



## Big Picture Report: November 2022

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### SUSTA Launches a New Way to Connect All Year Long: CONNEX 365

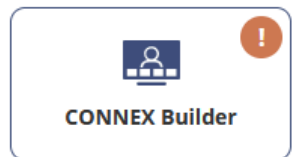
#### How it Started

In the fall of 2020, SUSTA and our member states began brainstorming a way for you, our Southern U.S. participants, to showcase your products online while unable to travel. Initially, the concept was to create an online trade show that actually looked like a trade show, with exhibition halls and booths.

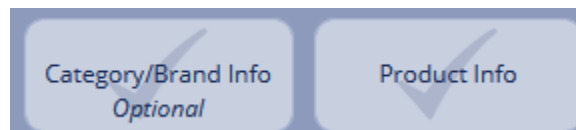
As we began to flesh out the idea, we quickly realized that a lot of time would go into making it look like a trade show rather than taking advantage of more modern concepts. So we re-imagined what it could be without the trade show trappings, and we focused instead on the idea of a company telling their story and uploading their products.

#### How it is Going

The result is [CONNEX 365](#), which is launching this week. Through your [MySUSTA account](#), you can build out your company's CONNEX page using the CONNEX Builder. We want to allow for as much customization of a company's page while also keeping the site streamlined and easy to browse. You can add your logo, a company video and tag line, as well as a full description. There is even an opportunity to select a color that matches your logo and will be your CONNEX accent color. The primary contact can also upload a contact image to make it even more personal.



If there was a challenge in creating CONNEX, it was making something that worked for companies with 80 products and for companies with four products! One way we tackled this is to give the option of grouping products into categories or brands. Using this option, a company with 80 products can organize their large inventory in a way that is easy to browse. But a company with only a few products can skip the Category/Brand option and just input their products. Note: Each product is required to have an image, name and description; other product specifications are optional.



#### It Takes Two to Tango

Naturally, this site is only valuable if foreign buyers are on it too. Once enough of our participants build out their pages, we will start the process of recruiting foreign buyers through the Foreign Agriculture Service's Agricultural Trade Offices and our foreign consultants. All of the foreign buyers who get access to the site will be vetted. They will then be able to log into the site and browse. We built in an easy Search function where they can search by keyword or by product type, company type, region of export or channel (retail, food service, etc).

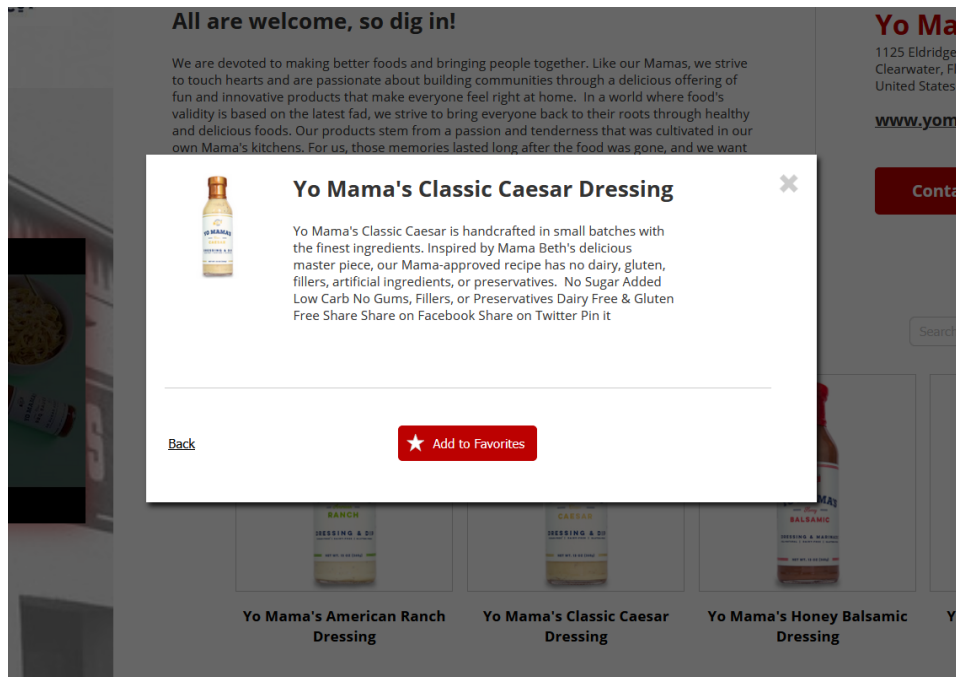
As your potential customers browse, they can "favorite" specific products in which they are interested. Then, they can reach out to the company with a message, including the products that they indicated are



a favorite. That initial contact will be sent through the system via email to your company contacts. After that, it is up to you to follow up with the foreign buyer.

### Tips for Making this a Success

One thing we know is that exporting is all about relationship building. CONNEX 365 is a stepping stone into a relationship, so make sure you add things like your profile photo, a video and a full description of your company. The foreign buyers want to know about your family business, or how you started in your garage, or your commitment to low cost, or why sustainability is a priority for your company. Fill in as many blanks as you can and tell your company's authentic story. And then, when a buyer reaches out, respond! They, too, are looking for a reliable and trustworthy partner, and someone who responds in a timely manner will gain trust more easily.



### How to Get Started

We have several tools to get you started, so take your pick:

- [This document](#) lists all the information and images (including image size) that you will need to build your CONNEX page
- [This short video](#) shows you how to build your page
- [We have another short video](#) that shows you CONNEX 365 from the foreign buyer's perspective