



**Request for Proposal
Middle East Initiative
Activity Number 6ME59**

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, 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

Gulfood 2026

1. Assist with recruitment of foreign buyers.
2. Assist with ensuring SUSTA pavilion is organized and functioning according to plan.
3. Communication with SUSTA staff and activity managers.
4. Work with pavilion organizers/booth builders to provide all required booth furnishings for co-exhibitors and other additional needs.
5. Provide ongoing support to co-exhibitors before, during, and after the event.
6. Arrange and schedule pre-set meetings between qualified buyers and co-exhibitors; send meeting agendas and buyer profiles at least one week before travel.
7. Coordinate sample shipments with co-exhibitors and SUSTA's designated shipping company, ensuring all details are tracked and communicated to staff and activity managers.
8. Secure interpreters for co-exhibitors as needed.
9. Maintain regular communication with the FAS Dubai office and SUSTA Team before, during, and after the event.
10. Assist with hotel arrangements for participants as needed.
11. Provide on-site support during the event.
12. Conduct post-event follow-up with companies if needed.
13. Prepare a post-show report summarizing results and key outcomes.

Outbound Trade Mission to the United Arab Emirates

1. Assist with recruitment to ensure participants are a strong fit for the mission.
2. Conduct initial consultations with participants to understand their products and market strategy.
3. Recruit qualified foreign buyers for one-on-one meetings with participants.
4. Arrange hotel accommodations, meeting spaces, and transportation.
5. Provide pre-, during-, and post-event support to participants.
6. Coordinate sample shipments with the designated shipping company and track logistics.
7. Secure interpreters for meetings as needed.
8. Maintain contact with FAS Dubai before, during, and after the mission.
9. Prepare a "Know Before You Go" packet for all participants.
10. Collaborate with FAS to host a Foreign Market Briefing on day one of the mission, potentially including presentations from importers or retailers.
11. Plan and execute a retail tour featuring 2–3 locations relevant to promoted products.

12. Provide on-site support throughout the mission.
13. Ensure foreign buyer participation and punctuality for meetings.
14. Collect and submit evaluations from all foreign buyers.
15. Follow up with participants post-event to collect success stories.
16. Prepare a final post-show report 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 measures:

- 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 drawn up 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

Whitney Lett

Development Representative Supervisor (Florida Department of Agriculture)

Whitney.Lett@FDACS.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.