

## **AGEC 300**

### **Food Processing Cooperatives**

**March 15 – 19, 2009**

#### **Description:**

Food Processing Cooperatives was offered for the first time in the spring of 2009. The class was born from the idea of Agricultural Economics Professors Dr. Gary Brester from Montana State University (MSU) and Dr. Mike Boland from Kansas State University (KSU) to provide students insight into California food processing cooperatives. In addition to attending a five day trip to California's Central Valley with students from KSU on March 15<sup>th</sup> through March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009, students from MSU participated in a two credit class taught by Dr. Brester. The class focused on the financial and management structures of food processing cooperatives. Lectures delivered by Dr. Brester were complemented by guest speakers such as Bill Perry – Relationship Manager, Northwest Farm Credit Services and Dr. Martin Frick – Professor, MSU's Division of Agricultural Education also spoke to the class about the inner workings of agricultural cooperatives. To gain appreciation for food processing cooperatives in California before their trip, students prepared group presentations on various agriculture industries in the state such as tomatoes and rice. The trip was made possible through the generous contribution of the CHS Foundation.

#### **Purpose:**

California has the most diverse agricultural industry in the United States. Farmers regularly deal with water regulations, immigration issues, environmental laws, and animal rights activists. California has not historically benefited from government subsidies and programs like Midwestern U.S. agriculture. Much of California's agricultural products are exported and marketed through cooperatives. The sheer diversity and value-added agriculture production in California coupled with its unique management challenges made California a fascinating state to study.