

OKLAHOMA AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

CLASS XVI

Scribe Notes
Seminar 10
October 2 - 4, 2013

Theme: *"Southeastern Oklahoma Agricultural and Industry"*

October 2, 2013

Scribe: Jamie Cummings

Harbin Fish Farm – Spencer Harbin

This farm is a family business and Spencer's father runs another farm in Harper Country, KS which has been in the family for 100 years.

They raise everything they sell for quality over quantity. Channel catfish make up 80% of their inventory although they also raise large-mouth bass, bluegill, minnow, carp, blue catfish, and tilapia. It is a six month growing season and they basically work 24/7 during those 6 months.

This farm has four 8-acre ponds. The target size is 3-4 pound fish. They feed 7000 pound of feed every day.

Most of their clients are government contracts to stock lakes. They have water rights the Wewoka Creek as a source of water.

Bass are cannibals. They receive \$9.50 per pound for their bass.

If you wanted to start a simple one-acre pond, it takes about \$6,000 to start: 10 lbs. minnows, 250 bluegill 4-6" in length, 50-100 bass 4-6" in length, and 200-250 channel catfish.

Hoepfner Kiwi Farm – Dan and Donna Hoepfner

They started growing kiwis when Dan's father fell ill in 1987 and they found healing properties in the kiwis. They grow on 10 acres but have 100 acres of land.

The female kiwi plants make the fruit and the male plants need to be within 10 feet of them. The peak time is spring.

They make many products with the kiwi including soaps, lotions, and even emerald wine.

Buffalo Creek Guest Ranch – Dave and Darlene Shaw

Dave was in Class X. He has been a tax accountant since 1982 and has a mowing and herbicide business, mainly for turnpikes. Darlene owns Side Saddle Catering.

They received a few loans from the Agriculture Department to add features to the guest ranch. They have two guest rooms and an event room. Their business has been moving toward holding more weddings.

They are trying to encourage surrounding areas to add rooms for tourists. The Choctaw Festival draws a large crowd for the area.

They have been featured in Oklahoma Today, Oklahoma Living, and Oklahoma County.

They raise shrimp for 120 days in a small pond and have a festival when they harvest them in October.

Following a delicious meal, some of the class members walked across the swinging bridge and four of the guys rode the zip line and dropped into a pond. It was fun to watch!

October 3, 2013

Scribe: Karen Eifert Jones

Tyson Foods

We had an excellent two hour tour of the Tyson poultry slaughter facility. Each group had a slightly different view from their guide. Notes were not allowed during the tour. In general, we learned that this plant uses local poultry they have obtained through local contract growers. Product is produced to customer's specifications; some bone in and some boneless. The product can be packaged "case ready" with an individual store label when requested.

One thing that struck me was a comment made by my tour guide when I asked what he does when not giving tours. He said that he is generally making sure everyone on the line is doing their job and if there is a problem he works with the employee to determine "whether it is a training shortfall or a personal choice" that led to the mistake/problem. Boiled down I guess all personnel problems fall into one of those two categories.

McCain Poultry Farm

Tommy McCain hosted us at his farm. He started growing for Tyson in 1986 in part to generate litter to be used by his father on the farm. He has built several houses since then and retrofitted the original houses with the most modern technology.

Chickens are grown to 8 pounds in 7 to 8 weeks. They turn about 4 to 4 ½ flocks per year with some downtime between to clean houses and rest. When chicks are growing, it is a 24/7 job. Each house is 16,000 square feet and about 16,000 chicks are put into each one. He was expecting chicks the next day. They will be about 3 hours old when delivered. He said the first few days are critical. As he phrased it: "The better you treat the crop at the front end, the better it treats you at harvest." No different with poultry than with grain crops.

He gave a very general overview of the pay structure under Tyson's contract. The base pay is 5.18 cents per pound. Growers with the least cost are paid the most. He said the most recent development to change the game is the nibble drinker called Peck-a-Drink. The biggest risk to a flock is weather and related power issues. A constant temperature is needed in houses.

My favorite quote: "I am the only employee here because I know I will show up."

Weyerhaeuser Timberlands

We started out in a conference room and got a general overview of what they do and learned about the various areas. We met several personnel. They have about \$100 million in annual sales. They grow their own seedlings in a Weyerhaeuser Nursery and breed for drought tolerance. They plant about 32,000 seedlings per year in January and February. In three years, the trees are about 11 feet tall. Satellite imagery is used to determine field conditions. They have identified that their biggest safety risk is driving! (After our one hour each way in vans with no shocks on a logging road – we think we see why!) They maintain 6,000 miles of road on their own property. The biggest challenge is arson.

They have nearly 1,000 employees. Trees are 28 to 30 years old at harvest. There are about 115 trees per acre at first thinning. The minimum size tree to harvest is 3 inch diameter and 12 feet tall. Trees are fertilized in the spring and fall. The goal is a 38 foot tree because this is the maximum legal length of a tree on the truck.

SFI (Southern Forest Initiative) is a voluntary self-regulating body that is trying to follow best management practices. They do seem to care for the land and the forests. After all, it is their livelihood – why wouldn't they?!

Huber Engineered Woods

Production was shut down between runs so the plant was deserted. They still tried to give us a good tour. It was cleaner and easier to hear (“bright side”!). They produce Oriented Strand Board (OSB) - sort of the chicken nugget of plywood. The plant runs 10 days on and 4 days off.

Wood that is processed has been cut less than three weeks ago. Pulp wood is about 16 years old and 6 inches in diameter. Chip and saw wood is about 22 years old and 9 inches in diameter. Within the plant, the dryer is the bottleneck; depending on the weather.

The final product is a 4 by 8 foot sheet used for flooring, roofing, RVs, etc. Different uses need different treatments. They are color coded accordingly. Wood is graded; Grade A is sold and Grade B is rejected (sold to salvager). They must strive for Grade A.

Kiamichi Forestry Research Station

Lovely meal put on for us with very interesting speakers. Honestly, I was beat and didn't take notes. But it was one of the best evening sessions we have had.

October 4, 2013

Scribe: Jamie Doyal

We started our day early. We had to be on the bus by 6:30, which was a little rough after an incredibly long day yesterday. To try to shorten the day, we did our synthesis for the previous two days on the way to our first stop. The first stop of the day was Love's in Durant for a bathroom break. This was Jane's favorite stop thanks to a large cup of coffee or two to start her day. We met up with Scott Stinnett, who had been at the Tulsa Fair, and Kevin Dale at the Colbert Post Office. Kevin is an alumnus from Class IX and a fellow FSA furlougher of mine. He was our tour guide for the day; and the tour would not be complete without a couple of U-turns throughout the day.

After a scenic tour of the outskirts of Colbert, America, we came to our first actual stop. We visited Terry Beal's bermudagrass hay operation. Mr. Beal has a very nice hay operation just north of the Red River that my sheep would enjoy. He is able to use the river for irrigation. He fertilizes his bermudagrass every 28 days and primarily sells his small square bales to horse ranchers in the Dallas area. He gave a fun demonstration of how quickly he can gather and stack his small bales with two different pieces of equipment.

From there we traveled to Weger Farms, Inc. owned by Gary Weger. He has a rather expansive sod operation. He is able to cut approximately four loads of sod per acre. Ideally, the bermudagrass is grown 140-150 days prior to being cut for sod and is sold on pallets or inrolls. Mr. Weger does not ship any sod north due to the possibility of spreading fire ants, which is greatly appreciated by those of us who know anything about fire ants. Mr. Weger showed us the Autostack machine which cost the operation \$328,000. This was a valuable piece of equipment. He said, "The day I bought this machine, I got rid of seven Mexicans." Without a doubt, the Autostack has paid for itself. He also said that the racecar in the barn is a part of the operation and is driven by his oldest son.

After seeing the Autostack, we loaded up and went to see where Mr. Weger had been cutting sod. We did not get to see the sod being cut that day due to possible adverse weather coming in. After looking at the sod, we traveled back to the barn for a restroom break prior to heading to the wildlife refuge. After some grief from Hitch, a couple of us decided to skip the bathroom break in hopes of getting to the refuge quicker and hoping for a decent restroom there. After quite some time on the bus, Stacy finally told us there were several people standing around in the barn chatting. Had we known the speakers at the wildlife refuge had cancelled, we would have ignored Hitch and taken advantage of this restroom break.

Eventually, we made our way from the sod farm to Mike Dyson's hunting lodge. There were restrooms for those of us who missed our opportunity at the sod farm, which was fantastic. Once the tables and chairs were unloaded, lunch was still nowhere to be seen. We loaded back up on the buses and ventured half a mile to Mr. Dyson's "party slab." This was a beautiful bar and patio slab area overlooking the river. After a brief time of enjoying the view, we headed back to the lodge for lunch. Half way to the lodge, Edmond's bus took a hard left over a terrace and ventured across the pasture to see the WRP project taking place near the river. Our bus was a handicap bus and would not have been capable of climbing the terrace so Steve, also on furlough, stopped our bus and explained the WRP program and what Mr. Dyson was planning to do with his WRP area.

After a delicious lunch, we had a quick synthesis followed by announcements regarding our South Africa trip. We received our possible topics for team presentation and instructions on picking a topic. Finally, we made our journey home...or at least to our original pickup points.