# INVITATION FOR BIDS

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are seeking one or more individuals/companies to be their In-Market Representative and assist in the execution of all responsibilities pursuant to their market development programs for processed foods, pet foods, food and animal feed ingredients, Northeastern US seafood products and/or wood products in the Middle East market. These activities include Food Show PLUS!™, Market Builder, Focused Trade Missions, Buyers Missions, Virtual Consultation, Lead Qualification Service, Product Showcases, Retail and Foodservice Promotions, Importer Education and Development, Trade Servicing, market research, market development and special projects for the year. The selected In-Market Representative(s) will be responsible for the aforementioned activities during our 2027 Program Year from January 1 to December 31, 2027.

The contractor must be able to cite previous experience in planning and conducting similar activities for food and agricultural products, and working effectively with people and by telephone, email and in person. Previous experience with not-for-profit groups, international marketing, food and/or agricultural groups will be considered favorably.

Attached please find the official Request for Proposal for details, requirements, and deadlines.

The deadline for proposals is **12:00 noon ET on Friday, November 6, 2026.**

**Questions should be directed to:**

Femke Bosch
International Marketing Program Manager
Food Export Association of the Midwest USA
Phone: (312) 334-9201
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**Please send proposals to:**

Joy F. Canono
International Marketing Programs Coordinator
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# Request for Proposals
# Middle East In-Market Representative

**Background**

The Food Export Association of the Midwest USA (Food Export – Midwest) and Food Export USA – Northeast (Food Export – Northeast) are not-for-profit export associations and whose primary function is to develop export markets for midwestern and northeastern (respectively) producers and processors of value-added food and agricultural products. Our members include state agricultural promotion agencies from thirteen midwestern and ten northeastern states.

Both groups are participants in the Market Access Program (MAP), America First Trade Promotion Program (AFTPP), Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP), and other federal programs handled by the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The MAP, AFTPP and RAPP are intended to boost the export of value-added food and agricultural products from the U.S. through a partnership between FAS and approximately seventy-five other industry-based trade organizations. This includes primarily commodity-specific groups, as well as two other unaffiliated regional groups similar to Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast that handle the southern and western regions of the U.S.

The products covered for export promotion by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast include a wide variety of processed and semi-processed products found throughout the retail, foodservice, and food processing sectors. These include products or derivations of meat, dairy, poultry, seafood, grains, fruits and vegetables, salty and savory snack foods, confections, beans, sauces and condiments, pet foods, beverages, canned foods, animal feeds, bakery products, pasta and many others. Marketing channels include mass market retail, specialty foods, convenience foods, private label, healthy/organic, food ingredients, frozen foods, and others. Additionally, Food Export – Northeast promotes benchmark seafood products from the northeastern U.S. including lobster, scallops, monkfish, Atlantic herring, squid, Atlantic mackerel, dogfish and skate.

Food Export - Midwest and Food Export- Northeast are independent organizations that have been engaged in a strategic alliance since April of 2000. Through this alliance, the strategy and tactics of the organizations have been aligned so that the activities and services of each group are very similar with differences based primarily on geographic focus. Food Export - Midwest focuses on midwestern exporters and a series of ten overseas target markets, including Africa, China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, Oceania, Mexico and Taiwan. Food Export -Northeast targets northeastern exporters and nine overseas markets, including Canada, Caribbean, Central America, China, Europe, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, South America, and

the Middle East. By collaborating, the activities and services of each organization are open to participation by companies from the other region. The net effect is that exporters in the Midwest and Northeast have access to a larger range of export promotion opportunities, while the limited staff at Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast can focus on specific market development opportunities.

The states that are members of Food Export- Midwest include: Illinois, Wisconsin, Kansas, Minnesota, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri and Oklahoma. Food Export – Northeast encompasses: New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Delaware, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

More information about Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast is available on the Internet at: www.foodexport.org.

**Scope of Work**

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are seeking one or more individuals/companies to be their In-Market Representative and assist in the execution of all responsibilities pursuant to their market development programs for processed foods, pet foods, food and animal feed ingredients, Northeastern US seafood products and/or wood products in the Middle East market. These activities include Food Show PLUS!™, Market Builder, Focused Trade Missions, Buyers Missions, Virtual Consultation, Lead Qualification Service, Product Showcases, Retail and Foodservice Promotions, Importer Education and Development, Trade Servicing, market research, market development and special projects for the year. The selected In-Market Representative(s) will be responsible for the aforementioned activities during our 2027 Program Year from January 1 to December 31, 2027.

Please provide a quotation for each of the following services:

**1. Expo Advantage/Food Show PLUS!**

**Background**

Expo Advantage is a service that provides U.S. companies with the information and support they need to be an effective exhibitor at an international trade show. We try to add value for exhibitors by focusing our efforts on maximizing their potential for developing leads, securing an importer/distributor, and realizing sales from the show. Ultimately, by being adequately prepared to do business at the show, companies make the best possible use of the trade show environment and improve their chances for building new sales relationships. The trade shows and activity dates will be determined later.

Expo Advantage includes Food Export's trademarked service Food Show PLUS! ™. Food Show PLUS! ™ will be offered through the selected In-Market Representative. A member state representative, staff member or a contracted activity coordinator will attend the show and coordinate all activities, and in general, provide onsite management of the activity. Publicity and recruitment for each Food Show PLUS! ™ event is typically handled by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast staff, with support from each of our member states. Participating companies pay a modest participation fee to help offset Food Export's cost of doing the event. We conduct an on-site evaluation plus a follow-up evaluation after six months.

**Scope of Work**

The types of services considered for each Food Show Plus!™ trade show are categorized as base services and additional services. Base services include those that directly relate to the generation of export results, at all events in which we offer Food Show PLUS!™, the base services must be delivered. For shows where we traditionally have had significant supplier participation, we may include an "a la carte model" of additional services offered that are tailored for the show/market.

Base services (required)

- Targeted invitation to qualified buyers to exhibitor booths and when possible, setting-up appointments (markets where appointments are unavailable must provide extra background on invitation process)
- Virtual Consultation with individual participants before the show
- On-site show assistance by In-Market Representative
- Welcome Packet and Market Briefing.
- Local industry tours as appropriate
- Performing 3 Lead Qualifications
- Assisting eligible exhibitors with obtaining Branded Program reimbursement
- Providing a final activity report to Food Export

Additional services (offered at larger Food Show PLUS!™ activities on an a la carte basis to suppliers based on need as determined by Food Export and In-Market Representative)

- Providing technical (food industry) interpreters/booth assistants at the show booth
- Translation of up to 2 pages of basic exhibitor material (usually company or product information), into appropriate foreign languages,
- Conduct store check analysis.

While Food Show PLUS!™ services offered may vary slightly depending on the market, trade show organizers, and Activity Coordinator, at the minimum, the In-Market Representative is responsible for ensuring that the services mentioned above are provided in a timely manner. Further explanation of the services and other administrative tasks include:

1. Providing key messages about the market and the show and any information that can be utilized to promote and sell the activity.
2. Developing an executive summary of goals, objectives, plans and budget to administer the project, and a detailed timeline for completion of each phase of the project plan in close coordination with the Activity Coordinator. Budget should include a total cost to administer the project.
3. Communicating project details to the appointed Activity Coordinator.
4. Utilizing promotional materials to promote the Food Show PLUS!™ service to companies registered for the trade show. In-Market Representative may be required to contact companies to promote the service.
5. If translation of material is part of the specific Food Show PLUS!™ , Companies must receive final translated version three weeks before the show as long as all company information is received in a timely basis. Companies will be responsible for printing profiles. (Translation is limited to a maximum of 2 pages of text per company.)
6. If store check is part of the specific Food Show PLUS! ™ The store check report will be based on visits to at least three different supermarkets in a major city in the market. If the product is new-to-market and there are no competitive brands, then information should be reported on a product(s) that could be considered a close competitor to the item of interest. Retail outlets selected for this

research should be able to provide the U.S. exporter with a view of a wide range of the major brands in the market. In the case of food ingredients, the store check report lists examples of product applications in the market; identifies where in the supply chain that the ingredients are needed; and whether the product is imported directly or through specialized intermediaries.

7. Providing an adequate amount of interpreters during show hours, if necessary, to serve the participating companies. The In-Market Representative is responsible for hiring qualified interpreters with knowledge of the food industry and applicable terminology and managing their services during show. Instructions/expectations should be provided to each interpreter prior to the show. Training will be conducted in advance of the show for interpreters and participating companies. U.S. companies may assist to brief the interpreters on product knowledge, knowledge of the selected food industry, and applicable terminology.
8. Attending the show to supervise activities and interpreters.
9. Conducting daily meetings with the Activity Coordinator while at the show.
10. Providing bi-weekly progress reports and maintaining close communication with the Activity Coordinator.
11. Communicating with the show management to obtain a list of U.S. companies who sign up for the show and communicate said list to the Activity Coordinator- maintaining close communication with the Activity Coordinator.
12. Inviting appropriate buyers to Food Show PLUS!™ participants' booths and set-up appointments, where possible, i.e., invite major importers of ketchup to ketchup exhibitors' booth.
13. Welcome Packet is required for all participants in order to demonstrate value of the service. This must be sent out ahead of time and can include a recorded/written Market Briefing if IMRs are unable to facilitate one on-site. If USDA is doing a market briefing, that does not replace the Welcome Packet. Other information in the Welcome Packet could include information about the show, city, country, or industry.
14. Virtual Consultations should be provided one-on-one with each participant before the show. In rare cases, group calls may suffice as long as participants are able to submit questions ahead of time as they do in Virtual Consultations.
15. Lead Qualification. Up to three leads from the participant must be qualified following the Lead Qualification process. Leads will be submitted to the IMR within one month of the trade show and must be returned within 2 weeks of submission.
16. Trade show booth/pavilion facilitation, including but not limited to acquiring booth(s) on behalf of Food Export, order furniture, design and order booth graphics, show badges, etc.
17. Providing a detailed final report inclusive of:
    a. Executive Summary
    b. Review of project
    c. List of Participants and corresponding company evaluations
    d. Summary of project and each segment
    e. Evaluation of each project segment
        - Company profiles
        - Store checks
        - Interpreters
        - Industry tours
        - Press releases (if any)
    f. Recommendations to improve services at the trade show or future activities
    g. In-Market Representative comments and evaluation results
    h. Digital pictures of the event including show signage and where possible, representative photos of the area.

***This service is provided on an as-needed basis. Participation varies by market but on average, 5 companies register for this service per show, each requiring approximately ten days of work. Please quote on per participant basis indicating costs for the base package and separately for the additional services.***

**2. Market Builder**

The In-market Representative will participate in a scheduled kick-off call (45mins.) with the U.S. company and Food Export staff. The objective is to learn from the U.S. company details on their product, communicate the deliverables of the service, and review the timeline for completion.

Package A – Market Scan

1. Retail or Foodservice Audit

The In-market Representative will participate in a scheduled kick-off call (45mins.) with the U.S. company and Food Export staff. The objective is to learn from the U.S. company details on their product, communicate the deliverables of the service, and review the timeline for completion.

Package A – Market Scan

Retail or Foodservice Audit

The In-Market Representative will assist U.S. food companies to determine whether products similar to theirs are being sold in the overseas market.

The retail audit report will be based on visits to at least three different supermarkets in a major city in the market. A foodservice audit report will be based on observations of the foodservice landscape in a major city in the market. If the product is new-to-market and there are no competitive brands, then information should be reported on a product(s) that could be considered a close competitor to the item of interest. Retail outlets selected for this research should be able to provide the U.S. exporter with a view of a wide range of the major brands in the market.

The types of information that are reported in the audit analysis are:

- Type of product
- Competitive brands or products
- Flavors
- Package types and sizes or foodservice formats
- Shelf space (number of facings) for retail products
- Regular prices in U.S. dollars and any special price offerings, if any
- Countries of origin
- Names of Importers/Distributors

In the case of a Market Scan for **food ingredients**, the store check report lists examples of product applications in the market; identifies where in the supply chain that the ingredients are needed; and whether the product is imported directly or through specialized intermediaries.

2. Distribution Analysis

The In-Market Representative will provide information on the make-up of the distribution channels through which the U.S. company's product is to be sold in the market. Types of information would include the size and make-up of the major players in the channel (ex. retail, foodservice or ingredient) and any trends evident in the changing nature of that channel over time.

3. Competitive Product Shopping

In-Market Representative will provide firsthand information to U.S. food companies about competitive products that are being sold in the market. This service will offer firsthand information about the type of packaging, labeling, and ingredients the competition is using. The competitive products that were identified while completing the Store Check and Distribution Analysis will be included, wherever possible. If the product chosen for the Market Scan is a food ingredient or foodservice, the competitive product shopping may not be possible. In lieu of this, the food ingredient or foodservice Market Scan participant receives a translation of up to 4 pages of their technical or product information. IMR should send digital images of the product, including product descriptions, sizes, other label information as well as current prices.

4. Importation Analysis

In-Market Representative will create a report that identifies the restrictions affecting the importation of said product into the market. Specifically, the report must include a statement listing:

- Harmonized System (HS) Code/import category
- Import statistics by volume and value based on the HS code, or a similar product, to demonstrate market share
- Also run a sample computation of the product's estimated landed cost
- Packaging and labeling requirements including date codes, local language requirements, importer information and units of measurement
- Import barriers
- Tariffs; value-added taxes and other fees
- Non-tariff barriers, including ingredient limitations, GMO concerns, etc.; prohibition on certain countries of origin whether temporary or long-term
- Import licensing requirements, permits, certificates and/or other documentation required to import a product into said country
- Product registration requirements
- Expiration date requirements

5. General Marketability Statement

This is the In-Market Representative's opinion of the marketability of the product and important marketing recommendations. It should be based on the In-Market Representative's opinions or observations in the market, but not involve any additional research or trade interviews. This should not be more than two or three paragraphs.

6. Distributor Referrals

The In-Market Representative will forward product samples, product brochures or literature, company profile and indicative export pricing to six appropriate and pre-qualified buyers. The Representative will create a report containing feedback from at least 5 buyers regarding said product. Buyers should provide feedback on the following qualities:

A. Reaction to the product, product samples, and literature
   - Taste
   - Formulation/Ingredients
   - Shelf-life
   - Package design and appearance
   - Type of packaging (glass bottles, cans, PET, cartons, etc.)

- Package sizes
- Labeling and information on the package
- Price

B. Reaction to product range (from catalogue or product literature)
- Products with best sales potential
- Products with least sales potential
- Products that a particular distributor is interested in

C. Other
- Typical distributor/wholesale and retail margins
- Barriers to import
- Expenses required to market the product, i.e., slotting allowances, new product evaluation fees, and/other retail policies which may affect market entry

7. Target Importer List

The In-Market Representative will provide a list of potential importers, including those involved in the distributor referrals above. Importers will be prioritized according to interest in the product. The list will include contact name and contact information. This list will also provide a brief summary of each importer's profile such as distribution, existing product lines and other available, public information. Buyers that are not interested are also listed with reasoning behind the non-interest.

8. Post Information

The In-Market Representative will also send any relevant reports from the FAS Overseas Post such as category specific guides, Exporter Guide, Retail Sector report, etc.

**There may be instances where a company may already have a product or brand in the market and is looking for more advanced or in-depth analysis. In this case In-market Representatives may be requested to provide alternative sections of the Market Scan report that may include:**

1. Audit of Current Market Position and Marketing

The In-market Representatives would audit the supplier's current importer, marketing efforts, and distribution, and suggest areas of improvement based on industry trends, consumer preference, and market conditions.

2. Customized Consumer Research

In-market Representatives will collect and/or analyze information about consumers' preferences, behaviors, and attitudes toward a supplier's product in the market. Third-party vendors who can provide this research on behalf of In-market Representatives will be approved by Food Export following a cost-analysis review of potential vendors. Food Export will assess research scope on a project-by-project basis. Objectives include providing actionable insights into understanding consumer behavior, customer segmentation, and pricing strategy, or providing product development feedback. Research should be limited in methodology and geography to provide the basic objectives mentioned above. The methods may include:

- Consumer surveys
- Consumer focus groups
- In-depth interviews with Consumers
- Observational research
- Online surveys

- Mystery shopping

3. Vendor Recommendations

In-market Representatives will provide recommendations for in-market vendors who may offer services associated with building upon or developing their market footprint. These services may include recommendations for vendors who can assist U.S. exporters with resources for packaging and labelling enhancements, digital marketing strategies, intellectual property protection, social media marketing, brand identity development, in-store/online product promotion activation.

4. On-going Market Updates

The In-market Representative will help to qualify new distributor leads and provide regular market updates for issues that may affect a U.S. exporter's product or market position. This may include changes to tariff arrangements or regulatory initiatives that could benefit or hinder further development in the market.

Package B – Rep Finder

1. Distributor Referrals

The In-Market Representative will forward product samples, product brochures or literature, company profile and indicative export pricing to six appropriate and pre-qualified buyers. The Representative will create a report containing feedback from at least 5 buyers regarding said product. Buyers should provide feedback consistent with section A, B, and C of the Distributor Referral section of the Market Scan above (#6) and include the additional following qualities:

A. General Marketability of Product
B. Marketing recommendations, including merchandising and promotional activities
C. List of companies that received product samples, their contact details, their interest in distributorship, and their opinion on whether the product is suitable for the market or not.

2. Target Importer List

The In-Market Representative will provide a list of potential importers, including those involved in the distributor referrals above. Importers will be prioritized according to interest in the product. The list will include contact name and contact information. This list will also provide a brief summary of each importer's profile such as distribution, existing product lines and other available, public information. Buyers that are not interested are also listed with reasoning behind the non-interest.

3. In-Market Assistance

The In-Market Representative will arrange at least three one-on-one appointments between participating U.S. exporters and targeted importers in said country. The Representative will make arrangements for the time, place, interpreter (if necessary) and other details of the meetings. The In-Market Representative will make personal introductions and accompany the U.S. exporter in the above-mentioned meetings with importers. The Representative will assist with communication or interpretation, if necessary, and moderate the sessions. The Representative will provide the participating U.S. exporter with a candid evaluation of the meetings and make recommendations for future action steps.

If a schedule cannot be filled, Food Export – Midwest and Northeast should be notified in advance.

The In-Market Representative should:

- Assist with hotel and domestic transportation arrangements, if needed, but these expenses will be paid for by the Market Builder company participant
- Provide a market briefing

- Arrange trade appointments and a visit with the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) Overseas Post (if time permits)
- The In-Market Representative will make personal introductions and accompany the U.S. exporter to meetings; assist with communication and moderate the sessions; provide the participating U.S. exporter with a candid evaluation of the meetings and make recommendations for future action steps.
- Where companies face non-tariff trade barriers, Food Export – Midwest and Northeast will assist companies in utilizing the appropriate services of the Foreign Agricultural Service and the U.S. Trade Representative to seek redress from higher level sources.
- The In-Market Representative will follow up with the U.S. exporter prior to their departure from the country to make sure that their meetings went smoothly and answer any questions they might have.

***This service is provided on an as-needed basis. A detailed template for the report will be provided; Market Scan reports average 25 – 40 pages. A full Market Builder requires approximately 6-7 days of work. Please provide quotes for each package of the Market Builder service and for providing the combined packages per project.***

**3. Buyers Missions**

**Background**

Food Export – Midwest's and Food Export Northeast's approach to organizing buying teams is to first identify sectors of the food and agriculture industry in which their suppliers are competitive. These sectors include Grocery Products, Specialty Foods, Seafood, Food Ingredients, Private Label, Natural/Organic, Food Service (HRI), Pet Food, wood and forestry products, and Feed Ingredients and Additives. Next, markets that are appropriate for that segment of the food industry are targeted, and important Buyers within these sectors are selected.

Buyers are invited to travel to the U.S. or a foreign market to participate in a broad series of private one-on-one meetings with U.S. suppliers. These meetings offer an unparalleled opportunity for each to learn more about the other's business, product line, marketing requirements or capabilities, strategies, opportunities, requirements and limitations.

Most of Food Export's Buyers Missions take place in the U.S., but occasionally Food Export will identify opportunities to invite buyers to international markets to meet with U.S. suppliers. Amongst other, these opportunities can take place at international trade shows or trade missions.

**Scope of Work**

The responsibilities of the selected In-Market Representative in carrying out a Buyers Mission are as follows:

1) Work with the Food Export staff and/or Activity Coordinator to determine needs of the Buyers Mission
2) Pre-qualify and recruit appropriate buyers, including any recommendations made by the local FAS Overseas Post
3) Communicate closely with buyers to understand their buying interests
4) Provide a detailed profile of each buyer to the Activity Coordinator, including detailed list of product of interest. Submit the nomination through Food Export's portal.
5) Assist Activity Coordinator with communication with the buyer after the nomination is approved, such as ensuring the buyer understands the Participation Agreement and provides necessary paperwork in a timely manner.
6) Assist Activity Coordinator to understand any special/cultural needs the buyers may have

7) Work with Food Export – Midwest and Northeast and their travel agents to make appropriate travel arrangements
8) Depending on the mission, In-Market Representative may be required to attend the mission to assist with various tasks, such as interpretation, communication and general management/logistics of mission
9) Follow up with the buyer(s) after the mission is completed to understand the results of the mission (i.e., sales made) and provide feedback to Food Export.

***Please quote on a per buyer basis.***

**4. Focused Trade Missions**

**Background**

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast and their member states work with small and medium-size food companies. Among the challenges of working with these companies is their lack of understanding and exposure to many markets. Often times, these companies try to sell their products and develop business relationships in countries they have not traveled to or toured in order to familiarize themselves with the basics of that market. This lack of understanding leaves U.S. exporters with only product specifications and prices as tools to market to foreign markets and often ends in failure.

The Focused Trade Mission is designed to offer U.S. exporters both a sales opportunity and educational experience. This project will take advantage of established relationships and programs available to U.S. exporters and provide a unique opportunity to travel to a target market not anchored to exhibiting at a tradeshow. Often, cost and time prohibit U.S. tradeshow exhibitors from the opportunity to study the market outside the tradeshow walls.

The Focused Trade Mission will partner with the following services and service providers: FAS Overseas office, Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast representatives, the Branded Program and member state representatives to offer U.S. companies a first-hand experience of the target market and highlight opportunities and constraints. Coupled with the educational component of this mission, there will be scheduled meetings and a tabletop reception to put U.S. exporters in contact with potential Buyers.

**Scope of Work**

The responsibilities of the selected In-Market Representative in carrying out a Focused Trade Mission are as follows:

1. Provide key messages about the market and the show and any information that can be utilized to promote and sell the activity
2. Work with Food Export staff to determine exact dates of the trade mission as well as elaborate a back-up plan for any changes on dates
3. Developing an executive summary of goals, objectives, plans and budget to administer the project, and a detailed timeline for completion of each phase of the project plan in close coordination with the Activity Coordinator.
4. Communicating project details to the appointed Activity Coordinator.
5. Conduct pre-event product research regarding pricing, import regulation, competitor analysis. Components of market scan may be chosen as part of this pre-product research.
6. Coordinate with the FAS Overseas Post to present a market briefing to the participating companies. The briefing could take place in the FAS facilities or in a meeting room. The In-market representative will make the request to FAS as soon as the project is approved.

7. Arrange one-on-one meetings with importers, distributors, supermarket buyers, and other appropriate trade contacts. The appointments will take place in the importer's offices or at other designated meeting place. The In-Market Representative will coordinate the transportation to all these appointments.
8. If recruiting buyers from areas outside of the host country/city, make travel arrangements for buyers to/at the trade mission location in line with Food Export's travel policy.
9. Organize supermarket tour or industry tour relevant to the product segment of the mission as part of the learning experience of visiting the market. Examples of the tour are a supermarket tour for retail focused trade missions, or a manufacturer facility tour for ingredients focused activities. During the tour, companies will be able to learn about local practices, who is doing business in the market and what type of products and prices they are selling for in the market. Transportation will be coordinated by the In-market representative.
10. Organize a table-top show / reception at a hotel meeting room or at the FAS Overseas office. Importers, distributors and buyers will be invited for the reception (a minimum of buyers should be confirmed). The table top will last average half day in order to give the opportunity to buyers to arrive at any time within that time. In-market representative will produce and send invitations for this event.
11. Coordinate the transportation of all the mission participants. Passenger vans will be rented as they are needed.
12. Coordinate hiring additional interpreters, so all the participating companies have access to clear translation during the trade mission.
13. Provide translation of marketing materials (up to 2 pages per participant) in the local language, if applicable. Companies must receive final translated version three weeks before the trade mission as long as all company information is received on a timely basis. Companies will be responsible for printing profiles. (Translation is limited to a maximum of 2 pages of text per company.)

14. Coordinate a room block at a hotel for all the participants at federal per diem rate. (Participants will pay their own lodging, meals and incidental expenses.)
15. Coordinate the importation of product samples into the market.
16. Arrange printing of a mission brochure which will contain information on all the participating companies including contact information and products. Approximately 500 copies (or a sufficient number of copies according to the needs of each particular market) may be printed in a double letter size page. Each participating U.S. exporter will use this as a hand-out during the showcase, reception and for the one-on-one business appointments. Any remaining brochures will be left at the FAS Overseas Office for further distribution.
17. Provide a detailed final report inclusive of:
    a) Executive Summary
    b) Review of project
    c) List of Participants and corresponding company evaluations
    d) Summary of project and each segment
    e) Evaluation of each project segment
        - Company profiles
        - Product surveys
        - Interpreters
        - Informal retail tours
        - Press releases
    f) Recommendations to improve services at future activities

g) In-Market Representative comments and evaluation results
h) Digital pictures of the event including show signage and where possible, representative photos of the area

***Total participation averages eight or more companies per mission, depending on recruitment. Based on our experience, we estimate a Focused Trade Mission activity will require approximately 50 days of preparation work plus the execution of the mission. Please provide a quote which is comprised of an overall administrative fee for the mission, plus a per-supplier participant fee for mission services for participants one through eight, then, include cost per supplier beyond eight participants.***

**5. Trade Servicing**

**Scope of Work**

The responsibilities of the selected In-Market Representative in carrying out trade servicing may include, but are not limited to:

- Visiting with potential importers, distributors, retailers, food service, food ingredient, feed ingredients, and seafood buyers and developing lists of these companies that are the most reputable, experienced, and in the best position to deal with our exporters.
- Developing and maintaining a database of potential importers and buyers from the representative's market, their contact information, and their product interests. Data developed as part of this trade servicing agreement will be shared with Food Export at the conclusion of the year.
- Dedicating the specified amount of trade servicing time to seafood specific initiatives and research as described by Food Export.
- Conducting outreach and educational efforts on behalf of Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast to encourage participation in our programs and services.
- Following up with buyers that participated in buyers missions, FSP!™, Market Builder, Focused Trade Missions, Product Showcases, Retail/Foodservice Promotions, other special projects and obtain evaluations and or identify problems which may be inhibiting sales.
- Participate actively in the usage of Food Export's Dynamics database either by entering notes in the system or providing any updates on contacts listed.
- Informing Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast of market development opportunities that arise throughout the year and activities that should be included in our annual funding application to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Unified Export Strategy (UES).
- Promoting Food Export's Online Product Catalog including pre-qualifying buyers and generating trade lead inquiries for dissemination to Midwest and Northeast companies.
- Traveling to the U.S. to visit with Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast to learn more about their operations, activities, and companies.
- Assisting with Branded Program inquiries as requested.
- Assisting our State Marketing Specialists on a limited basis.
- Informing Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast of any noteworthy market intelligence that should be included in our communication tools that goes out to exporters (newsletters, social media, blog, etc.)
- Reporting on any potential success story leads and actual sales that have resulted from a Food Export program or activity.
- Track sales and other performance measures resulting from all events in which services are provided. Assist in documenting performance results by completing evaluations using Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast standard evaluation formats, where appropriate.

Generate success stories as results warrant. Identify problems which may inhibit sales and in obtaining evaluation results.

- Refer participating importers and exporters to other relevant services offered by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast, the FAS offices and other service providers that can further assist them in achieving increased sales/purchases of U.S. food and agricultural products.
- The In-Market Representative will be responsible for providing a monthly report outlining the trade servicing completed and any results achieved.
- The In-Market Representative is responsible for complying with local data protection & privacy laws including providing documentation of any consent given to the In-Market Representative to use data for Food Export MW & NE's purposes if required by local law. The In-Market Representative is responsible for notifying Food Export immediately if any data used for Food Export MW or NE has been breached or compromised in any way and must have compliant policy in place to handle such a breach as required by local law.

**US Foodlink and US Feedlink Newsletter and Email Bulletins**

In addition to the above, the In-Market Representative is responsible for the promotion and distribution of *US Foodlink and US Feedlink* by:

- Maintaining a database of addresses for distribution of the bi-monthly *U.S. Foodlink* and *Feedlink* newsletters, including importers, retailers, foodservice operators, other trade contacts and FAS Overseas Post(s)
- Continually add new addresses, update existing ones and send this database to Food Export-Midwest and Northeast December of each year or as requested
- Translate the *US Foodlink/Feedlink* newsletters, or collaborate regarding translation with relevant other market representatives conducting business in the same language if appropriate
- Promote the *US Foodlink/Feedlink* bi-monthly newsletters and email bulletins to all contacts
- See that buyers with an interest in the *US Foodlink/Feedlink* email bulletins are entered in Food Export Dynamics database with an active e-mail
- Buyers interested in products featured in the *US Foodlink/Feedlink* newsletters are submitted as trade leads via the Food Export portal.
- Inform Food Export – Midwest and Northeast of any success stories that may come out of the newsletters or email bulletins. This should include not only sales from the New Products section, but any evidence of use such as attendance at a trade show due to use of the Events section or changes in operations due to research that is incorporated on the website
- Make recommendations for content and improvements to *US Foodlink/Feedlink*
- Conduct evaluation of *US Foodlink/Feedlink* every three years.

***Please quote on a per unit basis. Please identify the country(ies) you can cover.***

**6. Social Media Engagement**

The IMR will maintain and post on one or more social media pages dedicated to promoting Food Export - Midwest and Food Export Northeast in IMR market(s). IMRs will be responsible for maintaining social media engagement to create and increase foreign buyer awareness of Food Export programs and services.

Responsibilities include

- Posting a minimum of 2 times per week

- Sharing, liking, commenting on, and generally interacting with Food Export and other relevant groups' posts
- Tagging Food Export and other relevant groups in posts where applicable
- Promoting Food Export in-market activities
- Creating at least 1 specific post each month to share and highlight the U.S. Foodlink/Feedlink on each social media page
- Responding to inquiries within 2 business days
- Providing quarterly reporting to Associations on page analytics including reach, engagement, followers, page views, and/or other metrics relevant to the site. If pages are created on multiple social media sites, IMR must provide quarterly reporting on each page

***Please quote on per unit basis.***

**7. Food Export Website Creation and Maintenance**

The In-Market Representative will create and maintain a website that is dedicated to representing Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast in the IMR market(s). The main objectives of the website are to receive inquiries, connect with new buyers in the market, and promote Food Export importer services.

Website creation may include

- Initial design and website build-out
- SEO costs
- Domain purchase
- Translation
- Select stock images
- Other expenses specifically approved by Food Export

Website maintenance may include

- Hosting fees
- SEO costs

The IMR responsibilities related to the dedicated website include

- Providing a landing place for importers and other potential buyers who may be interested in US products or Food Export activities and services
- Generally promoting Food Export activities and services and value-added products from the Midwest and Northeast USA
- Responding to inquiries within 2 business days
- Featuring Food Export events and associated events in the market(s)
- Keeping the website security, links, videos, photos updated and working
- Providing quarterly reporting to Associations on website traffic, number of inquiries, number of trade leads submitted, other findings

***Please quote on per unit basis.***

**8. Virtual Consultation**

The responsibilities of the In-Market Representative in carrying out the virtual consultation includes:

- Review supplier profile report to be submitted by Food Export - Staff indicating a supplier's product, previous experience in the market, goal for participation in a cal, and questions pertaining to the one-on-one video conference.
- Conduct preliminary research in order to be able to answer supplier questions and provide valuable feedback to help the supplier attain a better understanding of the market.
- Questions may pertain to the following topics:
  - Product preferences (taste, ingredients, format, etc.)
  - Package size, color, type, etc.
  - Red Flags (issues with product that may make it a bad fit for the market)
  - Basic import data based on product type
  - Trade show information (size, audience, potential, etc.)
  - Country specific information regarding consumers
  - Basic marketability of product based on product type
- Participate on the 30 min. video call
- Provide basic follow-up to any further questions discussed during the consultation. The follow-up will be limited to and included in a consultation report (no more than one page). The consultation report will provide a record of what was discussed during the virtual consultation and will be provided to the supplier by the Food Export tactic lead.

***Please quote on a per participant basis.***

**9. Lead Qualification Service**

The responsibilities of the In-Market Representative in carrying out lead qualification service are:

- Review information submitted by the supplier this will include:
  - Business Card Info
  - Trade Show Attended
  - Focus of initial meeting/conversation
  - Key Product Takeaways
  - Reason for Desired Business
    - Particular appeal to the market?
    - Buyer particularly interested in products?
- Researches/contacts potential buyer to collect information, which may include:
- Demographics
  - Org. Category: Broker, Consolidator, Wholesaler, etc.
  - Access to Decision Makers
- Organization Description
  - Background/History
    - Year Founded/HQ
    - Industry Segment
- Products Information
  - What products do they carry/produce already?
  - What products do they have interest in importing?
  - Customers? Import Directly?
  - Shipping Information/Quotation Preferences
- Additional Information – Differences per market
  - Catch all text box where the IMR can share any pertinent info about the buyer not included above

        - Red Flags?
        - Things to consider when pursuing business
        - Cultural tendencies to be aware of
    - Disclaimer
- Submit information gathered to Food Export within two weeks of initial information submitted.

**10. Product Showcases**

Food Export offers U.S. suppliers opportunities to showcase their products in a Food Export shared booth at various trade shows around the world. Participants at these showcases do not need to travel to be present at these shows. They are represented at the show by Food Export In-Market Representatives. Assistance required may include:

- Coordinate procurement of potential booth space at the designated trade show with the trade show organizer
- Provide Food Export staff with resources and contacts to secure booth space at the designated trade show
- Take an active role in the organization, management and build out of the Food Export booth
- Participate in a virtual pre-show briefing with U.S. suppliers to provide brief knowledge of the market for their products
- Targeted buyer invitation to the Showcase
- Assistance with printing of marketing materials; display of product samples (and/or sample packaging) and literature in a shared Food Export booth
- Provide instructions on how to ship product samples/literature and assistance with product sample and literature shipment customs clearance and acceptance to the country
- A one to two-page post-show report for each Showcase participant with a list of trade contacts and potential buyers as well as buyer feedback on their products
- Follow-up with buyers
- Shipping of samples to importers and distributors after the show
- Detailed activity report to Food Export about the product showcase including general feedback and evaluation results

***This service is provided on an as-needed basis. Please quote on per participant basis.***

**11. Retail and Foodservice Promotion**

Food Export conducts promotional efforts geared toward raising trade and consumer awareness of the variety, quality and value of U.S. products with the goal of product adoption and retention in the long term. Contractors will be tasked with

- identifying and recommending promotional opportunities and partners in the retail and foodservice segments; including working with FAS Posts to identify such opportunities
- identifying product categories of interest or new-to-market products with the potential for short-term and sustained sales increases
- ensuring that products from the Midwest and Northeast are included in the promotions
- Developing and assisting with implementation of promotional activities within the guidelines specified by Food Export - Midwest and Northeast including negotiating promotional terms, assisting with in-store merchandising and display, development of promotional concepts and materials, etc.
- Submitting a report on the activity and providing evaluation results

***This service is provided on an as-needed basis. Please quote on a per unit basis.***

**12. Importer Education and Development**

Food Export continues to implement new measures to support established relationships and forge new relationships with importers, distributors and buyers worldwide. Buyer and importer education development is critical to building and maintaining trusted business relationships. Food Export conducts in-market importer education seminars to assist with this effort along with a number of buyer development initiatives. Contractors will assist with:

- organizing and conducting overseas importer education seminars with a focus on the benefits that the Branded program can offer to importers; discuss how to effectively implement and document promotional activities for reimbursement under the Branded Program
- identify other relevant seminar contents and information sharing on topics such as trends and innovations in U.S. food and beverage products; retail and foodservice concepts and formats; and/or effective buying and promotional practices
- production, translation and dissemination of importer education brochures and marketing collateral including digital materials
- increasing outreach and promotional campaigns via ads/advertorials and use of social media to build awareness for Food Export programs, solidify relationships with the trade, create and enhance awareness of the brand, quality and safety of US food products from the Midwest and Northeast regions

***This service is provided on an as-needed basis. Please quote on a per unit basis.***

**13. Wrap-around services to USDA Agribusiness Trade Missions**

The United States Department of Agriculture organizes trade missions to a number of markets each year. USDA will facilitate the trade mission and participants will be connected with key importers for business-to-business meetings and learn about local and regional market conditions through site visits and briefings by FAS staff, industry experts and government officials.

Food Export will support USDA's Agribusiness trade missions by promoting the trade missions to suppliers in the Midwest and Northeast region. Suppliers from Food Export's region will be supported by Food Export's in-market representative through wrap-around services.

The responsibilities of the In-Market Representative in carrying out the wrap-around services for USDA ATMs are as follows:

- One-on-one virtual consultation with each participant ahead of the trade mission
- Conduct pre-event product research regarding pricing, import regulation, competitor analysis. Components of market scan may be chosen as part of this pre-product research.
- Translation of marketing materials (up to 2 pages) into local language, if applicable
- Follow-up virtual consultation after the trade mission

***This service is provided on an as-needed basis. Participation varies by market. Please quote on a per participant basis.***

**14. Market Research and Development**

The responsibilities of the selected In-Market Representative in carrying out market research and development are as follows:

- Undertake industry and/or sector studies as requested;
- Perform other specific consulting work as requested by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast.

***Please quote on a per unit basis.***

**15. Special Projects**

New and special projects may arise and are undertaken by Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast. Enhancements to existing programs and services may likewise be undertaken in response to evolving market conditions or emerging market opportunities. Contractor assistance is often needed on these undertakings and may be assigned during the term of this contract. They are responsible for working with the International Marketing Program manager or designated Food Export staff to provide input on a plan of work for the project, as appropriate, and to provide the assistance required and assigned. A specific Scope of Work and Fees will be determined and agreed upon by Food Export and the contractor prior to the commencement of the special project. A contract amendment may be executed as necessary.

***Please quote on a per unit basis.***

**Requirements and Submitting a Proposal**

The contractor must be able to cite previous experience in conducting market research. Previous experience with not-for-profit groups, international marketing, food and/or agricultural groups will be considered favorably. The contractor must also be financially and legally capable of entering into and executing a contract for the above stated projects. In addition, please provide the following information:

1. Name of Entity (as it would appear on contract/invoices)
2. Main point of contact
3. Complete Mailing Address / Physical Office Address
4. EIN/TIN/SS number (or if an overseas entity, the equivalent tax identification number in your country)
5. Type of Structure (choose one):
   ___Individual ___Corporation ___LLC ___Partnership ___Sole Proprietorship

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are not liable for any costs associated with any company's response to this RFP. Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast reserve the right to not award this contract if, in the opinion of the evaluators, no suitable proposal is received. The awarded contract may be renewed for up to three (3) years.

The selected contractor must agree to abide by Food Export –Midwest and Food Export – Northeast Terms and Conditions:

Food Export Midwest and Food Export - Northeast do not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, national origin or ancestry, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation or military status. Persons with disabilities who require alternate means of communication of program information should contact us.

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast do not tolerate fraud in their programs or services, and expect all participants to comply with our code of ethics (www.foodexport.org/termsandconditions).

If you suspect any instance of fraud, please contact our Ethics Reporting Line at: www.foodexport.ethicspoint.com or 1-855-727-6715 (domestic toll-free.)

We reserve the right to deny services to any firm or individual which, in the sole opinion of Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast do not comply with MAP/AFTPP/RAPP and other federally funded programs; FAS; Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast regulations or policies, or otherwise reflect positively on them; their members states; FAS; or USDA, in pursuit of their mission of increasing food and agricultural exports, or for continued public support for their programs. For more information, please see our Terms and Conditions located at (www.foodexport.org/termsandconditions).

The selected contractor must agree to abide by the provisions contained in Section 202 of Executive Order 11246 (30 Federal Register 12319) with regard to employment and contracting practices. In addition, Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast require that its contractors may not discriminate 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. Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast acceptance of proposal is conditional upon contractor disclosing all existing relationship with another party that has the potential of impacting and/or influencing the contractor's ability to carry out the scope of work or may result in any real or perceived conflict of interest. Failure to disclose any known relationships is grounds for excluding a vendor from consideration to be awarded the aforementioned scope of work.

By responding to this request for proposal, you are certifying that your company nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any Federal department or agency. If you are unable to certify to the preceding statement, but wish to proceed with a proposal to this request, you will need to include an explanation as to why you cannot certify this statement as an attachment to your proposal.

The contents of this Request for Proposal and Scopes of Work are confidential and business proprietary. They may not be re-used for any purpose, in whole or part, including any text, or related concepts, strategies or tactics described, without written permission from Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast.

The contractor must agree to abide by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast invoicing guidelines which include:

- Invoice must contain a unique invoice number
- Individual invoices per project or activity
- Each invoice must include the current hours being invoiced, the hours already invoiced on the project, and the total number of hours agreed upon for the vendor to carry out the project
- Invoices must be submitted no less-frequently than at the completion of each project phase
- Final invoices must be submitted within 30 days of completion of the project.

- The Scope of Work for a specific project as agreed to by the vendor, Food Export – Midwest and/or Food Export – Northeast must be included as a basis to track the actual work performed against the agreement.

**The deadline for proposals is 12:00 noon ET on Friday, November 6, 2026**. Only emailed proposals will be accepted.

**Questions should be directed to:**

Femke Bosch
International Marketing Program Manager
Food Export Association of the Midwest USA
Phone: (312) 334-9201
Email: fbosch@foodexport.org

**Please send proposals to:**

Joy F. Canono
International Marketing Programs Coordinator
Food Export USA - Northeast
Email: jcanono@foodexport.org