University of Minnesota Extension Hosts Delegation from the People’s Republic of China

In cooperation with the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Scientific Cooperation and Exchange Program, University of Minnesota Extension hosted the SCEP China Meats Processing Team for ten days in August of 2015. The program focused on meat and animal production in the United States. The main components of the training program included the roles and responsibilities of meat processing regulators at the federal and state level, the role of trade organizations in advancing science and the meats industry, the most recent advancements in meat animal research, modern livestock production and meat processing technologies and standards, meat marketing strategies in a global environment, and meat and food safety programs and procedures.

Initiation of the program by Dr. John Vreyens, Director of Global Initiatives for University of Minnesota Extension included development of the American host team in Minnesota. Program development as well as in-person group leadership was carried out by Dr. Ryan Cox, Extension Meat Specialist for the University of Minnesota. The six person delegation that traveled from the People’s Republic of China included Jianxiang He, Division Director, Administrative Division, Bureau of Produce Processing, Ministry of Agriculture; Wei Zhao, Principal Staff Member, Division of Community Environment, Center for Development of Rural Social Undertakings; Ye Tao, Vice President, TRS Group Company, Ltd.; Shouwei Wang, Researcher, China Meat Research Center; Haihong Ouyang, Deputy Director General, Bureau of Produce Processing, Ministry of Agriculture; and Yongxing Kang, Engineer, Research Institute of Agricultural Development and Investment, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Engineering.

The training program was organized over a ten-day period, in several locations across the United States. The group arrived in Washington, D.C. to begin the study tour exploring the industry at a national level. Meetings in the nation’s capital included the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), the North American Meat Institute (NAMI), the National Renderer’s Association, and the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. In addition to an emphasis in the interaction between regulatory agencies, trade organizations and the industry, points of interest in Washington D.C. were also visited.

The group then traveled to Omaha, Nebraska to look more specifically at research in the meat industry and visit the USDA Agricultural Research Service Meat Animal Research Center, outside of Clay Center, Nebraska. This day-long research program considered topics and research relevant to the meats industry such as reproduction, genetics, nutrition, meat science and food safety. While in the region, the group was also fortunate to be able to tour the Smithfield Farmland pork processing facility in Dennison, Iowa. Visits in this region concluded with a stop at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. Here, Dr. Joe Cordray and his team provided instruction in the Global Food Safety Initiative as well as retail labeling standards and a tour of the facilities at the university.

The group then travelled north into Minnesota for the final leg of the instructional tour with meetings at the University of Minnesota and the Twin Cities. Meetings in this segment included the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Beef Council, as well as tours of livestock and meat processing facilities on campus as well as in Rosemount, Minnesota. Lectures were also provided by Dr. Ted Labuza on trade regulations and Dr. Alfredo DiCostanzo on the current state of the beef industry.

Drs. John Vreyens and Ryan Cox would like to thank all of those involved in facilitating the program and providing and excellent collaborative partnership with our new friends and colleagues from the People’s Republic of China. The group looks forward to opportunities for future collaboration and programming.