

Kansas State University

## Master of Agribusiness

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### **Student defends thesis, “Analysis of Solar Power Generation on California Turkey Ranches”**

**MANHATTAN, KANS., August 11, 2009** – Rick Palermo, Fresno, Calif., defended his thesis, “Analysis of Solar Power Generation on California Turkey Ranches,” Tuesday, July 21, 2009. Palermo is a Turkey Growout Supervisor at Foster Farms in Fresno, Calif. He will graduate from Kansas State University in August with a Master’s in Agribusiness (MAB).

Foster Farms is a family-owned company started in 1939 in Modesto, Calif., which currently employs more than 10,000 people in seven states. They produce fresh and frozen chicken and turkey products, as well as lunchmeats, franks and corndogs. Due to their location on the west coast, many input costs are higher than the national average. Foster Farms has been considering installing solar power to manage costs and reduce their electrical rates, which in California, may continue to increase rapidly.

Palermo conducted a net present value analysis of installing a solar power generation system on a company-owned turkey growout ranch for his master’s thesis project. In order to provide an accurate assessment for decision-making purposes, he researched the system’s power production capacity, investment costs, maintenance requirements, amount of energy saved, and the useful life of the equipment.

“The thesis process involved a lot of work, but was extremely rewarding. The finished product is something I am very proud of and will benefit my company in years to come,” Palermo said. “The information will be useful in making a decision whether or not to move forward with installing the solar power systems at our ranches.”

As electricity and other production input costs rise across the country, and many companies look for ways to “go green”, Palermo’s research will have important implications for many agribusinesses.

Jeff Williams, Professor of Agricultural Economics and Palermo’s thesis advisor, said, “Rick’s thesis topic, which examines the economics of solar power systems for electricity production, is important to agribusiness due to increasing electricity prices. Solar power systems show promise for reducing electricity costs for agribusinesses given environmental concerns and government cost share programs.”

K-State’s Master of Agribusiness is an award-winning, distance-education degree program that focuses on food and agribusiness management. Students and alumni work in every sector of the food and agribusiness industry and are located in more than 35 states within the United States and in 25 countries.

“Everyone in the program—professors, staff, classmates—have been so supportive and encouraging of my efforts to complete the program and finish my thesis,” Palermo said.

The full thesis publication can be found online on K-State’s Research Exchange at <http://hdl.handle.net/2097/1607>.

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