

Big Picture Report: February 2020
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USDA Trade Missions Highlight Markets to Watch

The USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) has scheduled an itinerary of seven agency sponsored trade missions this year. They include return missions to the Philippines and Peru, and first time missions to Spain and Portugal, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, and the United Arab Emirates.

USDA Undersecretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs Ted McKinney describes these missions as being focused on "markets that we've known, but just haven't spent a lot of time with" through official trade missions. "We're trying to lift these up," he explained.

Indeed, these trade missions are targeted to establish markets where there is opportunity to expand and diversify U.S. ag exports. They are designed to open doors for U.S. exporters, giving them the opportunity to forge relationships with potential customers, gather market intelligence and, most importantly, generate sales.

FAS staff located in-country and working out of the U.S. Embassy arrange meetings between trade mission delegates and local companies, as well as providing in-depth briefings and site visits in the market. Last year's trade missions facilitated 3,200 one-on-one buyer meetings for 240 companies. That roster of U.S. exporters included 11 SUSTA companies participating in missions in Canada, Mexico, Taiwan and Colombia.

As for 2020's mix of old and new, the missions to Peru and the Philippines are return engagements to markets at different stages of trade policy engagement. The U.S. and Peru have had a long-term trade agreement in place since 2009, with a 15-year tariff reduction schedule for most food and ag products. We are now well into that phase down. The Philippines, on the other hand, is a market where growth in U.S. ag and food exports have doubled in the last decade and our two nations are now negotiating a formal trade agreement.

The four new missions have at least a couple familiar destinations to SUSTA members, namely Australia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). SUSTA has held activities "down under" in Australia for a number of years, and the UAE has been a perennial top market for SUSTA for some time. While we're now in the process of compiling 2019's final sales tallies, in 2018 SUSTA companies netted more than \$17 million in Australia and more than \$53 million in the UAE.

Again, as we review and compile your feedback from the Global Events evaluation surveys, we've noted that in response to the question "*what new export markets would you be interested in pursuing going forward?*" the UK, Spain, Australia and Peru were all mentioned. These upcoming USDA Trade Missions provide a great opportunity to investigate the potential these markets hold.

Of course, the United Kingdom is a country many U.S. exporters are interested in exploring and better understanding now that Brexit is in process. The UK remains a dynamic market, especially as trade talks between the U.S. and UK progress, and the trade terms of Brexit agreement between the EU and UK are negotiated. Spain and Portugal are two EU markets with solid growth potential; in 2018, SUSTA companies shipped more than \$2.2 million worth of exports to Spain.

If you are interested in participating in any of these USDA sponsored trade missions, I encourage you to register through SUSTA. Companies with an approved [MySUSTA account](#) can benefit from SUSTA support, including travel.

- [USDA Trade Mission to Spain and Portugal](#), June 8-11, 2020
- [USDA Trade Mission to United Kingdom](#), September 14-17, 2020
- [USDA Trade Mission to Australia & New Zealand](#), October 19-23, 2020
- [USDA Trade Mission to United Arab Emirates](#), November 15-18, 2020