

Colonial Williamsburg Hosts IOMSA's 116th Annual Convention

Historic Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, served as the backdrop for IOMSA's 116th Annual Summer Convention, June 13–15.

The first day of the convention's technical program began with a presentation by Ben Morgan, executive vice president of the National Cottonseed Products Association (NCPA). Morgan described NCPA's efforts to raise the profile of cottonseed oil, beginning with the development of talking points for the media and trade industry audiences, working with industry experts and researchers. The focus of his presentation was NCPA's "Cottonseed Oil Comeback Tour" (<http://www.cottonseedoiltour.com>), a nationwide campaign highlighting restaurants, food processors, and bakeries who have reformulated their products to include cottonseed oil. Morgan estimated that the tour was worth more than a half million dollars in public relations value for NCPA.

Kathleen Warner, an industry consultant specializing in the quality and stability of edible vegetable oils, spoke on the functional characteristics of the more common vegetable



Robert Collette

oils. Drawing on her more than 30 years as lead scientist for edible oil research at the USDA's National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (NCAUR) in Peoria, Illinois, she described the chemistry at work in the frying process and compared the various vegetable oils commonly used in a variety of food products. Although there have been notable improvements in oxidative stability and functionality over the past 50 years, she commented that additional research is needed to develop oils with functional characteristics that combine stability with the deep fried flavor that is much sought after by food manufacturers.

In his review of issues affecting the edible fat and oil industry, Robert Collette, president and secretary of the Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils, described the status of food/feed safety legislation currently being considered by the US Congress. He indicated that a coalition of industry organizations are focusing their efforts to clarify the roles of the USDA and FDA with respect to food safety; other refinements being sought include the requirement for a federal recall



Ben Morgan

coordinator, protection against inappropriate disclosure of sensitive business information, and decreased frequency of inspection for low risk facilities. Commenting on the work underway to revise the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA), Collette observed that, for the first time, the DGA's advisory committee is looking at the effect of fat and cholesterol intake on the increased incidence of type 2 diabetes. He also reported on some of the proposed revisions to the Child Nutrition Act. Two revisions are aimed at school meals; one would, for the first time, recommend that foods served in school meals contain zero *trans* fat, while another would ban the use of partially hydrogenated vegetable oil. He concluded with an overview of the FDA's current focus on revisions to front of pack labeling and the possible implications for the food processing industry.

Robert Byrnes, managing director of Nebraska Screw Press, Lyons, Nebraska, gave convention attendees an overview of decentralized oilseed processing, emphasizing the advantages it affords to produce food, feed, and fuel from locally grown feedstocks. Pointing out that decentralized oilseed processing facilities present "tremendous" opportunities for rural economic development, Byrnes noted that locally available synergies, innovations, and resources can be effectively leveraged in a vertically integrated process. This vertical integration, according to Byrnes, is the key to the success of the decentralized rural processing plant. He then listed the best practices essential to a decentralized facility: 1) size facility to access target markets and use local materials; 2) integrate ability to process multiple oilseed types into pretreatment; 3) use simple and durable technology (much of which, Byrnes stated, is not new—"it's a case of back to the future"); 4) provide thorough operator training and oversight; 5) design in expansion from the start if needed; and 6) maintain final product diversity and the ability to shift between food, feed, and fuel markets. "Small is beautiful," Byrnes concluded, "and profitable."

Monday's luncheon speaker was Chief Richard Picciotto of the New York Fire Department, author of the best-selling book *Last Man Down*. The highest-ranking firefighter to survive the World Trade Center collapse on September 11, 2001, Chief Picciotto gave a gripping, first hand account of his experiences that day, describing his entrapment in the debris, his eventual escape, and how those experiences led to a soul-searching reappraisal of the values and priorities in his own life.

The first speaker on Monday afternoon was William Wark, board member of the United States Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB). After providing an overview of the CSB's role in investigating accidents in the chemical industry (stressing that its role is prevention; unlike OSHA and the EPA, the CSB is not a regulatory or enforcement agency), Wark's presentation focused on the July 2007 incident at the Barton Solvents facility in Valley Center, Kansas. The explosion caused extensive damage to the facility and led to the evacuation of nearly 6,000 nearby residents. He then outlined the various elements of a successful chemical



William Wark

process safety program and their role in implementing and maintaining an ingrained safety culture. With only 17 investigators on its staff, Wark remarked that the agency is currently "stretched to the limit," and that its investigation of the Deepwater Horizon incident in the Gulf of Mexico would likely be its largest, posing a significant challenge to the CSB's resources. He concluded by advising attendees to "be vigilant and maintain a sense of vulnerability."

Bill Davis, crane safety expert for Zurich Services Corporation and a Certified Safety Professional, described the common causes of crane accidents and noted that, in basic terms, cranes wreck "because somebody did something dumb." The number of crane accidents in the US—roughly 8,000 per year—has remained unchanged for decades, a fact he attributed to operators "doing the same dumb stuff over and over again." The introduction of computerized controls, which, theoretically, should reduce the number of accidents, have had little effect, mainly because they are often improperly programmed and/or overridden by the operator. Davis noted that OSHA has started to pay increased attention to crane incidents (Note: OSHA has issued a new rule addressing the use of cranes in construction which will take effect November 8, 2010; for the text of the rule, see http://www.osha.gov/FedReg_osha_pdf/FED20100809.pdf).

The afternoon session drew to a close with a presentation by John Campbell, Senior Vice President for Government Relations and Industrial Products at Ag Processing Inc. (AGP), Omaha, Nebraska. Campbell gave an overview of the current environment facing the renewable fuels industry in the US, with emphasis on the Environmental Protection Agency's RFS2 standard. Commenting on the ongoing topic of land use change, he observed that each year, the US

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Bill Davis



Loren Polak



Mike Boyer

loses 2 million acres (809,371 hectares) of agricultural land to development. He concluded by setting forth five “guiding principles” for the biofuels industry: 1) biofuels will not be allowed to “significantly” displace food/feed demand; 2) biofuels *will* be allowed to consume *surplus* food and feed supplies; 3) budget deficits are likely to motivate a shift in the biofuel subsidy from the taxpayer to the consumer; 4) consumers will tolerate some small price premium for renewables—but not much; and 5) mandates are a double-edged sword (they provide a guarantee market—unless they don’t, they provide a target for opponents even when they have no market benefit, and they can be waived for any reason—but especially if they violate principles 1 and 4).

“Sustainability in Oilseed Processing” was the topic addressed by three presenters in the opening session on Tuesday morning. Warren Barnes, vice president of Frazier, Barnes & Associates, Memphis, Tennessee, discussed the origins of the concept of sustainability, how it is used in the oilseed processing industry generally, and how it will impact a company’s business model and mission. He noted that an increasing number of companies are now disclosing their sustainability performance in their “sustainability” or “corporate performance” reports, and concluded that sustainability “is not a passing fad—it is here to stay.” The next presenter, Loren Polak, Director of Environmental Management, Bunge North America, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri, outlined Bunge’s sustainability program. Polak described how Bunge developed and is implementing its corporate sustainability policy, beginning with modest goals for reducing CO₂ emissions, water use, and landfill waste, with more aggressive goals planned for the longer term. Essential to developing a sustainability culture, Polak commented, is buy-in and an ongoing commitment from high level management. The final speaker on

sustainability, Mike Boyer, president of Agribusiness and Water Technology, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia, addressed the challenges and opportunities of implementing the corporate sustainability plan at the plant level. Economic considerations, Boyer suggested, are one of the factors behind the increased interest in sustainability: “There’s money in it.” Echoing Loren Polak’s remarks, he observed that enthusiastic senior staff at the plant level is critical in driving change, and recommended the designation of a sustainability “czar” at each facility. “This isn’t rocket science,” Boyer said, “it’s just a better way of organizing what you already may be doing.” The key elements of the effort, he explained, are clear guidance from corporate, early high visibility successes, effective communication, and an engaged and committed team.

Stephen King, public affairs specialist for the US Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Baltimore District Office, concluded the convention’s technical program with a presentation that focused on food safety and food defense. King gave an overview of the FDA’s current initiatives which highlight the critical role of employees in ensuring safety throughout the food chain, provided an update on the agency’s Reportable Food Registry, and described the FDA’s recall and alert mechanisms. He encouraged attendees to use the agency’s wide range of food safety resources available on CDs, DVDs, and online via the FDA website (www.fda.gov), as well as on YouTube and Twitter.

Company-specific presentations highlighting new products and services of interest to the processing industry were featured in a Vendors’ Forum. Closing out the day’s events was the annual IOMSA business meeting with comments by president Mark Ebeling, first vice president Kent Davidson, and the selection of Doug Kennedy of PYCO Industries, Lubbock, Texas, as second vice president.