

Request for Proposals Central America In-Market Representative

Background

The Food Export Association of the Midwest USA (Food Export – Midwest) and Food Export USA – Northeast (Food Export – Northeast) are not-for-profit export associations and whose primary function is to develop export markets for midwestern and northeastern (respectively) producers and processors of value-added food and agricultural products. Our members include state agricultural promotion agencies from twelve midwestern and ten northeastern states.

Both groups are participants in the Market Access Program (MAP), a federal program handled by the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The MAP is intended to boost the export of value-added food and agricultural products from the U.S. through a partnership between FAS and approximately 75 other industry-based trade organizations. This includes primarily commodity-specific groups, as well as two other unaffiliated regional groups similar to Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast that handle the southern and western regions of the U.S.

The products covered for export promotion by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast include a wide variety of processed and semi-processed products found throughout the retail, foodservice, and food processing sectors. These include products or derivations of meat, dairy, poultry, seafood, grains, fruits and vegetables, salty and savory snack foods, confections, beans, sauces and condiments, pet foods, beverages, canned foods, animal feeds, bakery products, pasta and many others. Marketing channels include mass market retail, specialty foods, convenience foods, private label, healthy/organic, food ingredients, frozen foods, and others.

Food Export - Midwest and Food Export- Northeast are independent organizations that have been engaged in a strategic alliance since April of 2000. Through this alliance, the strategy and tactics of the organizations have been aligned so that the activities and services of each group are very similar with differences based primarily on geographic focus. Food Export - Midwest focuses on midwestern exporters and a series of nine overseas target markets, including China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, South America, Mexico, and India. Food Export -Northeast targets northeastern exporters and seven overseas markets, including France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Central America, Canada, the Middle East and the Caribbean. By collaborating, the activities and services of each organization are open to participation by companies from the other region. The net effect is that exporters in the Midwest and Northeast have access to a larger range of export promotion opportunities, while the limited staff at Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast can focus on specific market development opportunities.

The states that are members of Food Export- Midwest include: Illinois, Wisconsin, Kansas, Minnesota, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Indiana,

Ohio, and Missouri. Food Export – Northeast encompasses: New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Delaware, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

More information about Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast is available on the Internet at: www.foodexport.org and www.foodexportusa.org.

Scope of Work

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are seeking one or more individuals/companies to be their in-market representative and assist in the execution of all responsibilities pursuant to their market development activities in the Central America market. These activities include Food Show PLUS!, Market Builder service, Focused Trade Missions, various buyers missions, market research, special projects and trade servicing for the fiscal year. The selected in-market representative will be responsible for the aforementioned activities during our 2013 Fiscal Year from February 1 to December 31, 2013.

Please provide a quotation for each of the following services:

1. Trade Servicing

Scope of Work

The responsibilities of the selected in-market representative in carrying out trade servicing may include, but are not limited to:

- Visiting with potential importers, distributors, retailers, and food service and food ingredient buyers and developing lists of these companies that are the most reputable, experienced, and in the best position to deal with our companies.
- Developing and maintaining a database of potential importers and buyers, their contact information, and their product interests.
- Conducting outreach and educational efforts on behalf of Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast to encourage participation in our programs and services including organizing Importer Seminars
- Developing a list of recipients and Distribution of Food Export's newsletters, including **US Foodlink**, and the like. As well as dissemination of the newsletter.
- Liaising with USDA/FAS Posts on a regular basis
- Informing Food Export USA – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast of market development opportunities that arise throughout the year and activities that should be included in our Unified Export Strategy (UES).

- Traveling to the U.S. to visit with Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast to learn more about their operations, activities, and companies.
- Promoting Food Export's Online Product Catalog; and generating Trade Lead inquiries for dissemination to Midwest and Northeast companies.
- Assisting with Branded Program inquiries as requested.
- Assisting our state marketing specialists on a limited basis.

In addition to the above, the in-market representative is expected to assist Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast to:

Track sales and other performance measures resulting from all events in which services are provided. Assist in documenting performance results by completing evaluations using Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast standard evaluation formats, where appropriate. Generate success stories as results warrant. Identify problems which may be inhibiting sales and in obtaining evaluation results.

Refer participating importers and exporters to other relevant services offered by the Food Export –Midwest and Food Export - Northeast, the FAS offices and other service providers that can further assist them in achieving increased sales/purchases of U.S. food and agricultural products.

The in-market representative will be responsible for providing a monthly report outlining the trade servicing completed and any results achieved.

Please quote on a per day basis.

2. Food Show PLUS!

Background

Food Show PLUS!sm is a trademarked service that provides U.S. companies with the information and support they need to be an effective exhibitor at an international trade show. We try to add value for exhibitors by focusing our efforts on maximizing their potential for developing leads, securing an importer/distributor, and realizing sales from the show. Ultimately, by being adequately prepared to do business at the show, companies make the best possible use of the trade show environment and improve their chances for building new sales relationships. The trade shows and activity dates will be determined later.

Food Show PLUS!sm will be offered through the selected in-market representative. A member state representative, staff member or a contracted activity coordinator will attend the show, and coordinate all activities, and in general, provide onsite manage of the activity. Publicity and recruitment for each Food Show PLUS!sm event is handled by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast staff, with support from each of our member states. Participating companies pay a modest participation fee to help offset

Food Export's cost of doing the event. We conduct an on-site evaluation plus a follow-up evaluation after six months.

Scope of Work

The Food Show PLUS! services offered vary by show, and are selected based on requirements of the market; services offered by show organizers and the local FAS office and Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast's ability to provide effective support. Every attempt is made not to duplicate services offered from another source.

The types of services considered for each Food Show PLUS!sm trade show include:

- Pre-show product research regarding pricing, import regulation, competitor analysis;
- Targeted invitation of qualified buyers to exhibitor booths, buyer-seller introductions and setting-up appointments;
- Translation of up to 2 pages of basic exhibitor material (usually company or product information), if necessary, into appropriate language(s) for show visitors;
- Providing technical (food industry) interpreters at the show booth, if necessary;
- On site show assistance by local in-market representative;
- In-market briefing and local industry tours, as appropriate;
- Qualifying exhibitors' leads from the show, and conducting background checks on the top few;
- Writing and sending a generic follow up letter in the local language to all contacts;
- Assisting eligible exhibitors with obtaining **Branded Program** reimbursement;
- Providing a final report.

The selected in-market representative will be responsible for planning, promoting, and managing the Food Show PLUS!sm service at trade shows. Total participation averages 10 companies per show, depending on recruitment.

At a minimum, the in-market representative is responsible for:

- 1) Developing an executive summary of goals, objectives, plans and budget to administer the project, and a detailed timeline for completion of each phase of the project plan in close coordination with the Activity Coordinator. Budget should include a total cost to administer the project.
- 2) Communicating project details to the appointed Activity Coordinator.
- 3) Utilizing promotional materials developed by the Activity Coordinator to promote the Food Show PLUS!sm service to companies registered for the trade show. The in-market representative would be required to contact companies to promote the service.
- 4) Translating exporter profiles into the appropriate language, if necessary. Exporters must receive final translated version one month before the show. Exporters will be responsible for printing profiles on their own company letterhead or brochure materials. (Translation is limited to a maximum of 2 pages of text per company.)

5) Conducting a competitive product survey of the market in the city in which the show takes place. The product survey will detail current product brands selling in the market, price points, etc., and for retail products, packaging size/description, shelf space, and other related information. The retail product survey includes store checks in at least three retail outlets and for 3 competitive brands per outlet. These product surveys need to be completed before the show.

6) Providing an adequate amount of interpreters during the show hours, if necessary, to serve the participating companies. The in-market representative is responsible for hiring qualified interpreters with knowledge of the food industry and applicable terminology, and managing their services during show. Instructions/expectations should be provided to each interpreter prior to the show. Training or orientation will be conducted the morning of the show for interpreters and companies.

7) Attending the show to supervise all activities and interpreters.

8) Conducting daily meetings with the Activity Coordinator while at the show.

9) Providing bi-weekly progress reports and maintaining close communication with the Activity Coordinator specifically on the planning process.

10) Communicating with the show management to obtain a list of U.S. companies who sign up for the show and communicate said list to the Activity Coordinator.

11) Invite appropriate buyers to FSP!sm Participants' booths and set-up appointments, where possible, for example, invite major importers of ketchup to ketchup exhibitors' booths.

12) Providing a detailed final report inclusive of:

- a. Executive Summary
- b. Review of Project
- c. List of Participants and corresponding company evaluations
- d. Summary of project and each segment
- e. Evaluation of each project segment
 - company profiles
 - product surveys
 - translators
 - informal retail tours
 - press releases
- f. Recommendations to improve services at the trade show or future activities in the Canadian market
- g. Representative comments and evaluation results

At a minimum, the in-market representative's proposal should include costs associated with providing the services mentioned above. An individual quotation for each of the services per company is desired, as well as an Administrative cost. The in-market representative will be paid based on services provided.

Based on our experience, we estimate a Food Show PLUS!sm activity will require approximately 60 days of work.

3. Market Builder

Background

The Market Builder Service is designed to assist U.S. companies to learn whether their products are appropriate for a given export market, and if so, to establish a base for securing an appropriate distributor relationship in that market. The service is provided by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast through their network of in-market representatives. The service consists of two independent packages. Although companies are encouraged to sign up for both packages, companies may choose to participate in one or both packages detailed below depending on their needs and goals in the market. Participating companies will need to choose a product and identify the export market for which they want the service to be conducted. For the Market Scan component in-market representative will have 30 days after samples of participants are received to complete the scope of work.

Scope of Work

Package A – Market Scan.

1. Store Check & Distribution Analysis
The in-market representative will assist U.S. food companies to determine whether products similar to theirs are being sold in the overseas market. The in-market representative will create a report that lists the brand names, package sizes, regular retail prices, current price specials, shelf space allotments, and the importer's name and contact information. The store check report will be based on visits to at least three different supermarket chains in a major city in the market selected.
2. Competitive Product Shopping
The in-market representative will purchase samples of similar and competing products sold in the market and will send these samples' packaging to the U.S. company. This will offer firsthand information about the type of packaging, labeling, and ingredients the competition is using.
3. Importation Analysis
The in-market representative will create a report that identifies import regulations and restrictions affecting the importation of said product into the country. Specifically, the report must include a statement listing:
 - Permits and/or certificates required to import a product into said country
 - Tariff and Duty details per product (Tariff Barriers).
 - Non-tariff trade barriers including ingredient analysis, import quotas, etc..
 - Current labeling requirements including GMO statements, etc.
 - Shelf-life requirements

4. Distributor Referrals

The in-market representative will forward product samples, product brochures or literature, company profile and indicative export pricing to six appropriate and pre-qualified importers. The representative will create a report containing feedback from at least three importers regarding said product. Importers should provide feedback on the following qualities:

- Package size
- Type of Packaging, i.e., bottle, can, carton, etc.
- Labeling
- Taste
- Appearance or visual appeal to customers
- Price
- Marketability

5. Target Importer List

The in-market representative will provide a list of potential importers, including those involved in the distributor referrals above. Importers will be prioritized according to interest in the product. The list will include contact name and contact information. This list will also provide a brief summary of each importer's profile such as distribution, existing product lines and other available, public information.

Package B – Rep Finder

1. Distributor Referrals

The in-market representative will forward product samples, product brochures or literature, company profile and indicative export pricing to six appropriate and pre-qualified importers. The in-market representative will create a report containing feedback from at least three importers regarding said product. Importers should provide feedback on the following qualities:

- Package size
- Type of Packaging, i.e., bottle, can, carton, etc.
- Labeling
- Taste
- Appearance or visual appeal to customers
- Price
- Marketability

2. Target Importer List

The in-market representative will provide a list of potential importers, including those involved in the distributor referrals above. Importers will be rated and prioritized, with contact names and numbers included. This list will provide a brief summary of each importer's business with regard to size, distribution, experience and product lines.

3. In-Market Assistance

Pre-Arrangement of Meetings and Meeting Facilitation - The in-market representative will arrange at least three one-on-one appointments between

participating U.S. companies and targeted importers in said country. The Representative will make arrangements for the time, place, interpretation and other details of the meetings. The in-market representative will make personal introductions and accompany the U.S. exporter in the above-mentioned meetings with importers. The in-market representative will assist with communication or interpretation, if necessary, and moderate the sessions. The Representative will provide the participating U.S. company with a candid evaluation of the meetings and make recommendations for future action steps. The in-market representative will arrange for and facilitate the above services but the participating company will be responsible for the payment on rentals and other expenses incurred during the visit to the market.

This service is provided on an as-needed basis. Participation varies by market but on average, 10 companies register for this service per market, each requiring approximately ten days of work.

Please provide quotes for each package of the Market Builder service and for providing the combined packages per company.

4. Buyers' Missions

Background

The Food Export – Midwest/Food Export Northeast's approach to organizing buying teams is to first identify sectors of the food industry in which their suppliers are competitive. These sectors include Grocery Products, Specialty Foods, Seafood, Food Ingredients, Private Label, Natural/Organic, Food Service (HRI), Pet Food, and Feed Ingredients and Additives. Next, markets that are appropriate for that segment of the food industry are targeted, and important buyers within these sectors are selected.

Buyers are invited to travel to the U.S. to participate in a broad series of private one-on-one meetings with U.S. suppliers. These meetings offer an unparalleled opportunity for each to learn more about the other's business, product line, marketing requirements or capabilities, strategies, opportunities, requirements and limitations.

Scope of Work

The responsibilities of the selected in-market representative in carrying out a Buyers Mission are as follows:

- 1) Work with Activity Coordinator to determine needs of the Buyers Mission.
- 2) Pre-qualify and recruit appropriate buyers, including any recommendations made by the local FAS Office.
- 3) Communicate closely with buyers to understand their buying interests.
- 4) Provide a detailed profile of each buyer to the Activity Coordinator.
- 5) Assist Activity Coordinator with details of the itinerary.
- 6) Assist Activity Coordinator to understand any special/cultural needs the buyers may have.

- 7) Work with Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast and their travel agents to make appropriate travel arrangements.
- 8) Depending on the mission, the in-market representative may be required to attend the mission to assist with various tasks, such as interpretation, communication and general management/logistics of mission.
- 9) Provide input into retail tour needs.
- 10) Assist with follow-up after the mission is completed to understand the results of the mission (i.e., sales made).
- 11) If needed, assist Activity Coordinator or Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast with six-month evaluation process.

Please quote on a per buyer basis.

5. Focused Trade Missions

Background

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast and their member states work with small and medium-size food companies. Among the challenges of working with these companies is their lack of understanding and exposure to many markets. Often times, these companies try to sell their products and develop business relationships in countries they have not traveled to or toured in order to familiarize themselves with the basics of that market. This lack of understanding leaves U.S. exporters with only product specifications and prices as tools to market to foreign markets and often ends in failure.

The Focused Trade Mission is designed to offer U.S. exporters both a sales opportunity and educational experience. This project will take advantage of established relationships and programs available to U.S. exporters and provide a unique opportunity to travel to a target market not anchored to exhibiting at a tradeshow. Often, cost and time prohibit U.S. tradeshow exhibitors from the opportunity to study the market outside the tradeshow walls.

The Focused Trade Mission will take advantage of the following services and service providers: FAS Overseas office, Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast Representative, Market Builder service, the Branded Program and member state Representatives to offer U.S. companies a first hand experience of the target market and highlight opportunities and constraints. Coupled with the educational component of this mission, there will be scheduled meetings and a tabletop reception to put U.S. exporters in contact with potential Indian buyers.

Scope of Work

Total participation averages 8 companies per mission or more, depending on the recruitment. The responsibilities of the selected in-market representative in carrying out a Focused Trade Mission are as follows:

- 1) Develop an executive summary of goals, objectives, plans and budget to administer the project, and a detailed timeline for completion of each phase of the project plan

in close coordination with the Activity Coordinator. Budget should include a total cost to administer the project for 8 companies.

- 2) Communicate project details to the appointed Activity Coordinator. Conduct Package A of the Market Builder service (Market Scan described above) for the Mission participants.
- 3) Conduct a market briefing in conjunction with FAS Office. The in-market representative will coordinate with the FAS Office to present a market briefing to the participating companies. If agreed by FAS, the briefing could take place in FAS facilities. In-market representative will make the request to the FAS office as soon as the project is approved.
- 4) Organize pre-scheduled one-on-one meetings. In-market representative will set-up a number of appointments with importers, distributors, supermarket buyers, etc. The appointments will take place in the importers' offices and contractor will coordinate the transportation to all these appointments.
- 5) Arrange supermarket tours. In-market representative will organize visits to different retail stores as part of the learning experience of visiting the market. During the supermarket tours, companies will be able to learn who is doing business in the market, what types of products are selling, and what prices various products are selling at in the market. Transportation will be coordinated by the Representative.
- 6) Conduct a Table Top Show and Reception. In-market representative will organize a table-top display of participating companies products and, where feasible, a reception including sampling of the products being showcased. The table-top display can be held at the FAS facilities, if available. Importers, distributors and buyers will be invited to the reception (a minimum of buyers should be confirmed). The table top-display should be held for at least half day in order to give opportunity for buyers to show up anytime within that time. In-market representative will produce invitations to the showcase and will send them via courier to all local trade contacts.
- 7) Transportation coordination. In-market representative will coordinate the in-country transportation of all the mission participants. Passenger vans will be rented as they are needed.
- 8) Interpreters. In-market representative will coordinate hiring additional interpreters, so all the participating companies are able to get clear translation/interpretation during the complete trade mission.
- 9) Hotel Reservation. In-market representative will be in charge of arranging hotel accommodations for all Mission participants at federal per diem rate. (Exporter/participants will pay their own lodging and meal expenses).

- 10) Importation of samples into the market. In-market representative will coordinate the importation of the samples into the market.
- 11) In-market representative will arrange for the printing of a mission brochure containing information on all the Mission participants, including contact information and company and/or product profiles. Approximately 500 copies (or a sufficient number of copies according to the needs of each particular market) may be printed in a double letter size page. Each participating exporter will use this as a handout during the showcase, the reception and during the one-on-one business appointments. Any brochures left will be left at the FAS office to hand-out to people inquiring for information.

Based on our experience, we estimate a Focused Trade Mission activity will require approximately 50 days of work plus the days of the mission. Please provide a quote for each company participant and an Administration fee.

6. Market Research, Development and Promotion

Scope of Work

The responsibilities of the selected in-market representative in carrying out market research, development and promotion are as follows:

- Undertake industry and/or sector studies as requested;
- Identify and recommend promotional opportunities in the food service, food retail, and food ingredient sectors of the market;
- Develop and assist with implementation of promotional activities within the guidelines specified by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast including negotiating promotional terms, assisting with in-store merchandising and display, development of promotional concepts and materials, etc;
- Assist in ensuring that products from the Midwest and Northeast are included in the promotion;
- Submit report on the activity and provide required evaluation results;
- Perform other specific consulting work as requested by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast.

Please quote on a per day basis.

Requirements

The in-market representative must be able to cite previous experience in market research, market assessment and evaluation, and market promotion/public relations activities.

Previous experience with not-for-profit groups, international marketing, food and/or agricultural groups will be considered favorably. The contractor must also be financially and legally capable of entering into and executing a contract for the above stated projects. In addition, please provide the following information:

1. Name of Entity (as it would appear on contract/invoices)
2. Complete Mailing Address
3. EIN/TIN/SS number (or if an overseas entity, the equivalent tax identification number in your country)
4. Type of Structure (choose one): ☐ Individual ☐ Corporation
☐ LLC ☐ Partnership ☐ Sole Proprietorship

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are not liable for any costs associated with any company's response to this RFP. Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast reserve the right to not award this contract if, in the opinion of the evaluators, no suitable proposal is received. The awarded contract may be renewed for up to three (3) years.

The selected contractor must agree to abide by Food Export –Midwest and Food Export – Northeast Terms and Conditions:

Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast do not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, national origin or ancestry, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation or military status. Persons with disabilities who require alternate means of communication of program information should contact us. Food Export - Midwest and Food Export – Northeast do not tolerate fraud in their programs or services, and expect all participants to comply with our code of ethics (www.foodexport.org/codeofethics).

If you suspect any instance of fraud, please contact our Ethics Reporting Line at: www.foodexport.ethicspoint.com or 1-855-727-6715 (domestic toll-free.)

We reserve the right to deny services to any firm or individual which, in the sole opinion of Food Export – Midwest or Food Export – Northeast does not comply with MAP; FAS; Food Export – Midwest or Food Export – Northeast regulations or policies, or otherwise reflect positively on them; their members states; FAS; or USDA, in pursuit of their mission of increasing food and agricultural exports, or for continued public support for their programs. For more information please see our Terms and Conditions located at www.foodexport.org/termsandconditions.

The selected contractor must agree to abide by the provisions contained in Section 202 of Executive Order 11246 (30 Federal Register 12319) with regard to employment and contracting practices. In addition, Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast require that its contractors may not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, national origin or ancestry, race, color, religion, creed, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation, military status or membership in the military reserve.

The deadline for proposals is 12:00 noon ET on January 25th, 2013. Faxed or E-Mailed proposals will be accepted. Please forward to:

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