



**Request for Proposal
Japan Initiative
Activity Number 6AS05**

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 the federal Market Access Program (MAP) and Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP) 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 Market Access Program "Branded" program and the Market Access 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, in 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

FOODEX Japan – March 10-13, 2026

1. Provide a brief market overview for each co-exhibitor that includes information on the advantages and the challenges of introducing a product or products into Japan.
 - a. The consultant will describe the overall market prospects for the product(s), distinguishing (as necessary) between the retail, food service, and food processing sectors.
 - b. If possible, the consultant will provide information on tariffs, taxes, and customs duties for the product(s) in question.
 - c. The consultant will provide information on the registration processes(es) for the product(s) in question.
2. Arrange and schedule pre-set meetings between qualified buyers and co-exhibitors; send meeting agendas and buyer profiles to co-exhibitors at least one week before travel.
3. Assist with ensuring the SUSTA pavilion is organized and functioning according to plan.
4. Communicate with SUSTA staff and activity managers.
5. With the activity managers, work with the pavilion organizers/booth builders to provide all required booth furnishings for co-exhibitors and other additional needs.
6. With the activity managers, coordinate sample shipments with co-exhibitors and SUSTA's designated shipping company, ensuring all details are tracked and communicated to staff and activity managers.
7. Secure interpreters for co-exhibitors as needed.
8. Assist with hotel arrangements at the published federal per diem rate for co-exhibitors as needed.
9. Provide ongoing support to co-exhibitors before, during, and after the event.
10. Maintain regular communication with the staff at FAS ATO Tokyo and with SUSTA staff before, during, and after the event.
11. Provide on-site support during the event.
12. Conduct post-event follow-up with co-exhibitors if needed.

ProWine Tokyo – April 14-16, 2026

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 - a. The consultant will describe the overall market prospects for the product(s), distinguishing (as necessary) between the retail, food service, and food processing sectors.

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Inbound Trade Mission to Texas and Summer Fancy Food Show – June 25-27, 2026

- 1. Recruit qualified foreign buyers for one-on-one meetings with participants.
- 2. Provide travel requirements (passports, identification, etc.) for incoming buyers.
- 3. Conduct initial consultations with participating U.S. companies to understand their products and market strategy.
- 4. Provide pre-, during-, and post-event support to participating U.S. companies.
- 5. Provide on-site support throughout the mission.
- 6. Ensure foreign buyer participation and punctuality for meetings.
- 7. Collect and submit evaluations from all foreign buyers.
- 8. Follow up with participating U.S. companies' post-event to collect success stories.
- 9. Prepare a final post-show report for SUSTA detailing outcomes and successes

The time frame for the contract will be January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026.

Specific responsibilities strategy for the initiative would include:

Budget

Funding for this project is provided through the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service Market Access Program, 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 October 31, 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 planned commencement of the project will start in 2026 upon written notification from SUSTA. Proposals may be submitted to the following:

Bernadette Wiltz-Lang

Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)

Executive Director

Bernadette@susta.org

Sandra V. Lobb

Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)

Global Events Director

Sandra@susta.org

Questions

All questions in regard to this RFP should be directed to:

Bernadette Wiltz-Lang

Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)

Executive Director

Bernadette@susta.org

Sandra V. Lobb

Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)

Global Events Director

Sandra@susta.org

Jonathan Van Balen

Import/Export Advisor

Jonathan.VanBalen@ky.gov

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.