



STEP – Agri-Value

**Border Buster
Oct. 9 – 11, 2018
Minneapolis, MN**

TRIP REPORT





CONNECTING SASKATCHEWAN BUSINESS WITH THE WORLD

Overview/Mission Description

The 2018 Border Buster was a business development program meant for companies seeking to understand and access the U.S. food market. Attending companies travelled to Minneapolis, MN to learn about the export process while also in market. The program was created with the objective to prepare participating companies for international business development while realizing market diversification and new export sales. Companies in attendance learned about the U.S. export/import process, regulatory and customs procedures, the U.S. retail model, new market opportunities, best practices, market trends, and made connections with food industry leaders.

Three STEP members took part in the three-day program, which included attendance to Minnesota's *Food, Ag and Ideas Week*, the Minnesota Section *IFT Suppliers' Expo*, numerous networking opportunities, an educational seminar and more.

Summarized Agenda

The program took place in and around downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN over a three-day period. After arrival on the first day, companies were lead to numerous seminars held during *Food, Ag and Ideas Week*, followed by networking opportunities. On day two, companies again participated in *Food, Ag and Ideas Week*, walked an IFT Suppliers' Expo, attended networking events, and went on a manufacturing bus tour. The bus tour included a visit to local specialty food shop, *Seasoned*, the *Co-Op Partners* warehouse and distribution centre, and a tour of St. Paul's NE Food District. On the final day, STEP coordinated educational seminar.

The educational seminar included speakers from various companies/industries. The speakers were: US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), FasTrack Globalizer (consultant on preparing for and working a trade show), Reile's Transfer, Registrar Corp., Livingston International, Consulate General of Canada in Minneapolis, Capita 3 (retail and distribution consultant), and the U.S. Customs & Border Guard (CBP).

Market Information

Home to over 68.1 million people spread across 12 states, the Midwest region spans an area of 1.2 million sq. km. bordering the Great Lakes to the north and comprising the majority of the rich agricultural region known as the U.S. Grain Belt¹. The Midwest imported \$1.7 billion of Saskatchewan's food and beverage products in 2017, an increase of 8.5 per cent over the previous year. This makes up nearly 50 per cent of all food and beverage exports to the U.S.²

When looking at the U.S. as a whole, it is Saskatchewan's largest trading partner, accounting for 55.5 per cent of the province's total exports. Export shipments valued at \$15.7 billion were sent to the United States which is an increase of 25.8 per cent from 2016.

The shared border between Canada's Prairie Provinces and the Upper Midwest has created a long history of business transactions. The Upper Midwest provides an ideal entry point into the U.S. and is therefore an excellent place for Saskatchewan's first-time exporters. Saskatchewan companies may also be attracted to this area because of their food processing heritage and resources, shared culture and/or values, numerous headquartered top food companies, an abundance of growing food categories, and numerous distribution hubs. The region is home to many of the largest food and commodity companies in the U.S., including Archer Daniels Midland, Cargill, CHS, Mondelez International, Kraft Foods and the Kellogg Company.

Results

A total of three STEP companies participated in this program. During the three-day program, companies gathered a great deal of information about the market and how to access it. All companies reported that they gained a great deal of insight, made new important contacts, and came home with new ideas. Companies stated that they would attend this program again in the future.

The agenda provided companies with numerous opportunities to learn and network. The Minnesota market, as well as surrounding states, proved to be an encouraging place for companies to begin exporting.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau (2017). *American Community Survey 1-year estimates*. Retrieved from *Census Reporter Profile page for Midwest Region*<<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/02000US2-midwest-region/>>

² International trade data and market intelligence. (2013, August 13). Trade data online - Home. Retrieved from <http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/tdo-dcd.nsf/eng/Home>



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Although innovation and entrepreneurs in the food industry are growing in the area, it is still a competitive, logical and manageable place to start.

Recommendations

The Border Buster program was robust and purposeful. All attended and planned events were well suited for participating companies. When planning this event in future years, it is encouraged to continue the seminar day, as this was the most valuable in terms of content. However, because of the large amount of content, it would be wise to split the day into two half-days.

It was advantageous to have the U.S. Border Guard in attendance during the seminar to briefly discuss the customs and border crossing process. However, it would be even more beneficial to physically go through the process of crossing the border. It is recommended that in the coming years, STEP plans a Border Buster program that enables attending companies to cross the Canadian-U.S. border with their product, in order to learn the process first-hand.

Finally, in order to expand knowledge of the U.S. market, it is recommended that future Border Buster programs be conducted in different strategic markets, such as Washington, North Dakota or Illinois.

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Pictures



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