



## **Request for Proposal**

### **Singapore Blue Catfish Promotions**

### **4AS73**

#### **The Organization**

The Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA) is a 501c non-profit international trade development organization, which combines federal, state and industry resources for export market development. SUSTA's member states include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

SUSTA cooperates with its member state Departments of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to carry out programs that will increase U.S. agricultural exports. SUSTA promotes U.S. agricultural products in over 30 countries by way of international trade exhibitions, trade missions, in store promotions, export seminars, and point-of-sale promotions. It also provides export assistance to small businesses to offset their export promotion costs.

#### **Background**

SUSTA's funding is almost entirely derived from federal market development program funds, which is administered by the USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS). The organization is tasked with promoting exports of high-value food and agricultural products of U.S. origin and the funds must be utilized according to federal regulations outlined by USDA.

SUSTA assists companies in promoting products internationally through two basic types of programs: The Regional Agricultural Promotion Program "Branded" program and the Regional Agricultural Promotion Program "Generic" program:

- SUSTA's 50% CostShare (Branded) program assists individual companies to carry out their own marketing activities internationally by reimbursing them for 50% of eligible promotional expenses. Companies must be small according to the Small Business Administration (SBA) guidelines and their products must be of at least 50% U.S. agricultural origin. Products promoted have been as diverse as rice, seafood, alligator hides, snack foods and hot sauce. Companies apply for funding on a fiscal year basis, with marketing and promotional activities taking place year-round.

- SUSTA's Global Events (Generic) activities are industry-wide projects managed by SUSTA staff and its member State Departments of Agriculture. Activities typically include trade missions, trade shows, store promotions, and trade seminars. Any company or cooperative with products of 50% or more U.S. agricultural origin are welcome to participate in SUSTA's Global Events.

### Scope of Work

SUSTA seeks a professional consultant or firm based in Singapore to develop and implement a comprehensive marketing strategy for Southern U.S. Blue Catfish. The consultant will coordinate closely with SUSTA's member State Department of Agriculture Activity Managers.

The Blue Catfish Promotion is a multi-faceted promotion to source seafood products from the U.S. to Singapore. The initiative would utilize an in-country consultant that would build trade relationships, determine what challenges the trade face in importing southern products, increase awareness and interest in the procurement of Southern U.S. blue catfish by retail and restaurant trade. The in-country consultant will identify the best opportunities to promote Southern blue catfish products in the Singapore market by assisting the association in identifying the best strategy to conduct marketing and promotional activities. **The time frame for the contract will be August 1, 2025, and end on December 31, 2026.**

Specific responsibilities strategy for the initiative would include:

- Provide examples of previous projects in the Singapore market and connections within seafood sales channels with importers, processors, restaurants, retailers, distributors, and institutions (state-owned and operated).
- Research the market potential for Southern blue catfish and identify industry specifications, product volumes that can be sold, and price points for whole frozen fish, filets, and value-added products.
- Develop new sales channels and manage buyer relationships.
- Identify and execute strategic partnerships with processors, importers, distributors, restaurants, institutions, and retailers to begin sales of blue catfish.
- Maintain a database of processors, importers, distributors, restaurants, institutions, and retailers contacts identified.
- Support companies with the completion and organization of all necessary documentation required for international shipments.
- Provide guidance on regulatory requirements for exporting catfish products, ensuring compliance with both U.S. and destination market standards.
- Offer expertise on the freight forwarding process, including timelines, documentation, and carrier coordination.
- Serve as a point of contact for participating companies to address questions or concerns related to logistics, regulations, documentation, or market entry procedures.

- Help ensure all products meet destination country specifications, including labeling, packaging, and quality standards.
- Notify the USDA Agricultural Trade Office of activities and project plans.
- Develop and implement communications/messaging, public relations campaigns, and events targeting wholesalers and consumers. Communications will include press releases, marketing/sales materials, and other necessary items. Marketing materials include promotional flyers, product specification sheets, and supplier lists.
- Identify online influencers to contract for social media postings.
- Develop a Chesapeake Bay Blue Catfish website in English and Mandarin to explain this new product. Information for this site can be sourced from the Virginia and Maryland blue catfish websites. Update this website throughout the project.
- Plan out and initiate wholesale and consumer events with product sampling. Year One will have three wholesale events, and Year Two will have two retailer/consumer-focused events and one wholesale event.
- Identify and contract a local chef to sample products featuring local cuisine at events.
- Plan out and secure booth space at industry trade shows. In the project's first year, the tradeshow will be Seafood Expo Asia in Singapore. The second year could look into a new show, such as Food and Hotel Asia in Singapore. Coordinate both artwork and meetings with buyers.
- Develop metrics for the project and monitor and report on activities and sales monthly.

## **Project Breakdown**

### **Year 1 (August 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025)**

#### **Phase 1**

1. Utilize established connections and sales channels in restaurants, retailers, and wholesale channels to begin partnerships to feature blue catfish in Singapore. Begin outreach to new industry contacts and develop sales channels. Determine preferred specifications for blue catfish.
2. Coordinate shipments with blue catfish processors, assisting with product export, documentation, and required specifications.
3. Notify ATO office of all project activities and efforts.
4. Develop communications and execute an event plan targeting wholesale and consumer marketing channels. Communications will include press releases, marketing/sale materials, and other necessary supplies. Marketing materials will consist of specification sheets and supplier lists.
5. Develop a Chesapeake Bay Blue Catfish website in English and Mandarin to explain this new product. Information for this site can be sourced from the Virginia and Maryland blue catfish websites.

6. Plan out and secure wholesale and consumer events with product sampling. Year One will have three wholesale events, and Year Two will have two retailer/consumer-focused events and one wholesale event.
7. Identify a local chef who can sample products featuring local cuisine at events.
8. Plan out and secure booth space at industry trade shows. In the project's first year, the tradeshow will be Seafood Expo Asia. The second year could look into a new show, such as Food and Hotel Asia.
9. Develop metrics for the project and monitor and report on activities and sales.

## **Phase 2**

1. Roll-out of the public relations campaign and communications activities in full.
2. Increase direct outreach to larger wholesalers and retailers.
3. The contractor will deliver the first in-person tasting event to introduce Blue Catfish to restaurant owners/chefs at Greenwood Fish Market or another approved wholesale market.
4. Continue adding content, photos, information, and recipes to the microsite - where to find, etc.

## **Phase 3**

1. Increase PR activities, leverage the success of the Month Two in-person event, work with Maryland and Virginia marketing assets, and seek chef testimonials for use in social media.
2. Deliver a second in-person event oriented towards commercial/retail purchasers and customers. The event could be at Greenwood Market, a different venue, or another well-known food and beverage venue. It should be scheduled in conjunction with Seafood Expo Asia.
3. Continue adding content, photos, information, and recipes to the website, including where to find blue catfish.
4. Create artwork for Seafood Expo Asia booth space and exhibit at the tradeshow. Organize meetings with buyers at the tradeshow.

## **Phase 4**

1. Begin retail promotion support. Ideally, Sheng Siong, <https://shengsiong.com.sg/>), or Cold Storage (<https://coldstorage.com.sg/>) or NTUC FairPrice (<https://www.fairprice.com.sg/>)
2. Continue with wholesale/customer outreach.
3. Public relations activities to build on the momentum, leverage recent tasting events, plus the introduction of new channels.
4. Continue adding content, photos, information, and recipes to the website.

## **Phase 5**

1. Continuation of public relations efforts.
2. Continued support for retail rollout.

## **Phase 6**

1. Host a third in-person tasting event based on new interest from partners generated through the tradeshow.
2. Evaluate success/impacts/contracts; sales generated and anticipated.
3. Evaluate the need for any type of light-touch ongoing extensions or support to key commercial partners.

## **Year 2 (January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026)**

## **Phase 7**

1. Continue export support.
2. Continue PR campaign.
3. Continue support of retail efforts.
4. Continue outreach to buyers.
5. Create new content for the website.
6. Hold the first retailer event focusing on consumers with sampling.

## **Phase 8**

1. Continue PR campaign and retailer support.
2. Continue buyer outreach.
3. Plan and create materials, artwork, and exhibit at an industry trade show. This could be Food and Hotel Asia or another approved trade show.
4. Hold the first wholesale sampling event in year two in conjunction with the trade show.
5. Coordinate product supply for events.

## **Phase 9**

1. Continue PR Campaign and retailer support.
2. Add new content to the microsite.
3. Hold a second retailer promotion targeting consumers.

## **Phase 10**

1. Provide all buyer contact information to the project managers.
2. Complete evaluation of the project using established metrics and provide a report and recommendations to SUSTA and activity managers on increasing blue catfish sales in Singapore.

## **Activity Background:**

The Southern U.S. Blue Catfish promotions will specifically target Singapore to promote and generate interest in southern region blue catfish.

### **Budget:**

Funding for this project is provided through the USDA's Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP) and is subject to the appropriate regulations and policies.

### **Sufficiency of Response**

Each proposal will be scored on the following measurements:

- Description of proposed activities and relevancy
- Measurable results of previous, similar programs managed by the respondent
- Approach to managing the activity
- Cost
- References (minimum of 3)

Proposals should be concisely written to respond to this RFP. Elaborate attachments are not necessary.

### **Acceptance of Proposal**

The successful bidder's proposal will be the basis of a contract executed with SUSTA to perform all services at the specified costs contained in the bidder's proposal. SUSTA retains the right to negotiate with the successful bidder prior to final contract execution.

### **Subcontractors**

If any service is to be performed by someone other than the contractor's permanent staff, all subcontractors and their addresses must be included in the proposal. These will be subject to approval by SUSTA.

### **Deadline for Proposal**

All proposals from bidders must be submitted by **June 27, 2025, 5:00pm central standard time (CST)**. The successful bidder will receive notification after SUSTA's Operations Committee has reviewed all proposals based on the key criteria. The project is scheduled to commence in 2025 upon written notification from SUSTA. Proposals may be submitted to the following:

#### **Stone Slade**

Director of International Marketing  
Maryland Department of Agriculture  
[stone.slade@maryland.gov](mailto:stone.slade@maryland.gov)

**Mike Hutt**

Mike Hutt  
Executive Director  
Virginia Marine Products Board  
[mike.hutt@vdacs.virginia.gov](mailto:mike.hutt@vdacs.virginia.gov)

**Bernadette Wiltz-Lang**

Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)  
Executive Director  
[Bernadette@susta.org](mailto:Bernadette@susta.org)

**Sandra V. Lobb**

Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)  
Client Relationships Manager  
[Sandra@susta.org](mailto:Sandra@susta.org)

**Questions**

All questions about this RFP should be directed to:

**Stone Slade**

Director of International Marketing  
Maryland Department of Agriculture  
[stone.slade@maryland.gov](mailto:stone.slade@maryland.gov)

**Mike Hutt**

Mike Hutt  
Executive Director  
Virginia Marine Products Board  
[mike.hutt@vdacs.virginia.gov](mailto:mike.hutt@vdacs.virginia.gov)

**Sandra V. Lobb**

Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)  
Client Relationships Manager  
[Sandra@susta.org](mailto:Sandra@susta.org)

**Rejection of Proposals**

SUSTA retains the right to reject all proposals submitted in response to this RFP. SUSTA does not discriminate in any of its programs and activities against recipients on the basis of: age, disability, national origin or ancestry, race, color, religion, creed, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, military status, marital or familial status.