Michigan Specialty Crop Industries Visit C. America

The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) along with the Michigan Specialty Crop Industry visited Panama and Costa Rica the first week of February to look at new export opportunities.

Michigan companies participating in the trade mission were Graceland Fruit Inc., Frankfort; Cooperative Elevator, Pigeon; Cherry Marketing Institute, DeWitt; and the Michigan Bean Commission, St. Johns.

“The international trade delegation is just one way MDA is promoting Michigan’s quality agriculturally-based products as well to expand our markets and diversify our state’s economy,” said Don Koivisto, MDA director.

“Safeguarding and expanding international markets for Michigan products are critical to growing our state’s second largest industry.”

The goal of the mission was to promote the export of Michigan specialty crops - fruit, dry beans, and vegetables - into the Central American market. The trip provided a great opportunity to learn about the economic situations in each of the countries and the opportunities associated with the CAFTA-DR Free Trade Agreement.

Companies had a chance to visit retail establishments to see how consumers in each of the countries shop and what U.S. products are already available in the market.

One-on-one meetings were held in Panama and Costa Rica where the Michigan companies had a chance to showcase their products to potential buyers.

Left: Graceland Fruit Inc. of Frankfort, MI met with interested buyers and showcased products
Below: Attendees toured a dry bean processing facility

Capitalize on the Market Builder Service

The Market Builder service is a cost-effective two-tier service that is customized to your unique product and target market.

The service includes a market scan to assess potential in a market and relevant competition followed by a rep finder to help you reach potential importers. Market Builder also assesses the import requirements for your product, vital for effective and sustained trade connections.

The service arranges meetings with importers and distributors who are uniquely qualified and vetted to handle your products.
Attendees Learned Best Export Practices at a February Van Andel Trade Center Seminar Event in Grand Rapids

The Van Andel Global Trade Center along with the International Marketing Program at MDA hosted an educational export seminar in Grand Rapids on February 18.

The event, “Global Opportunities for Michigan Food Industry” focus was for agriculture and food companies and featured a speaker on payment, a speaker on logistical handling, and Jamie Zmitko-Somers spoke on Food Export Association’s available assistance programs.

The logistical section featured Bob Roubitchek who focused on the aspects of consolidation and ensuring payment once the product is sold. Martha Gabrielse from JP Morgan Chase discussed the different payment options associated with international trade. She suggested using banks that have an international office and that have connections to financiers overseas.

Meet One-on-One with Interested Global Buyers

The International Marketing Program at MDA is pleased to announce two opportunities to meet with interested and pre qualified buyers for your products. Buyers’ Missions are a valuable chance to forge new trade ties with global buyers.

Meetings with international buyers from Canada, Central and South America, South East Asia, and the Middle East will last 30 minutes and are prearranged based on your preferred markets.

The Buyers’ Mission at the National Restaurant Association’s Show is held in conjunction with this event on May 22-25. Meetings are conveniently held right on the show floor and it is a great opportunity to meet with international buyers without the expense and hassle of traveling.

Buyers are primarily interested in HRI/ Foodservice products, however some are interested in other products as well (such as gourmet and ingredients).

A panel of successful exporters was also featured and shared their experiences of the international marketing process. The focus was how they started exporting and ultimately how they turned contacts into successful sales. Martin Andree told attendees of his experience starting to export.

He told the story of how a Japanese buyer approached him at a show, and using Food Export Association’s Food Show Plus! services and assistance, Andree was able to identify this buyer as reputable. This relationship has grown into regular shipments of 20-foot containers. Koeze products have gone as far China, Europe, Chile and the United Arab Emirates.

Meet One-on-One with Interested Global Buyers

The second opportunity is the Midwest Buyers Mission. This unique event is coming to East Lansing, Michigan on July 26. Meetings with international buyers from Canada, Central and South America, South East Asia, and the Middle East will last 30 minutes and are prearranged based on your preferences.

Buyers are interested in wide range of products including ethnic foods, healthy foods, HRI/Foodservice, retail, and more. Contact Beverly Wilkins at wilkinsb@msu.edu for more information. Both events are low-cost options.

The Global Business Club of Mid Michigan is hosting a half-day seminar and luncheon “Better Understanding Export Practices.” The Featured Keynote speaker is Walters Gardens of Zeeland Michigan, 2008 Michigan Agricultural Exporter of the Year. Morning sessions will feature a panel of successful exporters from various sectors of industry, hedging against foreign currency risk, and protocol for international business travel. Space is limited, so register today. Contact Beverly Wilkins at wilkinsb@msu.edu.

We appreciate your active participation with us, and we’re hoping you would contribute a brief export success story. As state and federal budgets tighten, we need to express the value of our products and services. In order to complete a success story, simply fill out a short form HERE or contact us at (517) 241-4835.

Thank you for your assistance with this and your sustained participation in our programs and services.

If you have questions regarding how this information is used, please be sure to let us know.

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