

Spotlight on Deirdre Ortiz

AACC International members each have their own story, and we want to highlight all of their amazing accomplishments. "Spotlights" is a series of individual and institutional member interviews capturing the unique stories of our many volunteers and their journeys with AACCI.



Deirdre Ortiz
Kellogg Co.
Member for 28 years

Q: What is your current position and what type of work do you do?

A: I am a Fellow at the Kellogg Company. Fellows at Kellogg lead large, global technical programs that have significant business and technical impact. One of the programs I lead is the Global Grain+ Program that looks at our core raw materials (grains and potatoes) from seed to farm to fork. It has allowed me to learn more about grains (and potatoes) from a breeding, growing, agronomy, sustainability, chemistry, processing, and business perspective.

Q: When and how did you first decide you wanted to work in cereal grain science?

A: When I was in my mid-20s, my sister graduated with a food science degree and started working in the food industry. I was looking for a change in direction, and she encouraged me to consider food science as an option. I was living in Kansas and loved to bake, so I looked into grain science. I wrote Dr. Carl Hoseney a letter, and he invited me to drive to Manhattan, KS, to visit, and eventually, I decided to go to grad school at Kansas State University to pursue a degree in grain science.

Q: How have you been involved with AACCI? How has your involvement with AACCI enriched your career?

A: I started out presenting my research while in graduate school. While I was in graduate school, there was a group of students from a couple of universities who helped start the AACCI Student Division and the AACCI Student Silent Auction that raised funds for the AACCI Foundation. Since that time I have served on a variety of committees, as the chair of the Annual Meeting Technical Program Planning Committee, on the Board of Directors, and now as the chair of the AACCI Foundation Board of Directors.

Q: In what ways do you see health and nutrition affecting how cereal-based foods are processed? How are health issues affecting cereal science and the cereal grain industry overall?

A: Cereals are a core source of nutrition and calories for many of the people around the world. Something like 50% of the world's calories come from grains, and these foods are more digestible and palatable if they are processed either in someone's home or in a food processing facility. Processing helps make foods safer by removing unsafe materials, like mycotoxins, from the food stream or cooking to kill pathogens. Processing also makes cereals more digestible. In addition, cereals are a main source of fiber, which plays a significant role in human health. There are a variety of health issues that are impacting the cereal world—obesity, hunger, celiac disease, and others. These opportunities force us as cereal scientists to think differently about the grains we are using and how we use them. There are opportunities through the entire food processing world to improve the overall health of humanity while still providing the food choices that consumers desire. This is a balancing act that we are still perfecting.

Q: This issue of *Cereal Foods World* focuses on "processing for health." Do you have any perspectives on this topic?

A: Food isn't healthy or nutritious unless it is consumed. Grains are not very consumable without processing of some sort. Processing is a critical way we can improve human health globally. We need to become more transparent concerning how processing helps grains provide more benefits for human health.

Q: What's next for you?

A: Good question! "Do justly, love mercy and walk humbly" is my motto. I hope to continue to do those things no matter where life takes me. And, I hope that life takes me on the road less traveled to some place interesting!