



Big Picture Report: January 2021
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Positive Outlook for 2021

Here's to the new year and our sincerest wishes that it will be a good one for you and your businesses. Actually, we're offering more than our good wishes – SUSTA, as always, is here to help you make 2021 prosperous.

I've always been a firm believer that challenges and setbacks offer opportunities if you look for them. Indeed, as the old adage holds, necessity is the mother of invention. The COVID-19 disruptions to travel and exhibitions necessitated SUSTA to be inventive with our virtual outreach. As one company commented, "the virtual options and trainings that SUSTA has been offering have been very helpful during the pandemic."

Several companies noted that maintaining connections in 2020 are an important running start to have when markets get back to more normal circumstances. Even with the economic and trade disruptions from COVID, I'm pleased to share that some initial sales were reported in Canada, Central America and India through virtual events.

The long-term trend to incorporate virtual marketing as part of an overall strategy was in many ways inevitable in our digital age. COVID became the catalyst. In fact, we here at SUSTA noted that back in 2019 – prior to COVID - at least one company shared this comment in its evaluation, "what sort of remote or digital connections might you think about in the future?" And this year, another company noted, "even in normal times it's a good idea to continue these virtual missions as first contact prior to traveling."

This feedback is a good reminder that although we now are into the 2021 program year, properly wrapping up 2020 is vitally important. As always, companies who participated in Global Events activities are asked to review and evaluate those marketing efforts immediately after the activity, and six months later as a follow-up to focus on sales results. Companies in the 50% CostShare program will be asked to complete a year-end review of their marketing activities. That survey will be available starting February 1, 2021.

These surveys and evaluations are used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of SUSTA's marketing programs and to chart a course to constant improvement and export growth from the SUSTA region. I can't stress enough how important the 2020 year-end surveys will be. Sharing your experiences, results and insights is the cornerstone of building future activities and strategies, and it helps USDA to assess the investment of market development funds.

Here's to the New Year! Let's make it not just better than last year, but a great year overall. SUSTA is here to help. Please check your MySUSTA account to see the opportunities to connect with qualified foreign buyers all over the world. I will tell you that we at SUSTA are approaching this year not only with all of the good ideas that have come out of the crisis, but with extra gusto too.