

Branded Program

Importer Guide

Learn how you can use the Branded Program
to double your marketing budget for U.S. products!



Eligible Activities Include:

Advertisements • In-Store Promotions
International Tradeshows • Website Development
Online Marketing & Social Media
Foreign Market Compliant Packaging/Labeling



Dear Buyers of U.S. Food and Agricultural Products,

The Food Export Association of the Midwest USA and Food Export USA–Northeast Branded Program(s) provides an outlet to facilitate trade between U.S. food suppliers and importers around the world. The Branded Program is made possible through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service, who also set the program regulations and required documentation standards. The program assists small food and agricultural businesses by reimbursing them for eligible marketing and promotional costs.

The Branded Program is designed for U.S. companies to begin or further their exporting goals, and is invaluable for importers and distributors who pay for marketing and promotional activities on behalf of their U.S. suppliers. This manual will help you to understand the program policies, procedures, and guidelines, and includes information on eligible expenses for reimbursement.

Thank you for your interest in Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast’s Branded Program. We look forward to receiving your U.S. supplier’s application and working with you throughout the coming year.

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Discover products from the Midwest and Northeast (USA)! The Midwestern and Northeastern parts of the United States are two of the most bountiful regions in the world. Agriculture is a way of life and food producers take advantage of their natural resources. The results are specialized, high quality food products that are perfect for expanding global tastes.

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Chicago BBQ Supplier Continues International Success Despite a Challenging Year

Named after the founder’s Grandmother Lillie, Lillie’s Q Sauces and Rubs LLC produces a wide variety of barbeque rubs and sauces both domestically and internationally. Using only best quality natural ingredients sourced from Tennessee to Alabama and up to the Carolinas, Lillie’s Q creates BBQ with what they call “Smotherly Love”.

Since 2015, Lillie’s Q has been a prosperous Branded Program participant, and that growth held steady in this year where they reported nearly \$200,000 in

new export sales to a variety of markets, the most prominent being Australia. In addition to these excellent sales numbers, Lillie’s Q also announced two new partnerships with importers in the Australian market while utilizing their allocated Market Access Program (MAP) funds to participate in a wide range of promotional activities. Lillie’s Q is poised to ramp up efforts and is looking forward to furthering success via the Branded Program.

To find more successes and read additional stories, scan the QR code below.



<https://www.foodexport.org/success-stories?page=1&program=d9e5a51f-4ace-695b-a4cc-ff03008efdb3>



Pennsylvania Pretzel Exporter Grows Sales

SB Global Foods, Inc., which specializes in packaged consumer snack, confection, and grocery products, has utilized Food Export–Northeast’s Branded Program to gain brand awareness in international markets for many years. Most recently, the Hatboro, Pennsylvania supplier utilized their funding to promote their Pretzel Pete Pretzels in Israel and Germany. SB Global/ Pretzel Pete worked closely with its respective import distributor partners in both markets to fine tune the packaging to meet all local label requirements.

SB Global/Pretzel Pete’s president, Karl Brown, commented “Our expansion into Israel and Germany would not have been successful without the support of the Branded Program. The ability to offset 50% of the costs of the design and update the packaging to meet the various regulations in those markets was critical. Our willingness and ability to modify the packaging was very important to gaining the trust of our import partners and has led to ongoing orders that continue to this day.”

To find more successes and read additional stories, scan the QR code below.



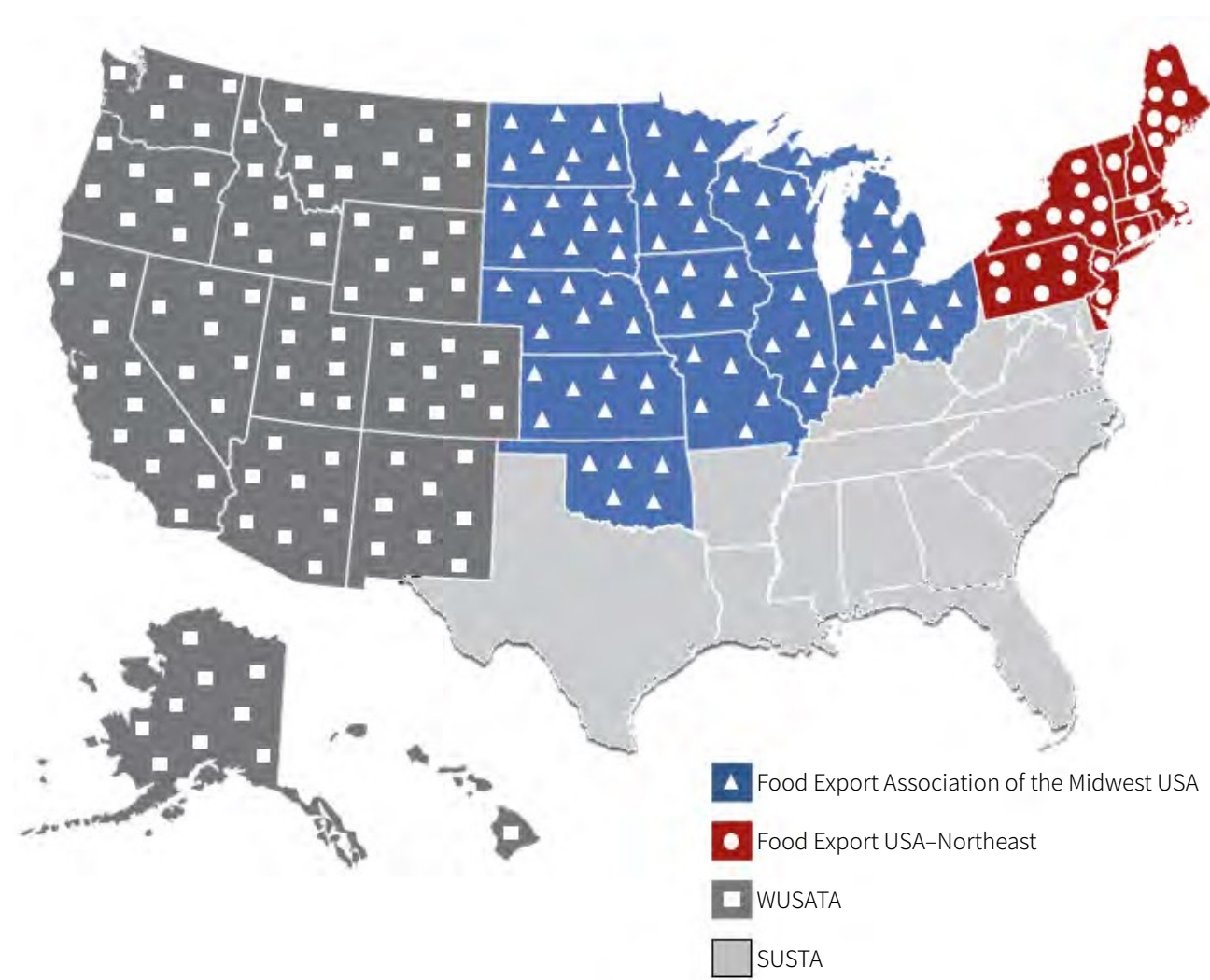
<https://www.foodexport.org/success-stories?page=1&program=d9e5a51f-4ace-695b-a4cc-ff03008efdb3>



Regional Requirements

In order to be eligible for the Branded Program, your U.S. supplier must have a headquarters in one or more of the following states in the Midwest (Food Export–Midwest) and/or the Northeast (Food Export–Northeast) regions. A company’s headquarters is defined as the physical location of the business’s main management/operations office.

Additionally, your U.S. supplier must meet a number of criteria to be eligible for this program. For more information on company eligibility, see page 8.



If your U.S. supplier is not located in the Midwest or Northeast regions of the United States, they can still apply for the Branded Program through other State Regional Trade Groups (SRTGs). Food Export Association of the Midwest USA and Food Export USA–Northeast are two of four SRTGs in the United States.

Southern region can contact:
Southern U.S. Trade Association (SUSTA), www.susta.org
Western region can contact:
Western U.S. Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA), www.wusata.org

Program Basics



To participate in the Branded Program, **your U.S. supplier must apply and be approved.**

Only the U.S. supplier can apply and join the Branded Program. They will also be responsible for submitting all documentation.



We work with **small to medium sized companies.**

Their employee count is defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

50%

Eligible expenses are **reimbursable at 50%** of invoiced cost.

Participating companies are paid on a reimbursement only basis.

\$2,500 – \$300,000

The minimum request level is **US\$2,500** and the maximum request level is **US\$300,000** total, for all countries.

Please note this is the reimbursement amount; the company would spend respectively US\$5,000 or US\$600,000.



The U.S. Supplier can apply for a **contract amendment** if they would like to make changes to the approved marketing plans.

Approval of amendment must be granted prior to beginning the new activity. Amendments can be submitted to add a new country, activity, product, or to request more funding.

Product of USA

All activities and materials must identify the origin of the product as **“Product of U.S.A.”**, **“Grown in the USA”**, or a similar approved statement.

The Branded Program cannot, under any circumstances, reimburse expenses without the U.S. origin statement present.

⚠ Important Fraud Information

All Branded Program participants are expected to comply with the laws of the countries they are doing business with, as are the agents representing them. Failure to obey these laws is grounds for being dropped from the program. If participants knowingly commit an act of fraud we are authorized to inform the USDA, Foreign Agricultural Service and they will be dropped from the program. Additional legal action may be taken. Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast have a zero tolerance policy regarding fraud. Participants will not engage in fraud which, for the purposes of this program is defined as: the taking or obtaining by deception, of money or any other benefit from—when not entitled to the benefit or the attempt to do so; the intentional misrepresentation of—financial position; the intentional misrepresentation of information leading to financial loss. All suspected fraud and allegations of fraud will be reported to the USDA, Foreign Agricultural Service, which could result in being dropped from the program and legal action being taken.

Eligible Companies and Products

Company Requirements

Your U.S. supplier must meet the following company eligibility requirements to apply:

- Must be a small company as defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), sba.gov, or an agricultural producer cooperative.
- The company must be a registered business entity in the United States.
- They must have adequate resources and a continuous supply of products in markets where funding is requested.

Product Requirements

Products must be value-added agricultural products including:

- Food ingredients
- Foodservice products
- Specific wood products
- Seafood*
- Consumer food products
- Feed ingredients
- Pet food products
- Hemp**
- Other Agricultural Products

Products must contain at least 50% U.S. agricultural content

Products must be clearly labeled as Product of the U.S.

Products cannot be covered by another commodity group[†]

* Eligible seafood products must be of 100% U.S. origin unless they are processed or used as an ingredient. Please contact us for more information about seafood products.

**Hemp and hemp products must comply with all local, state, federal or international country laws and regulations to conduct eligible marketing activities and seek reimbursement. COMPANY must abide by USDA, FAS guidance on hemp and hemp products located here: <https://www.fas.usda.gov/resources/eligibility-hemp-and-hemp-products-under-fas-market-development-programs>.

† If a company has multiple product lines, that company can apply for our Branded Program.

Program Fees

Application Fee

There is an annual non-refundable fee for application to the Branded Program. An application cannot be processed until this is paid.

Administrative Fee

All program participants are charged a non-refundable administrative fee equal to 6% of the approved funding allocation.

How your U.S. Supplier can apply

Pre-Qualification

Your U.S. supplier submits a Pre-Qualification on our website, www.foodexport.org.

To apply to the Branded Program, your U.S. supplier can visit our website or request a printed hard-copy version of the necessary forms.

Proposed Marketing Plan

Once the Pre-Qualification is approved, you work with your U.S. supplier to create a proposed marketing plan.

Application

Your U.S. supplier submits an application on our website.

The approval process: Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast rate applications based upon allocation criteria and then allocate available funding to the various applicant companies. Allocations are based on the quality of the application, and the overall level of funding available. Not all applications receive the full requested amount.

Application Approval

The application is approved, or more information is requested.

Execute Activities

Once approved, you and your U.S. supplier can execute the marketing activities.

Eligible Expenses

We encourage your U.S. supplier to contact us to confirm eligibility for specific promotional plans PRIOR to incurring related expenditures. The following expenditures are reimbursable:

Marketing and Point-of-Sale Materials

Production and distribution of sell sheets, brochures, catalogs, shelf-talkers, give-away items, banners, posters, recipe cards and related materials including translation costs.

Website Development

Costs associated with developing, servicing, and updating websites that target a foreign audience.

Online Marketing and Social Media

Electronic marketing such as text messages, e-mails, podcasts, advertisements on web pages, and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) costs. Content creation, social media management, promotion by influencers or KOLs, and advertisements on social media pages.



Advertising

Production and placement of advertisements in magazines, newspapers, posters, billboards, direct mail, transit, TV, radio and importer/distributor websites.

International Tradeshows and Virtual Events

Exhibit fees, freight, and construction of a temporary booth for trade-only exhibits and shows held outside of the U.S and its possessions. Other eligible costs: set-up charges, electricity, and furniture rental. Limited international travel expenses (air and federal per diem only) for a maximum of two representatives of the U.S. supplier (including agent/distributors) are ONLY eligible if exhibiting. International virtual event costs are also eligible, including registration and booth fees, marketing materials, videos, or other marketing made specifically for the event.

Foreign Market Compliant Packaging/Labeling

Costs associated with design (as necessary to accommodate required changes only), production and printing of a one-year supply of labels and any labor costs to attach or sticker (if outsourced). Participants must demonstrate that the changes are necessary to meet importing requirements of the importing country.

Part-time Contractors

Demonstrators, interpreters, and translators that assist with eligible promotional activities such as in-store demonstrations, tradeshows and seminars. (Employee, importer and distributor wages are not eligible.)



Demonstrations/Merchandising

In-store and food service promotions, consumer and trade demonstrations, shipment of promotional samples (but not the cost of the actual samples), temporary displays and rental of temporary space for displays such as end-of-aisle and gondola displays.

Loyalty Point Promotions

Fees to participate in loyalty point promotions may be eligible for reimbursement on a case-by-case basis. That can include shelf talkers or other advertisements created for the promotion, as long as they include a U.S. origin statement.

Freight Costs

Costs for shipping samples to importers/distributors, consumer and trade demonstrations, and for shipping tradeshow materials and samples to eligible tradeshows and seminars.

International Trade Seminars

Site rentals, interpreters, translation and duplication of seminar materials. Some expenses related to seminars and educational training for international audiences in the United States are also eligible.

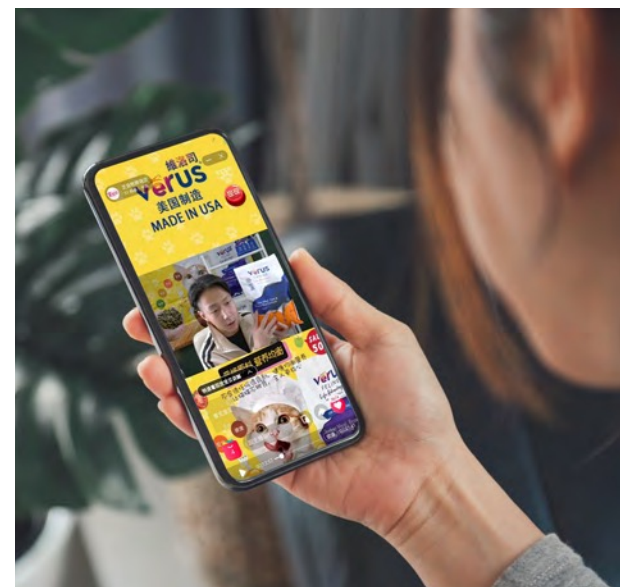
Public Relations

Production and distribution of press releases, press kits and other materials and information directed at the media, trade and consumers.

Ineligible Expenses

Below you will find a few of the common ineligible expenses. For a full list of ineligible expenses, contact the Branded Program.

- Any activity or product not included or approved as part of the Branded Program Agreement
- Expenditure for activities and materials that do not carry U.S. origin statements
- Salaries, living expenses, office costs, administrative expenses
- Meals, reception refreshments, entertainment, gifts
- Business cards, seasonal greeting cards, membership fees
- International travel costs not associated with exhibiting at an international tradeshow
- Product research and development
- Product samples
- Slotting and shelf-space fees, licensing and product registration fees
- Coupons, price discounts, awards, sweepstakes and prizes
- Federal regulations prohibit funding Branded Program activities in the following countries: Crimea Region of Ukraine, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Syria. Certain restrictions apply when exporting to Sudan; please contact the Branded Program for more information.



Reimbursement Documentation

In order to receive reimbursements, required documentation must be submitted by the U.S. supplier. Three documents must accompany the reimbursement request.

Invoice

Any document from a vendor that states charges and details of the services rendered.

Proof of Activity

This is dependent on the activity and should be an example of the promotional activity conducted. Each activity must identify the marketed product as made in the U.S.

Please translate all documents to **English** when submitting for reimbursements.

This includes invoices, proof of payment and any documents showing proof of activity.

Proof of Payment

A confirmation of payment is required. The acceptable forms of payment required are:

- Cash receipt must be marked “paid,” and show a zero balance.
- Check – A cancelled version of the check or copy of the check accompanied by a bank statement showing it was posted.
- Credit Card Statement showing the charge. Signature slips are not acceptable.
- Wire Transfer Confirmation – the request alone is not sufficient.
- Credit Memo – If the U.S. supplier is paying the importer, vendor or overseas agent in product, an invoice for the product and credit memo is required. If, after applying the credit to the invoice, there is a remaining balance, we must see the importer, vendor, or overseas agent pay the balance. If there is no balance we must see freight or airway bill showing the product was shipped.
- Overseas Agent Expenses – these are eligible if they are submitted by the U.S. supplier. We will accept either a U.S. supplier’s full reimbursement to the overseas agent or the overseas agent’s proof of payment for the expenses and participant’s 50% reimbursement to the overseas agent.

Program Calendar

OCT
31

Application Deadline for New Program Year

October 31st of each year (Application acceptance beyond this date contingent on available funds)

JAN
1

DEC
31

Program Year

January 1st – December 31st of each year

DEC
31

All Activities Must Be Concluded and Paid For

FEB
28

All Reimbursement Requests for the Program Year Must Be Submitted

February 28th of the subsequent calendar year



Other Services

Connect with U.S. Suppliers

There are a variety of services to connect you with Midwest and Northeast companies and introduce you to U.S. products. We pre-arrange meetings with suppliers at tradeshow in your country, or during Trade Missions that bring U.S. companies overseas.

You can also travel to the U.S. and participate in one of many yearly sponsored Buyers Missions which usually take place in conjunction with major tradeshow.

Submit a Trade Lead

Are you looking for a specific U.S. food or value-added agricultural product? We are here to help facilitate an introduction to our U.S. suppliers.

Please fill out the Trade Lead Form at foodexport.org/trade-lead-form to get started. Our In-Market Representative covering your region will follow up with you to initiate the process.

Product Promotions

We also sponsor promotions in overseas markets that showcase U.S. food products. Examples include retail displays, cooking demonstrations at tradeshow and industry seminars, and U.S. menu promotions in food service establishments.



For Food That's Unforgettable Import from the Midwest & Northeast USA



**Food
Export**
Midwest USA



foodexport.org
info@foodexport.org



Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast administer many services through Market Access Program (MAP) funding from the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the USDA. Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Persons with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations or alternate means of communication for program information should contact us. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. Food Export Midwest and Northeast do not tolerate fraud and are vigilant in preventing fraud in any of our programs. Food Export reserves the sole right to accept or deny companies into our programs. For complete participation policies and our code of ethics, visit: www.foodexport.org/termsandconditions. To file a program discrimination complaint, go to <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer>. Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast are equal opportunity employers and providers.