



Alumni Spotlight

Timothy Loh

Class of 2003
Deputy Regional Director
U.S. Soybean Export Council
Singapore



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A Singapore citizen by birth, Timothy earned his Bachelor's in Finance at Western Michigan University. Upon returning to Singapore, he started his career in ocean transportation, spending several years with an international shipping company managing the commercial prospects of its fleet of Panamax vessels. He later joined a U.S.-based grain company, Continental Grain Company (CGC). Timothy transitioned across its international offices working in different markets before moving to the Philippines as CGC's Country Marketing Manager merchandising various agricultural products from multiple origins. Working for CGC was where he first developed a deep interest for the agricultural commodities industry.

After the acquisition of CGC's grain export business by Cargill in the late 1990s, Timothy joined the American Soybean Association as its first Director of Marketing for Southeast Asia, tasked with developing ASA's marketing strategies and industry engagement initiatives. He spent over 13 years consulting for the United Soybean Board and the American Soybean Association, overseeing the commercialization and marketing activities for the U.S. Soybean Export Council (previously known as ASA International Marketing) in the region. Through these years, he gained an in-depth understanding of the technical and commercial aspects of the agribusinesses. His interaction with U.S. soybean growers, producers and exporters of U.S. agricultural commodities also gave him an inside perspective into the U.S. agricultural industry.

When comparing the food and agriculture industry in the U.S. and Southeast Asia, Timothy sees more differences than similarities. Demographics alone raise many distinctions – the United States, a population of around 315 million people under one single government, while in Southeast Asia, there are more than 500 million consumers under eight or more

governments. The U.S. a first-world industrialized nation while most of the countries in Southeast Asia still hold third-world, emerging economy status. "In that respect, and in consideration of the varied geo-political and socio-economic climates, the two markets differ widely in production, utilization and consumption," he said. Americans spend around 15-20 percent of their disposable income on food while most of the countries

in this region spend 50 percent or more of their income on just food alone with a high percentage of the populations living below the poverty line.

Timothy professes that his core interests are international agribusiness marketing and trade, ocean transportation and supply-chain logistics for agricultural commodities and his current employer has contributed tremendously to his professional development.

He also attributes his progress to when he made the decision to enroll in KSU's MAB program 12 years ago. In 2001, having experienced several key turning points in the global agricultural landscape, Timothy realized in order to keep pace and stay relevant that he needed to reinforce and increase his knowledge base.

"I felt I had reached a plateau in my knowledge at a critical time when there was so much happening in the global agricultural industry," he said. "The Master of Agribusiness (MAB) program offered the opportunity to learn and better equip myself to deal with the latest developments, as well as gain insight where the industry will be heading in the years to come."

Aptly, Timothy's MAB thesis addressed an event that had a major impact on

the agricultural industry in the region, specifically the poultry sector. Titled 'Avian Influenza (AI): Impact on the Poultry Industry in Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam', his thesis chronicled the impact that the strain of HPAI H5N1 virus had on the poultry industries in three of the worst affected countries in the region, from the time of the first outbreak in 2004-07. His paper examined each affected market and analyzed the efficacy of the measures taken by the government to control the outbreaks and their efforts to revive their poultry sector at home and abroad. The mass culling of birds to stem the spread of the virus resulted in large economic losses and in some cases also decimated the poultry industry in some countries.

"In 1997, Avian Influenza A (H5N1) was discovered to have infected both chickens and humans in Hong Kong. This was the first time an avian influenza virus had ever been found to transmit directly from birds to humans," he said. "International alarm was again raised in 2004 when Vietnam declared a similar outbreak of the highly pathogenic AI H5N1 (HPAI) virus in the southern part of the country as the human casualties and death toll mounted and the disease started spreading across the region. These events should serve as an

important reminder to governments, agribusinesses, and consumers that everyone has a role to play in ensuring food safety and public health."

Timothy currently serves as the Deputy Regional Director (Southeast Asia) with the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC). USSEC's global mission is to create and sustain demand for U.S. soybeans and soybean products, advocate for

the use of soy in feed, aquaculture and human consumption, and promote the benefits of soy use through trade and technical programs, meetings, workshops and conferences; maximizing the return for USSEC's stakeholders, i.e. US soybean growers and exporters. Based in Singapore, his office oversees and provides support to USSEC's satellite offices in Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia.

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