

Food For Export: FAS' New Partnership With Food Industry Associations

By Valerie Bowles and Jim Warden

In early 2000, the AgExport Services Division of FAS began cultivating relationships with select food trade industry associations. The pay-off will be expanded future market opportunities for U.S. producers of processed foods.

The goal of these partnerships is twofold. First, FAS seeks to strengthen its ties with the U.S. food processing industry. It also serves to make the associations' member firms more aware of FAS programs and services.

The groups the AgExport Services Division has been working most closely with are the American Frozen Food Institute, American Pet Product Manufacturers Association, Food Distributors International, Grocery Manufacturers Association, National Association for the Specialty Food Trade, National Food Processors Association, Private Label Manufacturers Association, and the Snack Food Association.

A History of Building Bridges

These new partnerships are just the latest in a 25-year history of cooperative efforts. Over the years, FAS has built and maintained productive relationships with other non-profit associations. Most significant are four state regional trade groups (SRTG) that work hand-in-hand with state

departments of agriculture in promoting exports of high-value processed foods.

By region, they are the Mid-America International Agri-Trade Council (MIATCO);, the Southern U.S. Trade Association (SUSTA), the Western U.S. Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA) and Food Export USA Northeast. The AgExport Services Division also has partnerships with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), the Intertribal Agriculture Council and the Chocolate Manufacturers Association. These partnerships have resulted in hundreds of small companies successfully exporting high-value food and agricultural products.

New Partnership Begins at Forum

Most exporters agree that the United States needs to expand its market share overseas. The dramatic increase in world trade in processed food has spurred the creation of the partnerships with these food trade associations.

At the 2000 NASDA mid-year meeting, FAS sponsored a forum where food trade industry associations could meet face-to-face with FAS and SRTGs and to hear firsthand about world trade trends in processed foods and competitor country marketing efforts.

For their part, the food trade associations responded enthusiastically, and generated a list of needs and ideas related to market access and market promotion.

Staffers from AgExport Services Divi-

sion agreed to participate in the food trade associations' meetings, as well as to sponsor a presence at select trade shows.

FAS has already facilitated a food trade association's participation in a major international trade show, which was included in a SRTG activity supported by FAS' Market Access Program (MAP).

A Partnership That Pays

This alliance paid off handsomely in October, at the SIAL trade show in Paris. There, FAS and the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade (NASFT) collaborated to fund a Fancy Foods Pavilion within the USA Pavilion, which was organized by MIATCO.

Market research clearly indicated that the European market offers U.S. speciality food suppliers an attractive export market opportunity.

A total of 81 companies, all members of the NASFT, participated in the pavilion. For 97 percent of the companies this was the first time they had exhibited at the SIAL. The pavilion generated over 100 information requests for more than 600 products.

NASFT plans a similar presence at the October 2001 ANUGA Food Show in Cologne, Germany, again assisted by FAS' MAP program. ■

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