

**Big Picture Report: September 2019**  
**Bernadette Wiltz, SUSTA**

Good news! Through the first half of the year, SUSTA companies have been booking some impressive sales as reported in their initial activity surveys. Of course, serious challenges remain in many markets due to global trade policy tensions, but despite that, sales are ringing up.

Now more than ever, SUSTA is relying on our companies to continue to report on their participation and successes through the activity surveys we ask you to complete. That direct feedback helps us strategize, plan and manage the marketing dollars available under the Market Access Program (MAP) to help you get export sales on the books this year, and grow in the future.

Additionally, USDA has allocated additional funds to support even further export market development under the new Agriculture Trade Promotion (ATP) program. ATP operates similarly to MAP, but there are few key eligibility differences; for example, the limits on company size are less restrictive and mandatory graduation out of a market after five years have been waived. ATP provides even more financial tools to help Southern companies expand export sales.

And the program has helped SUSTA plan even more activities in more markets this year. In 2019, we've added 10 new activities offering our U.S. suppliers exposure to 13 new countries.

As you know, SUSTA allocates these trade promotion dollars from USDA to support southern U.S. small businesses in everything from export training seminars to market research, to exhibiting at world-class trade shows, to reimbursing marketing expenses. But continued success depends on getting your feedback about markets, the quality of activities, SUSTA's customer service, and your successes.

Believe me when I say, I understand there can be some "survey fatigue" set in after multiple evaluations come your way, but that flow of company feedback is absolutely necessary to maintain the flow of marketing dollars, programs and activities back to you. Not only do we at SUSTA pay attention to what our companies report so we can manage these programs more effectively while maintaining the highest degree of accountability, so too does USDA. Last year, the Department set a strategic goal to

*Improve U.S. market competitiveness by expanding investments, strengthening accountability of export promotion programs, and incentivizing stronger financial partnerships.*

That goal pretty much sums up why we need to hear from you. Completing your initial surveys and a six month follow-up from Global Events activities, and reporting results via the year end evaluations for the 50% CostShare participation is critical to maintaining the marketing dollars that MAP and ATP provide, and fundamental to making sure those programs continue to benefit you and your export business.

Plus, we like to hear from you! Let us know how we can help, what markets you are interested in, and, by all means, please tell us what is working. If you have a sales success story, do not hesitate to call us up and let us know! It means that MAP and ATP is indeed a good investment and a solid financial partnership.