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Downloadable photos available at: www.certifiedangusbeef.com/press/ac09

***Certified Angus Beef*[®] brand celebrates commitment to quality, excellence**

Wooster, Ohio – Sept. 29, 2009 – While it might be expected that the country’s economic downturn would present only challenges, the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] brand found plenty of opportunities in the market. The reason, according to Certified Angus Beef LLC President John Stika: consumers have become more conscious of the ratio of price to value.

“This could be the year where we, as an industry, learned more about consumer preferences and the value of quality through the eyes of the consumer than ever before,” he explained at the brand’s annual conference. “This arguably advanced our premium brand position.”

The brand’s premium quality, said Stika, “pays even greater dividends when consumers apply a higher level of discretion to where they spend their dollars.”

The brand and its partners’ accomplishments were acknowledged with a record number of attendees at its annual conference, Sept. 17-19 in Scottsdale, Ariz. Partners in every sector of the industry were recognized for their commitment to quality, integrity and marketing achievements – all factors which have been integral to the brand’s success since it began more than 30 years ago.

“I believe our best days are yet ahead,” said Stika, thanking partners for their continued commitment to the brand and acknowledging their success in a difficult time.

Record growth despite challenges

Stika noted that the brand will experience record sales for the third consecutive year, despite challenging economic circumstances. He noted brand sales in the fiscal year ending Sept. 30 are projected to exceed 655 million pounds, surpassing last year’s record volume by more than 20 million pounds, and the previous 2007 record by 71 million pounds. Stika added that for the first time, the brand experienced monthly sales volumes above 60 million pounds, in both July and August.

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As customers shifted their dining patterns and spent more on meals at home, the brand's retail partners set a new record of more than 300 million pounds sold. In addition, there were three record-setting months where retail sales reached more than 30 million pounds.

Another bright spot was international sales, which Stika noted had returned to levels not seen since December 2003, when the market reacted strongly to the identification of BSE in the United States.

While Stika acknowledged that the foodservice division's sales have been affected about 7% because of a decline in restaurant traffic, that figure is much less than the overall market drops of 25 to 35% for high-end restaurants and 15 to 20% in the upper-mid scale sector.

"Consumers are eating out less, but when they do, they are gracing the doors of those businesses that have a reputation for exceeding the customer's price: value expectation," said Stika. "Our restaurants and distributors see the importance of quality, not just a price point on a menu."

To succeed, 'get better'

Edd Hendee, owner and operator of the venerable Taste of Texas restaurant in Houston, agreed that the market may be challenging, but focusing on excellence and refusing to settle for less than the best are the keys to success.

"Get better," said Hendee. "We intend every day to get better. The marketplace is changing, and it's more discerning than ever. With the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] brand, we can continue to be better every day."

This focus on quality, Hendee shared, is his philosophy. He knows he needs to deliver quality to his customers, to keep them coming back. He reads comment cards every day, focuses on the details, and simply works hard to deliver a great customer experience.

Since it became a brand partner in 1984, Taste of Texas has served more than 4 million pounds of *Certified Angus Beef*[®] brand products and is one of the top restaurant partners in the brand's history. Beyond sales success, however, Hendee has become an ambassador for the brand, speaking to groups of restaurateurs, as well as cattlemen. He has also helped develop marketing and educational tools. In appreciation for his commitment to the brand, Hendee received the Pioneer Award, given just eight times in the company's history.

In addition, noted chefs Brett McKee of The Oak Steakhouse, Charleston, S.C., and Peter Vauthy of Red, The Steakhouse, Miami, shared insight on capitalizing on the brand's quality. Their perspective as high-end restaurateurs explored opportunities for others looking to keep customers satisfied and business growing.

Maintaining vision through turbulence

Keynote speaker Howard Putnam, an entrepreneur and former airline CEO, shared leadership principles that help guide companies through challenging times. He advised leaders to keep a clear and concise vision at the forefront, in order to maneuver their organizations through turbulence they may encounter.

Putnam also introduced a special surprise guest, Air Force Col. Mark Tillman, pilot and former commander of Air Force One during the presidency of George W. Bush. Tillman reflected on his responsibility to transport the president safely during the events of Sept. 11, 2001, his respect for President Bush, and his relief and gratitude for landing safely that difficult day. The crowd delivered a standing ovation in appreciation for the Colonel's service and courage.

Recognizing excellence

A full slate of awards were presented to retail, foodservice, international, processor, fabricator, and supply development partners who demonstrated excellence in sales, marketing and integrity. (Full winner information and photos are available online at: www.certifiedangusbeef.com/press/ac09)

Conference guests also selected winners for the People's Choice Awards, recognizing outstanding advertisements, contests and promotions among retailers and foodservice distributors. Winners were Foodland Super Markets Ltd. of Honolulu, Buckhead Beef of Florida/Royalty Foods of Auburndale, Fla., and Palmer Food Services of Rochester, N.Y.

A charity golf outing, sponsored by Palmer Food Services/G&C Food Distributors, and auction raised a near-record \$66,640 for the Mick Colvin Scholarship Fund, which supports scholarship opportunities for future beef industry leaders. Sysco Corp., representing all licensed Sysco specialty meat companies and operating companies, will be the golf outing's title sponsor in 2010, winning the sponsorship at the El Conquistador Resort in Puerto Rico, for \$32,000.

Certified Angus Beef LLC hosted its annual conference Sept. 17-19 in Scottsdale, Ariz. More than 15,000 businesses partner with the brand in the United States and 45 other countries. Annual sales top \$2.7 billion. The *Certified Angus Beef*[®] brand, introduced in 1978, is *Angus beef at its best*[®]. Less than 8% of beef achieves the brand's 10 benchmark standards that ensure mouthwatering flavor, juiciness and tenderness. For more information, visit www.certifiedangusbeef.com.

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