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Tackling Meaty Issues

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In the meat processing business, food safety remains a priority issue for companies of all sizes, including small, independent processors who have been supplying local foods long before the concept captured the attention of culinary professionals and consumers.

As executive director of the American Association of Meat Processors (AAMP), Jay Wenther provides tools to help these processors succeed.

“We need a science-based food safety system,” says Wenther. “At AAMP, my job is not only to help processors stay current on regulations, but explain how they can implement strategies to be in compliance with these regulations.”

Wenther (’03 PhD meat science) has developed a variety of online resources to help members supply safe, quality meats to consumers. Since starting his career at AAMP in 2003, he has created tools including model Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) food safety plans and nutrition labeling information.

Wenther says his studies at Iowa State emphasized the importance of providing these practical, real-world solutions, which are invaluable to the association’s 1,315 members, including meat business operators, wholesalers, processors and home food service operators.

One of Wenther’s most useful experiences at Iowa State was attending the popular Sausage and Processed Meat Short Course, which is taught by leading professionals from around the globe. Wenther credits Joe Cordray, professor of animal science, for helping him learn about a variety of sectors within the meat business and connect with leaders in the industry.

“Every day at AAMP is different, and I need to have a network of professionals throughout the country that I can call to provide assistance to small meat processors who may not have Ph.D.s on staff,” says Wenther.

The Iowa Meat Processors Association (IMPA) honored Wenther during the group’s 2011 convention for outstanding service to the meat industry.

“There is no person in the country more dedicated to small meat processors than Jay Wenther,” says Cordray, who also is an IMPA member. “Not only does he have a working knowledge of the industry, but he goes out of his way to help small meat processors develop sustainable businesses.”

Wenther says he enjoys helping others discover the many opportunities that exist in the meat processing industry today and appreciates the solid base his Iowa State University training provided.

ALUM PROVIDES PROCESSORS THE TOOLS TO SUCCEED  By Darcy Maulsby

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Visit the American Association of Meat Processors online for resources for small, independent meat processors