

LeBeau Named COO



Tom LeBeau

Tom LeBeau has been selected as the new Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC chief operating officer and will lead the marketing and sales efforts of the branded beef program that has been in existence since 1995.

Arden Gremmert, who was named interim general manager in April 2007, will resume his role as a senior account manager for the western states region.

LeBeau has spent 28 years in the meat industry, getting his start as a meat market manager with Cub Foods, an 83-store warehouse supermarket chain located in Minneapolis. He spent nearly 20 years working on the inside at Monfort ConAgra, which later

became JBS Swift and Co., before leaving to become vice president of value-added products for American Foods Group.

He brings a wealth of experience in the areas of sales support, consumer education and value-added product development.

"I am excited about the key attributes that Tom brings to the table," says Craig Huffhines, American Hereford Association executive vice president. "He brings countless sales relationships with veteran salesmen and brokerage networks around the country and has a vast knowledge of the muscle cuts, the value of those items that make up the beef carcass and can communicate how to merchandise those items to drive profit for retail customers."

LeBeau has recently worked as a consultant to Cub Foods, where he was instrumental in the development of a central-cutting, case-ready beef program designed to reduce labor requirements at the store level. The entire retail industry, particularly in the larger chains, is moving toward a case-ready program where whole muscle box beef primals are sent to a central manufacturing facility, cut and packaged into individual consumer ready products, then delivered fresh to the store where the meat manager simply

maintains a steady stock of the product in the case.

"I believe we should investigate the possibilities of developing consumer ready products with independent manufacturers which will add another advantage to our portfolio of products," LeBeau says. "In addition, the staff has already launched a Hispanic brand, Nuestro Rancho, which is beginning to gain traction. This strategy also helps move more of the animal."

Several times a month CHB® product is cooked and taste tested against competing products in a multitude of sales oriented presentations. CHB product is consistently as good as or, most times, better than the competition in the vast majority of those cutting tests.

LeBeau says that by taking the program into further processing and adding additional value to the raw product, whether its portion cutting and packaging, marinating and cooking, or even taking beef trimmings and formulating a high-quality beef frank.

The company can add additional lines to an already dynamic menu of items and diversify the customer base. LeBeau's challenge will be finding ways to drive volume and add value at the same time. **HW**

New distributors expand reach

The Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC team has licensed a number of new distribution outlets in the last couple of years. As recently as the last month, three very large foodservice/restaurant distributors have been licensed to carry, sell and distribute CHB® product.

Sysco Foods in Baraboo, Wis., Sysco Foods in Nashville, Tenn., and Merchants Food Service in Hattiesburg, Miss., have all committed to the program. With these three distribution houses, CHB has added four states where delivery of product to the restaurant trade can be accomplished. Mick Welch, CHB LLC food service director, was principally responsible for the aggressive move into these larger distribution houses.

"The teaming up with full line distribution houses will allow us to reach a broader range of foodservice customers across several states," says Welch. "Each of these distribution centers will be committing a center-of-the-plate specialist to help drive the brand. I am excited to get started in the training of the sales staff of these firms so that we can transfer our passion for CHB to those street salesmen that can get us in the backroom kitchens of the restaurant trade." **HW**