Walters Gardens is “Exporter of the Year”

The International Marketing program, in tandem with the Food Export Association of the Midwest, hosted “Tapping into the Mexican Market” Export Seminar on August 18 at the Kellogg Center.

Eighteen companies attended to learn more about the possibilities of exporting to Mexico. Speakers included a market expert, financier, Food Export Association Representative, and a logistics provider. Raul Caballero, Food Export Association’s “In-Market” representative presented on the Mexican market potential and export considerations.

Scott Hibbard, VP of Financing at Comerica bank in Grand Rapids, spoke on the importance of financing in the exporting process. He detailed the payment methods, how to ensure payment and how to work with credit and the EXIM bank.

Tammy Loeman of Kuehne + Nagel Global Logistics spoke about cross border transit and logistical concerns.

Jasmine Scott, of the Food Export Association-Midwest presented on the various services and upcoming events to promote your product internationally.

To learn more about market potential, call (517) 241-3628.
Mark your calendar for upcoming Michigan pavilions opportunities at upcoming trade shows.

Food Marketing Institute at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center in May 2010 is home to the U.S. Food Export Showcase (USFES). To learn more about FMI 2010, visit their web site HERE. The American Food Fair Pavilion at the National Restaurant Association’s annual NRA Show is May 22-25, 2010 in Chicago. NRA attracts buyers from around the United States and abroad and participation in the Michigan pavilion can link you to retail buyers from the U.S. and abroad. Visit the NRA Show web site HERE for more information. Food Export Association also offers a Buyer’s Mission allowing you to formally meet with qualified and interested international buyers at the NRA show.

If you are interested in exhibiting at FMI or the American Food Fair Pavilion at NRA in 2010, please contact Jamie Zmitko-Somers at (517) 241-3628.

More information will follow; watch for updates via e-mail.

Focused Trade Mission yields strong trade connections

Three US companies traveled as part of the Focused Trade Mission to Philippines and Thailand in early August. A total of 11 companies sent product for market analysis. Graceland Fruit Inc., of Frankfort, Michigan sent dried fruit products for market analysis and buyer meetings. The event included informational seminars, retail tours, one-on-one buyers meetings, access to in-market representatives, a chef demonstration by David Feder highlighting U.S. products. There is great market potential in the Philippines and Thailand due to consumer preferences for US goods and market development. The Philippine and Thai markets are becoming more consumer oriented with a focus on value-added goods.

Japan is the largest food importer in the world making it a very receptive market to U.S. goods. In fact, the United States is Japan’s largest and most reliable supplier of food – a critical and mutually beneficial relationship for both countries. Japan imported $14.5 billion of U.S. agricultural products in fiscal year 2008, more than the EU27 combined.

Additionally Japanese consumers are regarded as “trend-setters” among the Asian countries and are increasingly interested in a diverse variety of foods. Japanese have long been willing to pay a premium for high quality food products. Japanese prefer specialty goods and consumer oriented products. But, with the recent economic downturn, luxury and expensive imports are becoming less attractive.

In seven years operating in Japan, through a subsidiary called Seiyu, Wal-Mart Stores has never turned a profit. But sales have risen every month since November, and this year, the retailer expects to make a profit. Retail analysts, economists and consumers all say that the shift away from luxury could be a permanent one.

In supermarket aisles, sales of lowly common vegetables — like bean sprouts, onions and local mushrooms — are up. Instead of the famed $100 melons, Japanese shoppers are buying cheap bananas, pushing imports up to records.

Branding and packaging are becoming less important as a costly conscious market emerges.

Free export consulting through the Michigan Export Growth Program

The Michigan Export Growth Program, a service of Michigan State University’s Center for International Business Education and Research (MSU-CIBER), helps small and medium sized companies develop both short-term export goals and a long-term sustainable plan. With grant assistance from the Ford Foundation, these services are free of charge. A well equipped staff of full-time international business faculty, MBA candidates, and undergraduate students works with your company to develop a marketing plan free of charge. Some agricultural and food companies have already taken advantage of this service and space is running out.

Increase your international competitiveness, call the MSU-CIBER today at (517) 353-4336 or visit their website HERE.