

**Texas Department of Agriculture
Major Border and Cross Border Initiatives**

Marketing Initiatives:

- TDA operates six livestock export pens in Brownsville, Eagle Pass, Laredo, Del Rio, El Paso and Houston. These facilities are available to provide a convenient stopping point for exporters to feed, water and rest their livestock prior to being exported and before the transfer of livestock from owners to international buyers. Five of the export facilities are located along the Mexican border and the livestock is exported via truck into Mexico. The export facilities located at the George Bush International Airport in Houston and the Brownsville Airport are authorized to conduct truck-to-airplane and truck-to-boat transfers.
- TDA is currently working with USDA and SAGARPA to begin crossing dairy cattle into Mexico. There is a protocol that went into effect on October 4, 2006, and we are finalizing the logistics to start crossing dairy cattle.
- TDA's Livestock Marketing Division and regional staff work with international committees for Texas' major livestock shows (including Dallas, Fort Worth, Mercedes, San Antonio and Houston) to develop and strengthen key international contacts. Additionally, this division works with organizations such as the U.S. Livestock Genetics Export Inc., the Dallas, Fort Worth and Houston Convention and Visitors Bureaus to host trade missions that promote Texas genetics. The regional staff assists year-round, facilitating sales to foreign buyers as well as expediting shipments to foreign countries. For instance, staff annually host groups of livestock buyers from Central and South America among other countries during the Fort Worth and Houston livestock shows. Additionally, TDA coordinates reverse trade missions to and from Mexico to attend major annual livestock and trade shows resulting in increased sales and referrals for Texas producers. The livestock marketing division also works with regional staff to coordinate and conduct ranch visits and tours and facilitate sales and referrals.
- TDA's International Program conducts Export Readiness Training in coordination with the Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA), of which TDA is a member, and the San Antonio area Small Business Development Center through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) Emerging Market Office grant program. This training educates companies on how to export and increase export sales of Texas products. While the training is not focused on trade with Mexico specifically, many training participants are often interested in trade with Mexico. This is a five-year program that will end in September 2009.
- TDA International Marketing staff is recruiting companies throughout the state, including the border regions, to offer programs that can assist them in their export endeavors. Export Readiness Training (ERT) is one such program that educates

companies on how to export and increase export sales of Texas products. The Branded Market Access Program (MAP) is another program that helps small- to medium-sized businesses market their products overseas by providing up to 50 percent reimbursement for eligible marketing expenses, including tradeshows, advertising and in-store demonstrations. The following are Texas companies in the border regions that have received assistance through one or both of these programs in past years:

- MAP Branded Companies - Claude's Sauces (El Paso), El Paso Chile Company (El Paso), Hygeia Dairy Company (Harlingen), Kunafin (Quemado), and Tri-City Sales (El Paso)
- ERT Companies - Claude's Sauces (El Paso), Kunafin (Quemado) and La Abuela (Weslaco)
- TDA, partnering with SUSTA, helped Texas companies meet Mexican buyers in the hotel, restaurant and bar industry by participating in the Exphotel trade show in Cancun, Mexico this year. Booth space and shipping costs were paid for through USDA/FAS funds. Two Texas companies were represented at this show. As a result of this tradeshow, an \$11,000 sale to Wal-Mart-Mexico was reported.
- TDA conducts reverse trade missions with buyers in Mexico, including a SUSTA-funded joint project with the state of North Carolina. Buyers from Mexico have traveled to Texas and North Carolina to have one-on-one meetings with food suppliers.
- TDA's Texas Yes! initiative was launched in 2003 to promote tourism and community growth in rural Texas. The free membership program is open to rural communities, organizations, businesses and individuals. Currently there are 82 Texas Yes! members located in the border region. Texas Yes! community members in the border region have been approved for more than \$85,000 in reimbursable funds through the Texas Yes! Hometown STARS and Bootstrap Bucks programs, which help rural communities promote local events.

Rural Economic Development Initiatives:

- The Rural Economic Development Division (RED) assists Texas communities and business people in expanding the rural Texas economy. Seven TDA specialists are located across Texas to work directly with communities and assist Texas producers, processors, marketers and entrepreneurs in diversifying agricultural production and in expanding or creating value-added agricultural businesses that will capture a greater share of state, national and international markets through various finance programs. RED staff also work directly with non-agricultural business people and community leaders, providing planning assistance and information on different programs available through TDA and other agencies.

- TDA works with Texas grain and sorghum producers to connect them directly with Mexican consumers. TDA does this by providing assistance in facilitating truck-, rail- and port-loading facilities in Texas for grain and sorghum producers to increase economic opportunity in border communities.
- Trade Adjustment - Staff provided rural businesses with contacts and information on Southwest Trade Adjustment Assistance Center grant opportunities, including successful applications by businesses in the cities of Stockdale, Weslaco, San Benito, Lyford, Odem, El Campo, McAllen, Pharr and Weatherford, as well as, El Paso, Hudspeth and Jeff Davis counties.
- Minority Farmers and Ranchers - The Texas/Mexico Border Coalition, with the support of the University of Texas Pan American and Natural Resources Conservation Service, continuously hold workshops throughout Texas targeting minority farmers and ranchers.
- Other Workshops - TDA partnered with local groups and American Electric Power (AEP) to organize economic development workshops in South Texas and the Lower Rio Grande Valley featuring state and federal agencies in panel discussions.

Regulatory Initiatives:

- TDA along with USDA provide phytosanitary certificates to facilitate export of Texas agricultural products to Mexico. USDA and TDA cooperate with the state of Tamaulipas and Sanidade Vegetal to release sterile Mexican fruit flies in Tamaulipas along the Texas/Tamaulipas border.
- As a part of the Border Governors Ag Work Table activities, Coahuilla, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas and Texas developed a plan to eradicate the Mexican fruit fly from these states; however, the plan was not implemented because of a lack of funds.
- TDA participates with Mexico in developing phytosanitary standards related to pests and diseases under the guidance of the North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO).

Texas Cooperative Inspection Program (TCIP) Initiative:

- Imported fruits, vegetables, peanuts and tree nuts from Mexico and other countries are inspected by the Texas Cooperative Inspection Program (TCIP). TCIP is a cooperative program between TDA and USDA that ensures USDA marketing standards of quality are met.

Natural Resources Initiatives:

- TDA is a participant in a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service steering committee for an experimental introduction of the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow.
- TDA cooperates with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Environmental Defense, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the Forgotten River Project. The goal of this project is to first chemically treat salt cedar along this stretch of river and later to revegetate with native vegetation to improve flow and water quality.
- TDA participates in the steering committee of the Rio Grande Basin Initiative, an agricultural and urban water conservation research project. The goal of the research is to further develop water conservation and irrigation technology that is specifically applicable to the basin's needs and to decide what type of educational programs are needed to increase water use efficiencies.
- TDA is a member of the Steering Committee and the Agricultural Subcommittee of the Arroyo Colorado TMDL for Dissolved Oxygen and Legacy Pesticides. The Arroyo travels through Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties and empties into the Lower Laguna Madre.
- TDA participates in the Pecos River Brush Control Project. This project works to control invasive brush species in the Pecos River Basin for the purpose of increasing water supplies for municipalities, industry and the citizens of Texas.

Miscellaneous:

- TDA continues to work with state and federal officials to ensure Mexico abides by the 1944 U.S.-Mexico Water Treaty and that Lower Rio Grande Valley agricultural producers have the necessary water to remain viable.
- TDA is a member of the Border Governors' Conference Agriculture Work Table and a member the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Tri-National Accord U.S./Mexico Working Group.
- TDA and its counterparts from the nine U.S. and Mexican border states continue to work together to protect the border and each state's plant and animal production systems against diseases and potential terrorist attacks.