



## USMEF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

### CARIBBEAN

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#### **Caribbean Retailers Get Firsthand Look at U.S. Beef Production**

The Caribbean represents a burgeoning market for U.S. beef exports and one of the keys to maintaining this growth is developing constructive relationships with retail outlets in the region. USMEF hosted a team of eight retail merchandisers from the Caribbean this week, providing them with a four-day “farm to plate” tour of the U.S. beef industry.

The group’s activities began in Greeley, Colo., with a tour of the JBS slaughter and fabrication facilities. The retail team was able to view the entire harvesting and production process including grading, sorting, inspection, processing, packaging and shipping.

The group next visited Meyer Natural Angus in Loveland, Colo., for a Beef 101 Seminar. USMEF meat scientist and Export Services Director Kevin Smith educated the participants on muscle seaming and cutting methods that help maximize the yield and quality of top beef cuts. Smith also led the group through a sensory tasting analysis.

The team received an in-depth look at the genetics, breeding, herd management and feeding practices that are critical to the production of high-quality cattle at Aristocrat Angus Ranch in Platteville, Colo. This visit was the subject of a television news segment on KCNC-TV, the CBS affiliate in Denver. In the news segment, Skylar Houston of Aristocrat Angus explained how beef exports are critical to the profitability of his operation, especially during a time when domestic demand is slumping for high-end beef cuts.

One of the tour participants, Troy Valcin, perishables director for Consolidated Foods Limited of Castries, St. Lucia, the parent company of St. Lucia’s largest supermarket chain, emphasized the value of being able to see cattle breeding and production facilities in person.

“I was here two years ago, but we didn’t get to go in the plants and actually go on the farms,” said Valcin. “I never realized cattle producers were so advanced in terms of using technology. It’s comforting to see that they are using technology to help cut down their overall costs by getting better animals that will yield exactly what they want.”

Over the weekend, the team toured a wide range of Denver-area supermarkets and food retailers, and attended the [2009 Annual Meat Conference](#). The conference included presentations on retail food trends, the impact of the economic recession on consumer behavior, advancements in food safety practices, consumer concerns regarding animal handling and welfare and using the Internet to improve food sales.

The team also received an analysis of global meat supply, demand and pricing trends from USMEF Economist Erin Daley. Daley examined the key markets for U.S. beef and provided examples of how demand in these countries can impact the entire global pricing structure.



*USMEF Economist Erin Daley addresses the Caribbean retail merchandising team*

As the tour reached its conclusion, Valcin said it provided her with valuable insights that will be very beneficial to her company and its customers.

“It’s been fascinating to see, all the way from the farm to the box, how U.S. beef is produced,” she said. “I can go home now with a better command and a better knowledge of the beef industry in the U.S., so I can help educate our customers. It’s not just price, it’s also about the quality we are getting and the fact that it’s a safe product that’s coming into the islands.”

Last year the Caribbean accounted for \$78.6 million in U.S. beef exports, a 14 percent increase in value over 2007.