

SEVEN MEXICO & ITALY

SPECIAL
Double
Edition



NEW MEXICO AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



NMAL Class 16 Visits Southwest Cheese

By Julie M. Hughes

The New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Class 16 embarked on its fifth seminar, Natural Resources and Agriculture in Southeastern New Mexico, with a packed schedule of tours in Artesia and Clovis, including a tour of Southwest Cheese, led by Eric Denton, site director. Denton, who has been with the operation for many years, provided a thorough background on the company and production facility.

Opening in October 2005, Southwest Cheese has grown to become a leading manufacturer of nutritious cheese and whey protein ingredients. Each year, they process over 5.1 billion pounds of milk and produce over 588 million pounds of premium block cheese as well as 36.8 million pounds of highly purified whey protein powders.

Southwest Cheese uses fresh local milk to produce Colby, White Cheddar, Colby Jack, Pepper Jack, Colored Cheddar, and Monterey Jack in 40-lb. or 640-lb. blocks. Its products are supplied to various leading brands and global food organizations for packaging and resale.

As North America's largest cheddar cheese plant and one of the world's most technologically advanced cheese plants, Southwest Cheese is jointly owned and operated by Dairy Farmers of America, Select Milk Producers, and Glanbia Nutritionals.

Dairy Farmers of America comprises over 13,000 family farmers from across the country who supply fresh milk to Southwest Cheese. Established in 1994 by family dairy producers and Dairy Farmers of America, Select Milk supplies Southwest Cheese with the freshest milk. Glanbia Nutritionals oversees the

production and marketing of the cheese and whey protein produced at the facility. Glanbia Nutritionals is a division of Glanbia, headquartered in Kilkenny, Ireland. Glanbia was formed in 1997 from the merger of Avonmore Foods and Waterford Foods and is one of Europe's biggest dairy producers.

The Glanbia Nutritionals division has 60 sales locations in 22 countries with over 3,500 employees and 20 production locations. Because of the global partnership that forms Southwest Cheese, it must meet safety standards for the United States and Europe. Glanbia is dedicated to ensuring all production sites hold an externally recognized food safety certification, such as those recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative.

Southwest Cheese's dedication to safety was visible and impressive as NMAL Class 16 suited up for the production tour. Denton took the class through the whole facility, including pointing out the additions to the production site since it first opened 18+ years ago. Class 16 asked Denton about challenges, and as with most manufacturing facilities, keeping high-quality employees is a struggle. Denton shared some of the larger and smaller efforts the company has invested in regarding supporting employees, including my favorite, which is that employees get to take home a block of cheese on each payday. To conclude the tour, Southwest Cheese also graciously gifted each member of Class 16 with a block of Pepper Jack cheese.

This presentation and tour were valuable to NMAL Class 16's understanding of how vital the dairy industry and Southwest Cheese are to the economy in Eastern New Mexico.



Peanut Processing Plant

By Emily Harris

Hampton Farms in Portales, NM was the backdrop for one of Class 16's stops on our tour of the Eastern portion of New Mexico agriculture. Wes Weems is the production manager and, on this day, our tour guide of the in-shell processing facility. Hampton Farms peanuts are grown, harvested, roasted, and proudly packed here in the United States. Hampton Farms has locations in North Carolina, Virginia, Maine, and Texas and the facility we toured in Portales. Their website boasts they "operate with full vertical integration that ensures premier quality at every stage."

On our tour, some of us (me included) learned that peanuts do not grow above ground. We also learned that peanuts are part of the legume family and, as such, are a relatively water-intensive crop. So, while we process peanuts here in the state, we are not generally growing peanuts as a commodity. Hampton Farms also undergoes audits and grading from multiple agencies like any other processing facility. Quality standards at the state and federal levels are the basis of their quality, but Mr. Weems explained how their internal standards are set above those required. Federal standards are set for processing while grading the commodity coming into the facility falls to the New Mexico Department of Agriculture.

Outside of those standards, Hampton Farms also meets third-party audit standards as a buyer requirement for the institutions it sells to.

The investment into technology to increase efficiencies and minimize commodity waste was readily evident as we walked through the processing facility. Mr. Weems explained the different functions of the machines we walked by. One machine used lasers to see peanuts and compressed air to remove debris or bad peanuts from the line. Previously,

much like other commodities that we seen get processed, peanuts used to have to be hand-graded before the installation of this machine. While many agricultural machines are adapted from

their original use to work for a different commodity, another machine at a different point in the facility is specifically made for peanuts.

They continue to pour capital into their facilities to improve efficiency and quality. Another exciting portion of this facility was the partnership with local farmers to reduce the amount of waste created. Partnering with local farms that can use the hulls and scraps from the processing of peanuts for livestock bedding helps cut down on waste being sent into landfills. These kinds of partnerships are what make agriculture great!



What is HF Sinclair?

By Bernadette Benally

There are green dinosaur figures in front of certain gas stations, also known as Dino Marts. Ever wonder about that green dinosaur? Wonders never cease to amaze that a production story about that green dinosaur exists. The green dinosaur represents an energy company fueling America. The interesting concept is that it is part of the agricultural cycle of how to produce energy.

This is what New Mexico Agriculture Leadership (NMAL) Class 16 learned. They visited the HP Sinclair Pre-Treatment Unit (PTU) and the Renewable Diesel Unit (RDU) in Artesia, NM, on April 11, 2024.

Upon arrival, we drove through the PTU and RDU facilities on the outside and then toured the inside of each unit. We saw parked trains connected to the export of products from the facilities and many high-tech pieces of equipment (See photos). For safety precautions, we signed in and put on hard hats. We also got to check out the control room and the small labs. HF Sinclair's website states, "the PTU provides feedstock flexibility, mitigating single feedstock risk and generating value through lower priced unrefined soybean oil and lower carbon intensity waste feedstock

such as animal fats and distillers corn oil. The 9,000 barrels-per day RDU upgrades the renewable feedstock refined by the PTU into a hydrocarbon, high-value renewable diesel with 50% to 80% less net greenhouse gas emissions and is chemically equivalent to petroleum diesel." How is this energy produced? During the tour, it was well explained by two HF Sinclair employees.

We started at the bottom of the facilities and toured our way up to the cooling towers. The best way to explain the facilities is the recyclables are imported into the facilities, go through high-tech equipment to be processed, and then export a fuel (energy) product.

With any operation, there must be water, which is a significant player in the agricultural community. The HF Sinclair facilities are tapped into the City of Artesia's Wastewater Treatment Plant. According to the employees, they said, "It is a million-dollar machine". After the tour, we saw the final renewable products on the table. They make tallow, DCO, and Canola oil (fuels). Class 16 received gifts from HF Sinclair. This was a great learning experience!



Oil and Natural Gas

By Luther Dunlap

On April 10, 2024, the New Mexico Ag Leadership class met with Representative Jim Townsend and Representative Cathrynn Brown in Lovington, NM, to discuss the oil and gas industry in New Mexico and the legislative budget. Much of the discussion was centered around the oil and gas industry. The 2024 budget totals \$10.21 billion in recurring spending, a 6.8% increase from the last fiscal year. The budget maintains reserves at 32.5%, a near-historic high. This year's Capital Outlay and General Obligation Bond appropriations include nearly \$1.8 billion in projects throughout New Mexico. Fifty-four percent of the state's revenue comes from the oil and gas industry of New Mexico. We are only extracting around 28% of the available oil in New Mexico. Representative Brown talked about how the capital outlay money flows.

One-third goes to the Governor, One Third goes to the House, and One Third goes to the Senate. They also discussed how each Representative and Senator gets Junior Money and how it works. Junior money cannot be used for Capital Outlay. It can only be used for operational costs for staff and ongoing projects.

The oil and gas industry currently employs 135,000 people in the state of New Mexico. I really enjoyed this visit after spending three days in Santa Fe during the legislative session. Thank you, Representative Brown and Representative Townsend, for the great information and for educating us on how much of an impact the oil and gas industry has on the state of New Mexico.



Moving Agriculture Forward in Eastern New Mexico

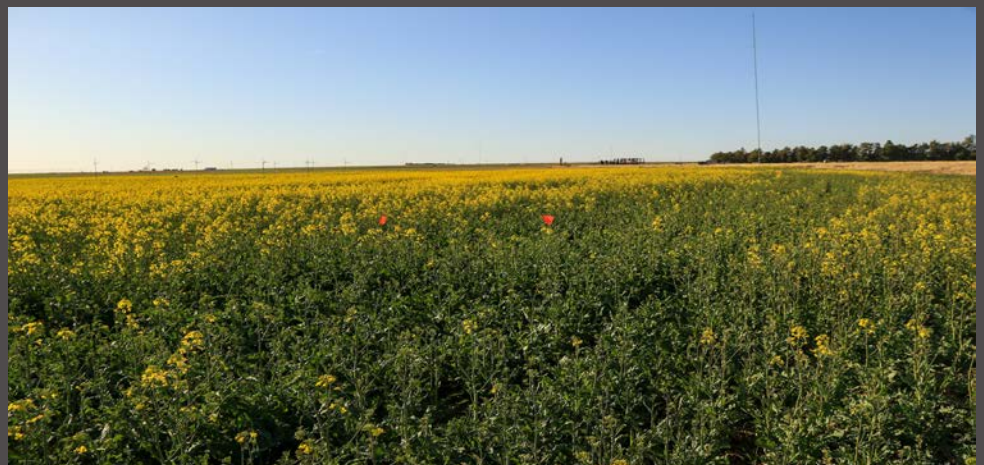
By Katelin Lee

We spent the second day of our eastern New Mexico seminar at the Clovis Agricultural Science Center. The Clovis Agricultural Science Center is part of New Mexico State University's Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) system. The AES system is the main research arm of the NMSU College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES). It consists of the main campus in Las Cruces and 12 additional centers throughout the state.

The vision for the Clovis Center is to “advance climate-resilient agriculture in semi-arid agricultural systems through research and innovations in soil health, water, and carbon management.” We spent most of our time at the center in the fields, learning about the ongoing research that aligned closely with the center's vision. One of the most exciting research studies we learned about was using circular grass buffer systems in center-pivot irrigated fields. Dr. Sangu Angadi explained that if farmers can't utilize the entire center pivot, that unused portion can be used for dryland native grass buffer strips. The current research project explores the impacts of the native grass buffer strip on soil moisture, nutrient loss, soil compaction, and wind erosion. The system was so different from what we typically think of for irrigated agriculture, and it was intriguing to hear some of the researchers' initial findings.

We met with several of the center's post-doctoral researchers, graduate students, faculty, research manager, and farm/ranch manager. As stated in the vision, some of the ongoing research at the center is exploring carbon management. Making the most of their land, the researchers walked us through some of the test plots on the farm and the technology they are using to measure GHG emissions. They also discussed practices such as cover cropping and composting and their research. I also learned that they are researching the use of biochar. Biochar is made by burning biomass, such as manure or pecan shells, at low oxygen levels. I previously wrote an article on using biochar in the soil, reiterating a growing interest in researching its use.

We also learned about the research being conducted on winter canola. Crop diversification for the region was the driving thought behind the research. We were lucky enough to visit when the canola bloomed and saw a sea of yellow. The sight reminded me of my trip to Scotland, where I saw fields growing in spring. Considering the climate and growing conditions vary



considerably between Scotland and New Mexico, I was curious about the crop uptake among farmers in the area. Although some farmers had given the crop a try, dry conditions in the area had proven difficult for all crops.

I have always loved science, and my time as a graduate student instilled a love and appreciation for research. The Clovis Agricultural Science Center team did an excellent job of explaining their complex research so that we could understand and answer all our questions. I have previously visited the centers in Farmington and Clayton, and I always walk away with an appreciation for the AES system, which devotes resources that farmers and ranchers may not have the freedom to expend toward experimenting with ways to improve agriculture. Change is hard, especially when margins are already tight. Still, I appreciate the spirit and devotion of the AES team to move New Mexico agriculture toward a sustainable and vibrant future. I have previously visited the centers in Farmington and Clayton, and I always walk away with an appreciation for the AES system, which devotes resources that farmers and ranchers may need more freedom to expend toward experimenting with ways to improve agriculture. Change is hard, especially when margins are tight, but I appreciate the spirit and devotion of the AES team to move New Mexico agriculture toward a sustainable and vibrant future.



NMAL Class 16 Joins New Mexico Department of Agriculture for Trade Mission Trip to Italy

By Julie M. Hughes

Participating in the New Mexico Agricultural Innovation and Trade Mission trip to Italy was one of the best experiences for me as part of the New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Class 16 as I met several producers and agricultural leaders from New Mexico, gained a more extensive understanding of the work of the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, and of course got to have many new adventures as we engaged with the multiple facets of agriculture in Italy.

Starting our adventure in Rome allowed us to tour and experience the architecture, history, and culture of a modern, cosmopolitan city and the third most-visited tourist destination in the European Union. Rome is the epicenter of the Roman Empire, the hub of Catholicism, and the birthplace of the Renaissance. It has a rich heritage in art, history, religion, cuisine, architecture, and fashion – all of which play a role in the culture of Rome today. Our tour guide was entertaining as she mixed historical facts with information about the modern political landscape of Rome. We passed by many of the historically significant landmarks, such as the Colosseum, Pantheon and Trevi Fountain. We also had the opportunity to visit many of the churches in Rome and learn about how Catholicism plays such a significant role in the culture of the city.

Following our sightseeing day, we visited the U.S. Embassy to meet with Charles Rush, an agricultural attaché, and his team

to learn about the agricultural landscape in Italy before staying with producers. We also met with the government's Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty, Forests, and the Confagricoltura, a farmer's union. This was the most formal part of our journey. Still, it gave us a good background prior to visiting with farmers, which helped as many spoke of the regulations associated with being part of the European Union. Learning about Italian farmers' challenges as part of the EU was one of the most consistently discussed aspects of agriculture across the countryside, regardless of the industry.



Following the business meetings, we were able to get out of the city to see multiple industries over the next couple of days, including visits to a dairy farm, a pig and cattle farm, a cashmere goat farm, and two wineries. The drives through the countryside were

picturesque. I really enjoyed the visit to the Chianti Cashmere Farm. It was interesting learning about a different industry, and our host, Dr. Nora Kravis, had a fascinating story to share about her journey to owning and operating the farm. Of course, I also enjoyed getting to see the products they produce, petting the goats, and holding the baby goats. They were fun and cuddly although after learning about some of the farm operations, it seems to be a challenging industry. I now have a better understanding of why cashmere is so expensive.

I also enjoyed getting to tour the two wineries and understand the subtle differences between a winery owned by a corporation and a family-owned winery. Both provided background on the wines they produce and were gracious hosts, but the approach to operations varied. This is one of the areas where different agricultural practices between New Mexico and Italy due to climate were glaringly obvious, particularly regarding water. The tasting lunch at the Fattoria di Corsignano winery was one of my favorite food experiences because they paired the food with their wines.

As we traveled from Rome to Florence, we were able to enjoy the countryside views more and had the opportunity to visit Frantoio Pruneti, a family-owned olive orchard and olive oil production facility. It was an eye-opening experience to learn about the production and learn how to taste olive oil for different flavors and notes. Of course, we also had an opportunity to walk around Florence and see some of the cultural sites of that area. I was able to take a side trip with my Extension colleague Stephanie Walker, the NMSU Extension vegetable specialist, and visit the Accademia Gallery to learn more about the work of Michelangelo and how it fits into the history of his time. His David statue is fascinating, as are many of his statues in the gallery.

Finally, we visited the University of Pisa, the oldest agricultural school in Italy. This was enjoyable, like visiting an NMSU Agricultural Science Center for a Field Day experience. They conduct research and provide outreach to their communities in various agricultural areas, comparable to the NMSU College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences.

As I reflect on this experience, it is meaningful to share how much I enjoyed getting to know the New Mexicans I was traveling with as part of the trip. It allowed me to spend time with colleagues in a new and different way and to meet new people I enjoyed getting to know. I will continue to reflect on this experience, and I value seeing a different culture, but it is always lovely to come home to New Mexico.



Agriculture an Ocean Away

By Emily Harris

Traveling abroad can make it easy to see the stark differences in culture and day-to-day living. The most unexpected turn of events in visiting a foreign country is the similarities between the two cultures, particularly in agriculture. We were an ocean apart, but our worlds paralleled more similarly than I would have imagined. This was not my first out-of-country trip, but the itinerary was jam-packed with new things to see and agriculture to explore. I hoped to see agriculture through the lens of another country and was not disappointed.

The trip was overflowing with memorable moments and new experiences with a group of strangers – who eventually all became friends throughout the trip. We began our trip with a tour of Rome and a lunch hosted in a refurbished part of an old building just outside the Colosseum. The walls were old, and you could feel the city's history as we dined beneath it. We continued our journey with a visit to the United States (US) Embassy, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, and Confagricoltura. Seeing the diverse US representatives at the Embassy share about their agricultural positions in Italy was fascinating, especially since they came from

(what feels like) the tiny state of New Mexico. The state of New Mexico felt especially small when we had the pleasure of meeting with US dignitaries and even a fellow New Mexican!

We set out to tour a local dairy that spanned across what felt like an entire town. Indeed, it may not have been that large, but it did include a relatively large estate where events could be held. The dairy was one of the cleanest I had ever seen and was brimming with happy

cows. The stewardship of these animals is evident in their raising and care. In livestock production, we also had the privilege to tour a fourth-generation cow and pig operation and a cashmere goat farm. The cow and pig operation was an ordeal for the family, and their hard work was evident. The pigs affectionately attempted to nibble on our tour guide (a son of the family whose farm we were touring), and our tour guide doted on their prize bull, who stood over 6 feet tall.

The cashmere goat farm was likely my favorite stop on this trip, but that accolade comes with a personal bias as a fiber art creator. The farm was filled with upwards of twenty kids (baby goats) ambling around the beautiful Italian countryside covered in a fleece that was truly



Emily and her husband Sean in front of the Colosseum in Rome

magnificent to the touch. The farm owner has a long story of her struggle to get where she is, but it shows how far hard work and belief in yourself can go.

Our trip also included visits to an olive oil processing company and an educational tour of the University of Pisa. The olive oil processing company takes olive oil exceptionally seriously, and its hard work shines in its delicious products. We had the joy of learning to properly sample olive oils and what to look for in other brands. The idea of sustainability and stewardship shone through in all the work that is done. The groves of olive trees are spread amongst gnarly, steep hills dabbled all over the countryside, and olives are raked off trees. Olive oil is small, batched, and made with only local olives. The University of Pisa felt very homey – coming from someone working at a university. They explained some of the work currently being done there and how they are trying to tie their research back to farmers. These people do different experiments and research to serve their constituents, just like we do back home. They were looking at ways to be better stewards of their livestock. They were a stark reminder of how small the world is and how we all aren't quite so different after all.

Italy was a wonderful place to visit, full of delicious foods. They taught me to be pickier about my choice of olive oil and that you need some noodles, quality olive oil, and good cheese to make a great pasta. We had the privilege of wrapping up our trip with a tour of the Florence farmers' market led by local guides. We sampled oils, kinds of vinegar, dried meats, sweets, and more. This bustling market made me jealous that I did not have such a boisterous market back home.

This trip made me realize that, though an ocean separates us, we are more alike than we think or realize. Agriculturists still strive to improve their stewardship practices to help the land, animals, and people who are tied to this life. They still deal with rules and regulations set forth by a higher power, just as we must. The passion and pride in these livelihoods



span the ocean and the lands. Though we share differences, we are the same. I will take many lessons from this trip, but the main one I'll carry with me is to remember to listen to others more than you talk. You'll be surprised at all you can learn!

Italy Adventures

By: Katelin Lee

We All Eat! Exploring Italy's Agriculture with Class 16 Twenty-seven New Mexicans, including a group from NMAL's Class 16, ventured to Italy for our international experience. As someone who had visited the country before, my primary goals were to connect with New Mexicans outside my NMAL class and explore the similarities and differences of agriculture in a foreign country. My previous visit to the country focused solely on the more touristy areas, and I hoped to explore more of the country's culture outside the tourist hot spots.

I enjoyed all the agriculture-based locations we visited, but the one that stood out to me was our visit to Confagricoltura. Confagricoltura is an Italian farmers' union that represents and advocates for its farmer members from across Italy. I was surprised to find that the structure and activities of the organization closely resembled the grassroots structure on which my organization prides itself. The president and staff of the organization spoke to the many challenges the country's farmers face, including increasing regulations, decreasing profitability, and the lack of young farmers entering the business. Through my work, I often notice that the European Union is often the first to adopt more stringent regulations in areas of the environment that we occasionally see pop up later in America. I noticed that the perspective of the Italian farmers and staff was not necessarily in opposition to the objective of the regulations but to the expedited timeline and lack of resources available to meet those strict environmental goals. This perspective could be attributed to the government structure we could glimpse during a visit to the Ministry of

Agricultural, Food, and Forestry Policies earlier in the day.

The agriculture visits provided many opportunities to learn about agriculture in Italy and compare it to my understanding of agriculture in New Mexico. I admired the adventurous spirit of some of the farms that we visited. The Chianina beef farm we visited was rooted in history and tradition as the "home" of the Chianina cattle, but the family employed an automated robotic feeder and had built a co-op for them and their neighbors to butcher their cattle and pigs. The University of Pisa's Department of Agricultural, Food, and Agro-Environmental Sciences was exploring how to pique local Italian interest in a heritage breed of cattle at the same time they were researching agroforestry. The Maccarese Farm shares many similarities with the dairies I am familiar with and has a biogas plant onsite to produce renewable energy. I found the balance between pride in the past and willingness to experiment for the future to be a spirit that could be incorporated in my work in agriculture.

I was surprised to find that while I was in Italy learning about Italian agriculture, I learned a lot about agriculture in New Mexico at the same time. All the trip attendees had varied experiences with agriculture and shared with the presenters and groups how the things we saw compared to their own farms and businesses. Many of us would talk during our travel time or meals about our farms, businesses, or workplaces, and it provided an excellent opportunity to build connections for when we returned home. My favorite moments of the trip were often connecting on a deeper level with the people I knew before arriving in Italy.

Traveling internationally is vital because it helps you appreciate the world from a different viewpoint. Being immersed in a language I am not fluent in with a culture that is not my own made me take a step back and consider how I carry myself in unfamiliar situations and how I react to people different from me. Our trip was short, and although I enjoyed it very much, I was ready to return to a familiar space. I thought a few times about the fortitude and courage it would take to uproot my life and start over in a new and unfamiliar place, as so many have done when coming to America. Those situations always remind me to give a little more grace to those I might instinctively perceive as an “outsider.”

Overall, I really enjoyed our trip. I found the visits to be educational and learned a lot about the challenges and advancements of Italian agriculture. I walked away with a broader

perspective of the world and forged new connections that will be beneficial in my career.



A promotional poster for the New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program. The background is a photograph of a brown and white goat standing in a field of dry grass and soil. In the top left, there is an orange square with the text "DEADLINE EXTENDED" in white, bold, sans-serif font. In the top right, the text "Applications Open" is written in a large, white, cursive font, with "CLASS 17" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it. In the bottom right corner, there is a white text box with the following text: "The deadline to apply is November 20, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Class 17 will begin in January 2025. Please email applications to nmal@nmsu.edu". In the bottom left corner, there is a logo for the "NEW MEXICO AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM" featuring a stylized sun and mountains.

A Word from College Drive

By Tina Wilson

Stepping outside your comfort zone... from time to time, we must do this. Good leaders must always be willing to do things that make them uncomfortable. I stepped outside my comfort zone during our Southeast seminar by having the seminar in two different locations. The standard operating procedure is to stay in one area for two nights. We spent the night in Artesia this time and the following day relocated to Clovis. No visit to Southeast New Mexico is complete without a visit from state representatives Jim Townsend and Cathryn Brown. As usual, their presentations were engaging, and this time, I learned that the New Mexico Senate and House of Representatives make their own procedural rules. The House of Representatives follows Mason's Rules for Legislation. I would have considered Robert's Rules of Order as it seems to be the gold standard for parliamentary procedure.

One of the principles I adhere to when planning seminars is to offer new experiences each time. In this seminar, the New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program had the opportunity to tour the HF Sinclair Refinery Plant in Artesia and the Southwest cheese plant, both new additions to our programming. I found it fascinating to witness the transformation of animal fat into fuel and learn about the intricate process of cheese production, a personal favorite. As a delightful bonus, we were gifted a two-pound block of pepper jack cheese during the tour. It was a truly delicious experience!

Class 16, along with the New Mexico Department of Agriculture and other invited guests, ventured to Italy in May. While living in England, I traveled to Italy, Rome, and Naples. A new experience for me was visiting Northern Italy. The first part of the trip was spent in Rome, where we had a meeting at the U.S. Embassy and, later in the afternoon, met with Confagricoltura, an Italian farmer's union.



Can I take it home?

After a few days, we ventured north to Florence. Along the way, we stopped at a cashmere goat farm. The owner, an American named Nora, had an intriguing story and detailed the intricate process of harvesting wool from the goats—a big thank you to Secretary Witte for catching kids and handing them off to everyone. If you know me, you know that I love animals and that I always want to hold and pet them. The goats' fur was so soft. Some of us came home with cashmere items such as scarves, throw blankets, and yarn. Now, if only the temperature would lower so that I could wear my new scarf. The views in the Tuscan region resembled the paintings I have seen. Breathtaking doesn't even begin to



Tuscany View

describe the views. We concluded our time in Florence with a visit to a market. I was excited to revisit markets again, as it was one of my favorite visits to Spain and Portugal last year. This visit did not disappoint. We sampled cheese, olive oil, and meats such as prosciutto. A highlight was the poultry vendor, who thought showing off a chicken's head was funny. We concluded the trip with a farewell dinner in Rome that included way too much food. If you walked away hungry, it was your own fault. After we said our goodbyes, I took side trips to Venice and Milan.



We are accepting applications for Class 17 beginning in January 2025. If you or someone you know would be interested in applying, please reach out to me at 575-646-6691 or tiwilson@nmsu.edu.

In a few weeks, look for a recap of our National Agricultural Policy Seminar in Washington, D.C. This is always one of my favorite seminars.



Even in Italy they enjoy boxed wine!



Cashmere goat and kids.



Our market guide explaining the samples.

Italy

By: Luther Dunlap

In May of 2024, the New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Class 16 took an international trip to Italy with the New Mexico Department of Agriculture on a trade mission. My goal for this trip was to gain a better understanding of the diversification of agriculture across the globe. I had two questions for myself for this trip: What challenges do agricultural producers in Italy face, and how do they overcome these challenges every day? I was surprised to learn that ag producers face some of the same challenges we deal with right here in America. They encounter some of the same environmental challenges that we do: too much rain and not enough rain. I learned that ag producers in Italy are incredibly resilient. They work hard and never quit. They have a passion for what they do and live that passion daily, much like ag producers here in America.

When I start thinking about my favorite visit on this trip, I have a hard time recalling one specific experience. I enjoyed the trip to Maccarese Spa. It's not a spa in the sense you might think. This is the largest farm in Italy, with 3,240 hectares of flat farmland. This is also home to the largest dairy operation in Italy, with 3,600 Friesian milk cows that produce 48,000 liters of milk. I liked this visit because of my connection with the dairy industry in New Mexico. They face many of the same challenges that the dairy industry encounters in the United States.

My ah-ha moment came when we visited with Gianni and Paolo Pruneti, fourth-generation olive oil producers. I had never seen how olive oil is produced, and this was a phenomenal tour. We use a lot of olive oil in our home, so seeing how the olives are processed and how the oil is extracted and preserved was amazing. Then, we had the opportunity to learn how to taste test olive oil. This was fun. I had no idea that taste-testing olive oil was a thing. We had the opportunity to taste the difference, and being able to discern that difference was eye-opening.

My favorite memories from traveling to Italy are all the food, phenomenal wine, and fellowship with everyone.



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The New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program is committed to developing knowledgeable, multicultural leaders within the food, agriculture, and natural resource industries of New Mexico.