



THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE'S 2008 SUSTAINABLE MANUFACTURING INITIATIVE

The U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) received a great deal of constructive individual feedback from U.S. industry at its September 27th “Enhancing U.S. Competitiveness Through Sustainable Manufacturing: A Public-Private Dialogue” event. Participants from both the public and private sectors agreed that sustainable manufacturing is an area where the United States must continue to increase its global competitive advantage, both in its ability to develop and utilize cleaner, more energy-efficient technologies and in its ability to implement manufacturing practices that are cost-effective and environmentally sound. To help maintain and enhance this global competitive advantage, the Manufacturing and Services (MAS) division of the International Trade Administration plans to take on four specific efforts in response to U.S. industry demand for DOC action on the topic of sustainable manufacturing.

The Establishment of an Interagency Task Force on Sustainable Manufacturing

To help maximize the value of complementary sustainable manufacturing efforts by various federal agencies as well as ensure the continuity of the MAS Sustainable Manufacturing Initiative, MAS has established and is chairing a sustainable manufacturing subgroup to the Interagency Working Group on Manufacturing Competitiveness (IWG-MC).

The Subgroup held its inaugural meeting on April 22, 2008 with representatives from various federal agencies in attendance including Commerce, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, the State Department, the Department of the Treasury and others. The Subgroup has agreed to support MAS's efforts to implement the remaining “next steps” as outlined below. Ad hoc consultation with U.S. private sector experts will take place to ensure effective implementation of task force efforts.

Creating a Central Online Clearinghouse of USG Programs and Resources That Support Sustainable Business

There are numerous U.S. government programs currently available to support sustainable business practices in the United States, however, there is currently no single portal yet available to the public that catalogs these many programs. To begin consolidating this information, Commerce will begin working with other federal agencies (i.e. Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture and others, with Commerce as the interagency lead) via the informal task force to launch an online clearinghouse that U.S. companies can use to identify the USG programs and resources that are right for them. The clearinghouse will include information on USG

programs that offer U.S. businesses technical assistance on how to enhance their sustainability, federal incentives and financial resources U.S. businesses can take advantage of to improve their sustainable business practices, and “best practices” research geared toward helping U.S. companies find information on how they can cost-effectively improve their global competitiveness through sustainable business practices.

Sustainable Manufacturing’s Regional American Tours (SMART)

Numerous U.S. companies have voiced concerns over the lack of visibility that sustainable manufacturing receives nationwide and the lack of information U.S. manufacturers possess in this field. In order to continue spreading awareness of sustainable manufacturing’s benefits, both to U.S. global competitiveness and the environment, MAS will hold the first round of SMART cities and regions: St. Louis, MO (July 28, 2008), Grand Rapids, MI (September 3, 2008), and Rochester, NY (September 23, 2008).

SMART city events will most likely include tours of local manufacturing facilities that showcase those firms that are incorporating sustainable manufacturing techniques into their production processes or have facilities that are otherwise sustainable. The goal of these tours is to demonstrate to other similarly situated firms in the area that incorporating sustainable manufacturing techniques into the production cycle is not cost-prohibitive and, in fact, can help the long-term economic viability of American manufacturers.

The Creation of Metrics for Sustainable Manufacturing

Efforts in response to U.S. industry requests for metrics that can be used to measure the economic, environmental and social impacts of sustainable manufacturing have been underway between the Department of Commerce and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) since 2005. The Department of Commerce has submitted a proposal to the OECD for a study that would propose a series of metrics to help businesses measure sustainable manufacturing’s cost-effectiveness as well as its benefits to the environment and society as a whole. This proposal was accepted by the OECD with the scoping phase having started in 2008.