

Broadline Benefits:

Bringing the Agar Advantage to Broadline Distribution

New England is a unique market with its own set of needs. For more than 60 years, Agar has served New England retailers and restaurants with its unique expertise in the regional commodities market. With its new emphasis on broadline distribution, Agar is poised to extend its commodities expertise to every facet of the retail and foodservice trades.

"On the retail side, our customers are looking to us to provide new product ideas and features, the best values, relationships, and the most reliable dis-



tribution network," said Agar CEO-elect, Karen Bressler. "On the foodservice side, our customers are busy in their kitchens, they work long hours, and there's less help than ever. They need to know that there is a company willing to work with them, to take care of them, and that's willing to support them with the best products and reliable service. At Agar, we all see ourselves as part of our customer's team."

Agar's focus on broadline distribution doesn't signal a shift away from its traditional customer base. Rather, the new focus brings unparalleled benefits to the loyal customers who have been dedicated to Agar over the years. The broadline emphasis also offers a superior alternative for customers tired of dealing with huge, publicly traded distributors.

"We can offer so many alternatives to all our customers now," said Agar Beef and Pork Buyer, Paul Johnson. "As our business evolves, customers will see an interaction between our foodservice and retail offerings. More and more retailers are offer-



ing prepared foods and home meal replacements. We're seeing more of a fusion between retail and food service.

"Our foodservice customers will have access to more products and better values from our retail end because of our ability to buy in volume and pass on savings. Our retail customers will benefit from access to more prepared foods that our foodservice customers use," Johnson added.

The key to Agar's success has always been its unique ability to take care of the needs of many different groups within the industry. Broadline allows Agar to offer even more of what it has always offered: great service, great prices, and great distribution.

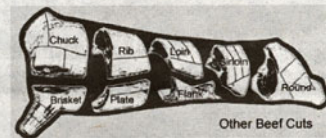
Expanded Service to the Retail Trade

Agar has served the needs of the retail trade since 1969, distributing pork. As the product line expanded to beef, pork, poultry, seafood, lamb, and veal, the supermarkets, independents, and wholesalers discovered that Agar was an unprecedented resource. The retail group provided a service unmatched in the industry.

"Retail is an extremely important part of our business," said Agar Senior Vice President, David A. Garon. "It was, is, and always will be a strong part of this business. We have a long-term commitment to retail."

Garon said the new building, the broadline support, and the company's foodservice business offer direct benefits to the retail trade. With 32 delivery bays and 285,000 square feet of storage space, Agar has the ability to bring in more product for

both retail and food service, Garon said. The facility was designed to allow more retail refrigerated space than before. Agar can serve its customers better than ever because of the efficiencies put in



Other Beef Cuts

place and the expanded space. The larger warehouse allows for storage of more product to serve all customers' needs.

"The retail department has always behaved as the primary consultant to the retailers," Garon said. "They are looking for Agar to suggest what items they should feature. The buying team knows the market and can book customers into items that they can offer as features. We take market positions for customers so they can feel secure about the price of the commodities they buy. They are also assured top quality since it is Agar's mission to only deal with the best. Other companies don't have the perishable experience that exists here. We know how important it is to quickly turn our product."

Seafood

Bob Marsters, Andy Gioianno, and Pat Young refer to themselves as Agar's seafood guys. Gioianno points out that Agar is strategically located between Boston, New Bedford, and Fall River, which gives it the ability to ship fresh seafood every day. Agar is already the largest frozen shrimp distributor in New England. Now it can ship everything that a customer may need with his seafood, from bread crumbs, to cocktail sauces, to clam-fry batter, to mussels. The new facility allows Agar to buy even more of the fresh fish it has provided for decades. Because Agar buyers are always accessible, customers can call in and find out from Gioianno or Young when a specific species will be in stock, whether certain kinds of fish are available, why some species may not be available, and whether there are any affordable alternatives.

"Agar customers are looking for a good quality seafood," Marsters said. "They can offer high-quality at a competitive price because the truck is already on the way with other provisions. The local fish companies need to ask for a high price because they need to cover the cost of a smaller delivery."

Meat

No one sells center-of-the-plate commodities like Agar, especially when it comes to meat. In the end, the extra buying and storage capacity results in additional cost savings that are passed on to the customer. Agar will continue to work with customers on quality programs that provide higher profitability, such as its certified Angus Beef Program. As New England's premier distributor, Agar can offer numerous substitute products when there is a sudden shortage or price increase in another commodity.

Poultry

Agar is the last word in both retail and foodservice poultry. Agar Poultry Buyer Brad Keith is already passing along the benefits of broadline distribution to his customers. He said the interplay between added storage space and a broadline focus has resulted in Agar distributing more brands of poultry so customers can offer more variety. Keith said one small example is that Agar now carries six different brands of chicken nuggets to accommodate varied taste profiles. It's all about providing quality choices for customers.

"As always, the poultry department is consistently on the market or under the market pricing," Keith said. "They scour the market looking for deals for customers, and booking our features to the retailers. The poultry department is always available to give market advice."

Processed Foods

Since moving into the new warehouse, Agar's processed food buyers have been able to add several new lines of processed meats, cheeses, and specialty salads. Just the move to Taunton alone has resulted in the addition of 20 percent more new product and the addition of five new lines of specialty salads. Agar is also adding premium product lines for customers who wish to serve an upscale clientele. Now customers can choose products based on price point, fat content, sodium content, brand name, and product quality. The choices are incredible.

Fresh Produce

In the past year, Agar has made a major commitment to produce. The new building houses three different produce rooms all set

at different temperatures. Agar now offers the highest-quality fresh produce in the region. Agar carries complete lines of domestic and imported fruits, vegetables, pre-cut items and salads. Everything from the most mundane local vegetables to the most exotic tropical fruits are available through Agar. The warehouse is stocked with every form of produce necessary to meet the needs of Agar's retail and foodservice customers, said Agar Produce Director, Bill Cavicchi. Agar also carries produce from all the major brand name companies, including Dole, Ocean Spray, Del Monte, and more.

Agar also services several supermarket chains and independents. Restaurants also benefit from the high-quality produce that Agar buyers shop directly on the local market each day and purchase directly by the cartload.

Broadline