

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Post: San Jose

AMERICAS FOOD AND BEVERAGE SHOW

Report Categories:

CSSF Activity Evaluation

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Report Highlights:

The Americas Food and Beverage Show was held in Miami Beach Convention Center from November 14-15, 2011

General Information:

AMERICAS FOOD AND BEVERAGE SHOW November 14-15, 2011

OVERVIEW

From November 14 to 15, 2011 the Agricultural Marketing Specialist from OAA San Jose, escorted a delegation of 64 Costa Rican participants to the 15th Annual Americas Food and Beverage Show, held at the Miami Beach Convention Center. The show was a great opportunity for both U.S. exhibitors and the Costa Rican food retail and food service sector representatives to meet, make contacts, and learn about new products to import into Costa Rica.

The USMEF, USAPEEC and the USDEC joined efforts to host a cocktail for Latin American importers of meat, dairy and poultry products. That activity gave the importers and the Marketing Specialist the opportunity to meet with contacts from the United States as well as those from other countries.

The Costa Rican delegation consisted of importers and exporters ranging from general managers to marketing and purchasing managers.

As in the past, the Miami World Trade Center and NASDA offered two nights lodging and the base fare of the plane ticket to some of our key contacts. Also as part of that program, show organizers arranged one-on-one meetings for Costa Rican VIP invitees with some of the exhibitors interested in exporting to Costa Rica. These meetings were of great benefit to the VIPs since they had time to prepare for the meetings, view some of the products in advance and obtain complete information on samples, sizing, prices, and shipping duties.

Thanks to the new opportunities created by the CAFTA-DR agreement, Costa Rican importers were looking to use this food show to develop new business contacts, diversify their offerings and maximize their client portfolio by building new product lines.

The show organizers and FAS held a closing meeting on Tuesday, November 15th for all the FAS Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) leading delegations from each attending country (Venezuela, Nicaragua, Perú, Ecuador, Costa Rica and the Caribbean). During this meeting the FSNs provided feedback about the show setting, number of exhibitors, logistics, type of products, one-on-one meetings, etc. The general opinion is that the show is improving year by year. It is not a huge show, but there is a good range of products for the Latin American market. Several of the participants mentioned that they made excellent contacts, found what they needed and are starting negotiations with some of the exhibitors.

In terms of the World Trade Center organization, there was a problem with recruitment for the show this year due to the proximity to the Christmas season; importers did not want to be away from their business due to the load of work they have in the busy season of November and December.

The alternative date of organizing the show in November is not a good idea, as none of the exporters will be ready to ship for December. If one objective of the show is to do preliminary business for the Christmas season then the show needs to take place in September of each year.

Since the World Trade Center was running a different show one week before the AFB, our posts suffered the lack of assistance from the organizer due to a personnel (staff) constraint.

By talking to NASDA representative, everyone mentioned that the process they are using for air ticket issuance and hotel reservations for those participants accepted by NASDA has to be revised, since more staff needs to be hired to be responsible for it.

Although there is not yet complete information regarding on-site purchasing, we received some information on beginning negotiations between Costa Rican importers and U.S. exporters. For example, to diversify their product line, a Costa Rican general gourmet food importer is negotiating with a processed meat company for breakfast sausages, bacon and ham. Others are in the process of analyzing new products and offers.

There is an annual competition for chefs at this show. Participation by Costa Rican chefs would be an attractive incentive for Costa Rican hotels and restaurants and for their chefs to earn recognition and learn about U.S. products. Post could seek participants through the Costa Rican Chefs' Association. Organizers expressed concerns about purchasing ingredients and tools and suggested that it would be much better that the organizers buy the base ingredients and charge a fee to the participants. Organizers need to have all the necessary equipment on-site because it is difficult for participants to travel with their cooking supplies.

Organizers also have the idea to proceed with planning a "bakery competition" for next year.

Organizers are looking forward to visiting some of the Latin American countries to more efficiently promote this event. Post is willing to support that visit.

On November 15th, Agricultural Marketing Specialist from Costa Rica visited SYSCO Foods facility in South Miami with a delegation from Panama and Dominican Republic which was organized by the USMEF representative in Mexico. This visit was a significant asset

GENERAL COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE SHOW:

This year, in terms of organization and communication with posts, the Miami Convention Center and organizers of the show were very efficient

Canada participated with a national pavilion, as well as Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Jamaica.

One highly positive and promising development from the show was the willingness of American exporters to work with the needs of Costa Rican importers. While many Costa Rican importers are interested in ordering a variety of products from various American companies, they have a unique issue when it comes to ordering and shipping.

Because of the size of Costa Rica and the smaller size of its market, many Costa Rican importers are interested in importing the right amount of product to fit their needs. For example, importers may not want several large containers of an item immediately, especially if they are bringing a new product to Costa Rica. They prefer smaller amounts so they can market test and position the new product within Costa Rica, and also measure sales of the product before placing larger orders. Not only do Costa Rican importers prefer to customize the amounts of product they order, but for smaller orders, they prefer to have these orders sent to a hub in Miami to be consolidated and shipped to Costa Rica in as few containers as possible. This helps maximize their efficiency and reduce costs.

Therefore, given these particular needs, many Costa Rican importers were pleased to meet a number of medium-size American companies exhibiting at the Food and Beverage show who are willing to work with their requests regarding product ordering.

CONCLUSION

The variety of products on display was greatly expanded as well. There was steady traffic for two days which was indicative of the high interest of visitors in the pavilion's product offerings. For the FAS San Jose FSN attending this show, it was a great opportunity to touch base with cooperators, state groups and meet new U.S. food and beverage suppliers.

COST

Total expenses for the San José FSN to attend this event - \$ 1,735.00