

# U.S. Exports to Asia: Making Sales a Snap With MAP

- One of Tokyo's top pizza producers has given U.S. tomatoes a starring role in its pies.
- In Taiwan, a fictional character named "Ms. Peach" is winning consumers' hearts and minds for California stone fruits.
- U.S. blueberries for muffins and other treats are on bakers' minds in Japan.

None of these market-cracking developments happened by chance. Rather, each is the result of hard work by U.S. trade associations, promoting their wares with funding assistance from FAS' Market Access Program (MAP).

Each success story is unique, and all illustrate the program's versatility and power.

## She's a Peach of an Export Promoter

California's fresh peach, nectarine and plum growers saw exports to Taiwan increase to record levels in 2000, thanks to a strong consumer marketing effort that has increased product awareness and sales. But having the right spokesperson certainly didn't hurt.

In 1999, the growers' marketing association, the California Tree Fruit Agreement

(CTFA), retained a local Taiwanese celebrity spokesperson on a two-year contract to appear in media ads and printed material. Her name, Tao Tzu, translates from Mandarin as "Ms. Peach."

This turned out to be a terrific strategy; Ms. Peach garnered exceptional consumer recognition in ads and on point-of-sale pieces while scoring other significant dividends.

"This was the kind of response marketers dream about," said David Miller, CTFA's International Programs Director.

"Consumers liked her, traders wanted materials that featured her and her presence yielded enormous returns to our MAP-funded media investments."

In just two seasons, the newly introduced "California Tao Lee" brand is recognized by more than 80 percent of Taiwan's



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consumers, according to the CTFA. Even better, over 90 percent of them know that this brand represents three California commodities—peaches, nectarines and plums. That's important to ensure that the association's three groups all share in the benefits of promotional activities.

CTFA estimates that the effort has thus far yielded returns of \$106 for every dollar invested. In 2000, nearly \$53 million in peaches, plums and nectarines were shipped to Taiwan, representing 8 percent of California's stone fruit production.

In fact, the promotion has been such a hit that the CTFA has extended Tao Tzu's appearances into the 2001 season.

## Strawberries Make Firm Sales in Japan

The California strawberry industry achieved an 8-percent increase in its exports of fresh strawberries to Japan this past season as a result of another MAP-funded marketing effort.



CALIFORNIA TREE FRUIT AGREEMENT

The California Strawberry Commission's strategy has been to position its strawberries as different from Japanese berries, which are typically quite soft. The promotion emphasized the firmer texture and tangier flavor of California berries, and suggested unfamiliar serving ideas, such as toppings for salads and desserts.

The innovative suggestions were a hit. Retailers and restaurants alike were impressed by the results of surveys indicating that one in three consumers loved the new menu suggestions. More than 30 retailers now sell and promote California strawberries—up from only nine the prior year.

### Bakers "Knead" More U.S. Blueberries

Recipes were also a key MAP strategy for the North American Blueberry Council (NABC) to capitalize on the increased Japanese interest in blueberries. However, this trade group focused on professional bakers instead of consumers.

The NABC used MAP funds with industry contributions to introduce Japanese bakers to the quality and versatility of U.S. highbush (cultivated) blueberries.

Onsite information meetings led by a professional baker from the United States, combined with advertisements and brochures, provided blueberry information and recipes to Japanese bakers.

The result was a wide variety of new products as bakers learned that blueberries could add value to baked goods.

The three-year promotion effort has fostered blue-ribbon results. Between 1998 and 1999, the trade association recorded record shipments to Japan.

Shipments of U.S. fresh and frozen highbush blueberries totaled 3,029 tons in 1999, a 6-percent increase over the previous year's record of 2,849 tons.

Demand grew again in 2000, with ship-

## How MAP Works for Exporters

**FAS'** Market Access Program is designed to promote U.S. agricultural products overseas by providing \$90 million in annual funding for export promotion in targeted markets worldwide.

Under MAP, USDA uses Commodity Credit Corporation funds to enter into agreements with U.S. agricultural trade organizations, state regional groups and cooperatives to share the costs of overseas marketing and promotional activities. MAP funds are funneled through these groups to assist small companies and other agribusinesses.

Most MAP funds are earmarked for

generic promotions to advertise a general commodity overseas, such as U.S. stone fruits, rather than one specific farm or company.

All program applicants undergo a competitive review process based on four weighted criteria: the extent to which the applicant contributes resources to the program, historical export performance, projected export goals and accuracy of past export goals.

MAP can fund studies to show where key markets or trade barriers may be in particular countries. Funds may also be used for travel to overseas trade shows.



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ments totaling 3,159 tons, with the total being a combination of 776 tons of fresh U.S. highbush blueberries and 2,383 tons of frozen U.S. highbush blueberries.

### Strawberry (Pizza) Cones Forever

California tomatoes are also making great strides in Japan thanks to MAP, en-

abling the California Tomato Commission to add fresh California Roma tomatoes to the menu of Strawberry Cones, one of Tokyo's largest pizza chains.

A \$1,000 MAP investment was used to create a one-time menu promotion for fresh California Romas. The result was tremendous. During the month-long promotion, Strawberry Cones purchased \$15,000 worth of product.

More importantly, based on the success of the initial promotion, Strawberry Cones then chose to replace local canned tomatoes with fresh California Romas in all of their outlets. The net result was \$45,000 in sales of California Roma tomatoes per month to the chain for the duration of seasonal availability and renewed orders for the following growing season. ■

*For more information about the Market Access Program, contact the FAS Horticulture and Tropical Products Division in Washington, D.C. Tel.: (202) 720-7931; Fax: (202) 690-3346; Homepage: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/export.html>*