

Big Picture Report: March 2019

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In collaboration with World Perspectives, Inc.

USDA just held its 95th Agricultural Outlook Forum late last month; the Forum is one of the biggest gatherings of the global food and agricultural industries each year. Fittingly, the theme of this year's conference was Growing Locally, Selling Globally. ***That's what our SUSTA companies do!***

No doubt, this past year has brought about a great deal of trade uncertainty, especially with regards to China. USDA's Chief Economist Robert Johansson reported during the Forum that China dropped from the top export market in 2017 for total food and ag exports, to fifth place in 2018. The good news, however, is that USDA is projecting growth in Canada, Mexico and the European Union for 2019.

USDA also sees room for important export growth in Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Indeed, as I shared in this column last month, SUSTA has received funding under the Agriculture Trade Promotion (ATP) program. This program is a special one-time effort to help U.S. exporters develop new markets and help mitigate the impact of lost markets in China and elsewhere as a result of trade disputes and retaliatory tariffs.

SUSTA is targeting these growth markets with ATP funds. Specifically, we will be supporting SUSTA companies in Central America, Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia. We will also be conducting promotions more broadly in Europe, including Eastern European and Scandinavian countries, as well as in India.

I am pleased to note that SUSTA companies have already had great success in gaining market share in the Middle East. It was the top region for SUSTA exporters in 2017, particularly for companies in the 50% CostShare program. So far, the 2018 end-of-the-year survey results are showing continued sales in the Middle East.

On that note, I cannot stress enough how important the data from these end-of-the-year surveys we receive from our companies really is. Your reports of sales and the new leads you make, as well as your feedback on the events themselves and SUSTA's customer service, is vitally important. In short, the information in these surveys truly is the lifeline to keeping Market Access Program (MAP) and Agriculture Trade Promotion (ATP) funds working in support of your export marketing activities and success.

We will be wrapping up the end of the year surveys and evaluations in the coming weeks. If you haven't already, I urge you to please take the time to complete your required survey(s) and include comments on SUSTA and the markets and activities where you participated. Please do this as soon as possible – the information you provide is crucial to our planning for the 2020 marketing year, which is already underway!