

International Trade UPDATE

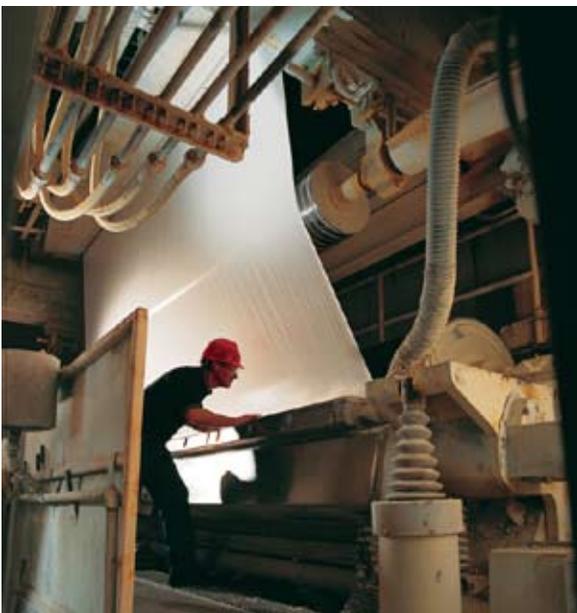
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April 2007

Commerce Department Targets Chinese Subsidies on Coated Free-Sheet Paper

Preliminary decision to apply countervailing duty law to china signals major change in trade policy.

BY TIM TRUMAN



Sheets of recently coated paper are examined at NewPage Corporation's Escanaba operations in Escanaba, Michigan. The Commerce Department's recent decision to apply countervailing duties to Chinese imports of certain papers was made in response to a petition filed by NewPage in 2006. (Photo courtesy of NewPage Corporation.)

Subsidies provided to Chinese producers and exporters of coated free-sheet (glossy) paper are the subject of the first countervailing duty (CVD) investigation against a non-market economy (NME) since 1991. On March 30, 2007, the Commerce Department preliminarily

decided to apply CVDs to coated free-sheet paper imported from China. The decision altered a 23-year-old policy of not applying the CVD law to NMEs, and it reflects China's economic development.

The preliminary results of the department's CVD investigation found that Chinese producers and exporters of glossy paper received net countervailable subsidies ranging from 10.90 to 20.35 percent. As a result, U.S. Customs and Border Protection is now collecting a cash deposit or bond from importers of that paper subject to the investigation.

"This administration has aggressively enforced our antidumping laws to combat unfair Chinese trade," said Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez. "China's economy has developed to the point that we can add another trade remedy tool, such as the countervailing duty law. The China of today is not the China of years ago. Just as China has evolved, so has the range of our tools to make sure Americans are treated fairly. By acting on the petition filed last October, the United States is demonstrating its continued commitment to leveling the playing field for American manufacturers, workers, and farmers."

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INTERNATIONAL
TRADE
ADMINISTRATION

New Guide Explains Basics of Trade Finance

A new publication from the International Trade Administration's Office of Finance offers small businesses and new exporters a succinct guide to the basics of export financing.

BY MATT BRAUD AND YUKI FUJIYAMA



A comprehensive, informative, and easy-to-understand resource on export financing, *Trade Finance Guide: A Quick Reference for U.S. Exporters*, was published in early April 2007 by the Commerce Department's International Trade Administration (ITA). Written by the ITA's Office of Finance, the guide was specifically conceived to address the need of U.S. small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for information on that occasionally daunting, but crucial, aspect of conducting international business.

SMEs make up the backbone of the U.S. economy. According to the Census Bureau, there were 5.8 million SMEs with employees in 2005. Those SMEs employed about half of the private-sector workforce in the United States. The *Trade Finance Guide* is designed to provide SMEs with the knowledge to grow and to successfully compete in overseas markets.

"The *Trade Finance Guide* is a first-of-its-kind finance resource for America's small businesses," said Franklin L. Lavin, under secretary of commerce for international trade. "By taking advantage of this cost-effective, easy-to-obtain tool, U.S. exporters can enhance their competitiveness in today's global marketplace and easily learn how to turn overseas opportunities into actual sales and profits."

Brevity, Visuals Aid Message

The *Trade Finance Guide* contains 11 two-page chapters, which offer concise descriptions of the most commonly used financing techniques in international trade.

Topics include the following:

- Methods of payment
- Letters of credit
- Export working capital

- Export credit insurance
- Government-assisted foreign buyer financing

A chart accompanies each section and offers the user a brief, to-the-point statement of the pros and cons of each financing method, as well as the risks involved in using the method. With this easy-to-understand guide, SME exporters will learn how to effectively manage the risks associated with doing business internationally and to achieve the ultimate goal of getting paid for their export sales, especially on time.

Released at Export-Import Bank Conference

On April 12, 2007, the *Trade Finance Guide* was officially released by Ana Guevara, deputy assistant secretary for services, while she spoke at the Export-Import Bank's annual conference in Washington, D.C. Guevara joined Bijan Kian, director of the Export-Import Bank, in a session titled "New Horizons in Exporting Services." They led an interactive discussion on ways to increase exporting opportunities for U.S.-based services.

"The annual Export-Import Conference provided an excellent opportunity to distribute advance copies of the *Trade Finance Guide*," said Guevara. "I was able to offer detailed explanations of how this guide can help participants remain competitive in today's marketplace."

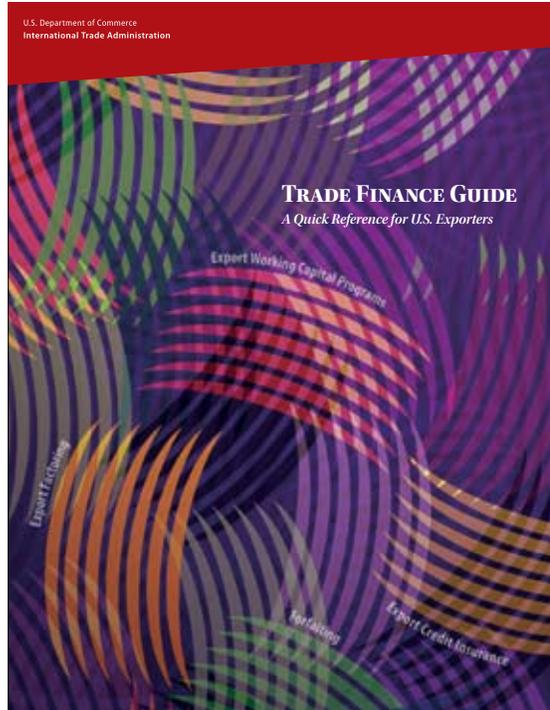
Private-Sector Partnership

FCIB, a non-profit association of executives in finance, credit, and international business that is based in Columbia, Maryland, helped create the *Trade Finance Guide*. FCIB is a prominent business educator of credit and risk management to exporting companies of every size.

Regular Updates to Come

The Commerce Department plans to update the guide on a regular basis. Future updates will be posted to the Department of Commerce's Web site and made available in print, reflecting the feedback received from the Trade Information Center, U.S. Export Assistance Centers, and the Commercial Service's overseas posts. All of those stakeholders plan to use the guide as a counseling tool to directly assist U.S. businesses in exporting their products and services to overseas markets.

Matt Braud is the communications director in the International Trade Administration's Manufacturing and Services unit. Yuki Fujiyama is a business and industry specialist in the International Trade Administration's Office of Finance.



How to Obtain Copies

The *Trade Finance Guide* is available online at www.export.gov, the U.S. government's export portal. Printed copies will be available from the Trade Information Center at (800) USA-TRAD(E) (800-872-8723) and from the Commercial Service's global network of domestic Export Assistance Centers and overseas posts. To find the nearest Export Assistance Center or overseas Commercial Service office, visit www.export.gov or call the Trade Information Center.

Commerce Issues Affirmative Preliminary CVD Determinations for South Korea and Indonesia

On March 30, 2007, the Commerce Department also announced its affirmative preliminary determinations in the CVD investigations on imports of coated free-sheet paper from South Korea and Indonesia. The department preliminarily determined that Korean and Indonesian producers and exporters have received net countervailable subsidies ranging from 0.04 percent (*de minimis*) to 1.76 percent; and 21.24 percent, respectively. Because of the preliminary determination, the Commerce Department has instructed U.S. Customs and Border Protection to suspend liquidation of entries of subject merchandise and to collect a cash deposit or bond based on the preliminary rates.

Chinese Subsidies

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First China CVD Investigation since 1991

The path to this decision began in October 2006, when a U.S. manufacturer of coated free-sheet paper, NewPage Corporation of Dayton, Ohio, asked the Commerce Department to reconsider its long-standing policy of not applying the CVD law to China. NewPage's petition marked the first time since 1991 that a U.S. company formally requested the Department of Commerce to countervail an NME.

In its petition, NewPage alleged that several Chinese companies received subsidies, such as tax breaks, grants, and low-cost loans. From 2005 to 2006, imports of coated free-sheet paper products from China increased by approximately 177 percent in volume and were valued at an estimated \$224 million.

Legal Authority to Apply CVD Laws to NMEs

The Commerce Department has the legal authority to apply the CVD law to NMEs. However, in 1984, the Commerce Department reasoned that subsidies had no measurable economic effect in the Soviet-style economies that were then under consideration. So the department adopted a policy of not applying the U.S. CVD law to NMEs. This policy was subsequently upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals in its 1986 *Georgetown Steel* decision. Since then, the antidumping law has been the most commonly used instrument to address unfair trade practices involving Chinese goods.

assistance to benefit the production, manufacture, or exportation of goods.

Subsidies can take many forms, such as direct cash payments, credits against taxes, and loans at terms that do not reflect market considerations. U.S. law and regulations establish standards for determining when an unfair subsidy has been conferred. The amount of subsidies that a foreign producer receives from its government is the basis for the rate by which a subsidy is offset or "countervailed."

CVD versus Antidumping

CVD investigations, including the current one, are often accompanied by antidumping investigations. The Commerce Department commonly applies the antidumping and CVD law at the same time. In fact, 30 out of the department's 35 current CVD orders are paired with a dumping order.

The Commerce Department recognizes that its conclusion to apply the CVD law to China may require a review of U.S. antidumping methodology for China, particularly at the enterprise-specific level, and it is currently considering this issue. A possibility of double counting results from simultaneous antidumping and CVD investigations, depending on the specific facts arising in such investigations. Hence, to the extent that the parties to the proceedings provide evidence for the investigations, the department will respond to the concerns in the course of its investigations.

Imports of Coated Free Sheet Paper from China, 2004 and 2006

Percent of all imports, by volume (millions of kilograms)



Source: U.S. International Trade Commission. Figures have been rounded.

Nature of a Subsidy

Government subsidies distort the free flow of goods and adversely affect U.S. business in the global marketplace. Foreign governments subsidize industries when they provide financial

China Still an NME

Conducting this CVD investigation does not reverse the Commerce Department's decision, reaffirmed in August 2006, to treat China as an NME under the antidumping law. Rather, the department will use all available trade remedy tools to ensure a level playing field for U.S. manufacturers.

Tim Truman is a senior import policy analyst in the International Trade Administration's Import Administration unit.

Dialogues on Standards Help U.S. Firms

Efforts by the U.S. Department of Commerce are helping U.S. exporters to overcome technical barriers to trade in Brazil and India.

BY RENEE HANCHER



countries to better understand how regulations are developed, why mandatory standards are needed to fulfill regulatory requirements, and how conformity assessment programs operate.

India Dialogue Sets Pattern

A standards dialogue with India was first initiated in 2005, and subsequent dialogues with other countries have followed the same format. First, the partner country and the United States discuss their own regulatory systems. Next, the two countries exchange information about their standards development systems. Then, the countries consider approaches to conformity assessment.

After those fundamentals have been fully addressed, the focus of the dialogues narrows to specific products or industries where there may be a current market access issue or an opportunity to cooperate as a new or improved technology develops. For example, in 2006, because of the ongoing standards dialogue, the United States received detailed information about new Indian regulations affecting medical devices.

Brazil Dialogue Addresses Alternative Fuels and More

In June 2006, Brazil and the United States launched a standards dialogue when Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez traveled to Brazil to begin the U.S.-Brazil Commercial Dialogue (see June 2006 issue of International Trade Update). Cooperation on standards forms an important part of this dialogue. Since the initial face-to-face meetings and later videoconferences in 2006, Brazil and the United States have already agreed to a collaborative program on metrology and standards for alternative fuels.

U.S. companies trying to sell their products in foreign markets face the challenge of differing standards, testing, and conformity assessment procedures. Redundant or additional testing requirements may delay a product's entry into a market or increase the product's cost so that it is non-competitive. At worst, differing standards can keep products entirely out of a market.

Many U.S. companies approach the government for assistance in working through technical barriers to trade. The Department of Commerce uses many avenues to try to resolve problems relating to standards, testing, and certification. Those ways include bilateral consultations, multilateral negotiations under the World Trade Organization's Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement, and exchanges on technical barriers to trade with free trade agreement partners.

Discussions with Major Trading Partners

Since 2005, the United States has undertaken a series of more focused discussions of standards-related issues with some of its major trading partners, including Brazil and India. Such exchanges help parties in both

“ Since 2005, the United States has undertaken a series of more focused discussions of standards-related issues with some of its major trading partners. ”

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Commerce Department Takes Trade Remedy Actions on Glycine and Lemon Juice Imports

On April 19, 2007, the Commerce Department initiated antidumping investigations on imports of glycine from India, Japan, and South Korea. GEO Specialty Chemicals Inc. of Lafayette, Indiana, is the petitioner for the investigations. Glycine is used in a variety of food, pharmaceutical, and industrial applications. From 2005 to 2006, imports of glycine from India, Japan, and South Korea increased 10.0, 27.5, and 13.3 percent by volume, respectively. In 2006, import values for glycine were estimated at \$2.7 million for India, \$3.1 million for Japan, and \$1.2 million for South Korea. The U.S. International Trade Commission is scheduled to make its preliminary injury determination on or about May 15, 2007.

In a separate action, also on April 19, 2007, the department preliminarily determined that exporters and producers from Argentina and Mexico were selling lemon juice in the United States at less than fair value. The preliminary dumping margins for Argentina and Mexico range from 85.64 to 128.50 percent and from 146.10 to 205.37 percent, respectively. As a result of the preliminary determinations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has suspended liquidation of entries of subject merchandise and is collecting a cash deposit or bond based on the preliminary rates. The Commerce Department is scheduled to issue its final determinations in those investigations by July 3, 2007.

For more information about those and other antidumping actions by the Commerce Department, go to the Import Administration's "Highlights and New Items" Web page at <http://ia.ita.doc.gov/ia-highlights-and-news.html>.

U.S.–India High-Technology Cooperation Group Meets

An important step in the continuing dialogue between India and the United States took place in Washington, D.C., this past February when Deputy Secretary of

Commerce David A. Sampson hosted the fifth meeting of the U.S.–India High-Technology Cooperation Group (HTCG). The HTCG was established in 2002 to implement President George W. Bush's commitment to facilitate high-technology trade between India and the United States, while advancing shared non-proliferation objectives. The HTCG has contributed to a substantial increase in trade between India and the United States.

HTCG has two subgroups. One group focuses on strategic trade issues, including export controls, and the other concentrates on bilateral trade development. The Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security leads the subgroup on strategic trade issues, while the International Trade Administration chairs the subgroup on bilateral trade development of high-technology sectors, such as biotechnology, e-commerce, and information technology.

The 2007 round of the HTCG was inaugurated by an industry day on February 22, 2007, that was organized and sponsored by the U.S.–India Business Council. Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez presented the keynote address, in which he reiterated President Bush's commitment to strengthening the U.S.–India relationship and urged India to further open its domestic markets.

At the conclusion of the industry day, business representatives at the event presented a series of recommendations to the cochairmen of the HTCG, Deputy Secretary Sampson and Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon, on ways the Indian and U.S. governments could improve the commercial environment in several high-technology sectors, including strategic trade, biotechnology and life sciences, defense trade, and information technology and electronic commerce. Those recommendations, along with other issues, were subsequently discussed during the government-to-government dialogue that took place on February 23, 2007.

The HTCG has become an important medium to raise the profile of bilateral commercial issues affecting U.S. companies doing business in India. Both

Indian and U.S. government officials and private-sector participants said the meetings were successful and productive. The next round will most likely take place in India in late 2007.

Information on the HTCG is available on the Web at www.bis.doc.gov/InternationalPrograms/IndiaCooperation.htm.

Trade and Investment Ties Focus of Visit to Gulf States

The close trade and investment ties between the United States and Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were the focus of a visit to the three Persian Gulf states by Franklin L. Lavin, under secretary of commerce for international trade, on March 10–14, 2007.

In the UAE, Lavin met with government officials and business groups in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Speaking on March 12 to the American Business Group of Abu Dhabi, Lavin noted that trade between the United States and the UAE grew more than 40 percent in 2006, with bilateral trade at \$13.0 billion. That growth reflects “the continued emergence of the UAE as a regional logistics hub ... [and] the enormous growth in the UAE economy.” He also addressed a number of challenges that exist in the U.S.–UAE commercial relationship, including the need for the UAE to improve its export control systems, to eliminate the manufacture and sale of counterfeit goods, and to revise laws that restrict foreign ownership of assets in the UAE.

In subsequent stops in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Lavin expressed many of the same themes. In a speech to the American Kuwaiti Alliance on March 14, he encouraged the government of Kuwait to undertake legislation that would reduce a tax rate of 55 percent that is applied, sometimes retroactively, to foreign companies. He also urged that steps be taken to better protect intellectual property rights. According to Lavin, passing

such legislation “will strengthen our relationship and encourage foreign participation in [Kuwait’s] economy.”

During his visits to the three Persian Gulf states, Lavin also spoke of the recently launched “Invest in America” initiative and encouraged local businesses to look to the United States for investment opportunities. “The United States is open for business ... [and] has proven to be an outstanding, low-risk environment for international investors,” said Lavin.



Left to right: Cherie Loustaunau, director of the International Trade Administration’s Office of Middle East, Franklin L. Lavin, under secretary of commerce for international trade, and Mohammed Omar Abdullah, director general of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry at a meeting on March 12, 2007, in Abu Dhabi. (Photo courtesy of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry)

May 2**UCP 600 and Global Trade Finance**

Raleigh, North Carolina
www.export.gov

This seminar, organized by the U.S. Export Assistance Center in Raleigh, North Carolina, will highlight Uniform Customs and Practice for Documentary Credits (International Chamber of Commerce Publication No. 600), also known as UCP 600. The registration fee is \$99.00. For more information, contact Frances Willis of the USFCS, tel.: (919) 281-2750; e-mail: frances.willis@mail.doc.gov.

May 7-10**Rebuild Iraq 2007**

Amman, Jordan
www.buyusa.gov/iraq/en/rebuild-iraq2007.html

In 2006, this event attracted more than 1,000 exhibitors from 48 countries and more than 13,000 trade visitors. The leading industry sectors that will be at the show include building and construction, electricity, water resources, oil and gas, health care, and information and communications technology. For more information, contact Frank Carrico of the USFCS, tel.: (240) 553-0584; e-mail: frank.carrico@mail.doc.gov, or Giles Hazel of Kallman International, tel.: (201) 251-2600, ext. 119; e-mail: gilesh@kallman.com.

May 10**Intellectual Property Rights in China**

www.stopfakes.gov

This month's Webinar, part of a continuing series on the protection of intellectual property rights in China, will focus on two reports issued by the U.S. Trade Representative on intellectual property enforcement in China: "Special Provincial Review" and "Special 301 Report of 2007." The Webinar will run from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Eastern time. To register, send an e-mail to chinaipr@mail.doc.gov.

May 15-16**Trade Winds Forum**

Arlington, Virginia
www.buyusa.gov/southcarolina/tradewinds.html

This event will feature 35 U.S. senior Commercial Service officers from Africa, Europe, and India and representatives from more than 40 companies who will address market trends and trade topics critical to all successful U.S. exporters. Participants can customize their experience by selecting from more than 25 panel sessions and join in an evening networking reception. For more information or to register, visit the Trade Winds Forum Web site.

May 16-20**Metaltech 2007**

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
www.tradelink.com.my/metaltech

Malaysia's manufacturing sector is forecasted to grow at an average rate of 6.7 percent per year, with opportunities in areas such as metalworking, machine tools, computer-aided design and manufacturing, and other related technologies. In 2006, the show attracted more than 20,000 trade visitors and had more than 1,200 exhibitors. For more information, contact Vivian How of the USFCS, tel.: +60 (3) 2168-4825; e-mail: vivian.how@mail.doc.gov.

May 17**Understanding the NAFTA Certificate of Origin**

Spartanburg, South Carolina
<http://www.buyusa.gov/southcarolina/nafta.html>

This seminar, cosponsored by the South Carolina District Export Council and the USFCS, will offer an overview of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) certificate of origin, looking at topics such as the benefits and risks for compliance and non-compliance, product classification and tariff assessments, rules of origin, and qualification process. For more information or to register, contact Ann Watts of the USFCS, tel.: (803) 732-5211; e-mail: ann.watts@mail.doc.gov.

May 20-25**Interop Las Vegas 2007**

Las Vegas, Nevada
www.interop.com/lasvegas

More than 400 exhibitors will display a full range of information technology solutions at this show. The show will also offer numerous educational workshops, such as the "CIO Bootcamp." For more information, contact Kevin Haley of the USFCS, tel.: (202) 482-6434; e-mail: kevin.haley@mail.doc.gov.

May 21**Export Logistics Seminar**

Manchester, Tennessee
www.export.gov

This seminar, organized by the U.S. Export Assistance Center in Nashville, Tennessee, is targeted at rural companies in middle Tennessee. Attendees will learn about the basics of international registration, patents, contracts, and more. Michael Deal, a leading export attorney in international trade and investment law, will be the featured presenter. For more information, contact Ericka Stevens of the USFCS, tel.: (615) 259-6063; e-mail: ericka.stevens@mail.doc.gov.

May 29-June 1**WasteTech 2007**

Moscow, Russia
<http://w2007.sibico.com>

First held in 1999, WasteTech is the largest biannual waste management trade show in Russia. This year, the show expects to host some 290 exhibitors from 18 countries and will feature numerous industry subsectors, including landfill management and recycling, processing, and composting. For more information, contact Ludmila Maksimova of the USFCS, tel.: +7 (495) 737-5037; e-mail: ludmila.maksimova@mail.doc.gov.

On The Horizon

June 4–12

Building for the Future: 2007 U.S. Green Building Products Trade Mission to Asia

Hong Kong; Manila, Philippines; Singapore
www.export.gov

Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Singapore all offer good opportunities for U.S. building products suppliers whose products are well respected, particularly for environmentally friendly building projects. Trade mission participants will be introduced to potential agents and distributors, architects, and end-users and will have an opportunity to learn more about building trends in those three markets. For more information, contact Amy Magat of the USFCS, tel.: (213) 894-3966; e-mail: amy.magat@mail.doc.gov

June 11

Americas Competitiveness Forum **Atlanta, Georgia** www.trade.gov/competitiveness/acf

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez will host the inaugural Americas Competitiveness Forum on June 11–12, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia. It will provide a venue for government ministers from throughout the Western Hemisphere to come together with leaders from the private sector, academia, and non-governmental organizations. For more information, contact Alysia Wilson of the Department of Commerce, tel.: (202) 482-5327; e-mail: alysia_wilson@ita.doc.gov. (See related story on page 7.)

June 19–21

World of Concrete **Mexico City, Mexico** www.worldofconcretemexico.com

The last show attracted 380 exhibitors from 36 countries. This year's show will have much more exhibition space, with a focus on business aviation. U.S. companies can pay to participate in a Commerce Department minibooth or product literature center. The deadline for participation is January 2, 2007. For more information, contact Karen Dubin of the USFCS, tel.: (202) 482-3786; e-mail: karen.dubin@mail.doc.gov.

Featured Trade Event

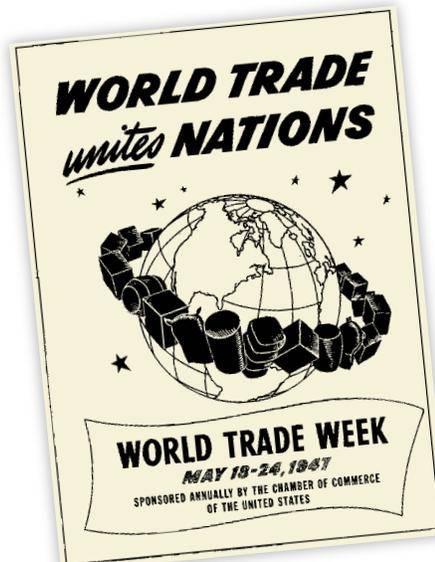
World Trade Week 2007

What we call World Trade Week has its roots in local promotional efforts. National recognition for this event came in 1933, with a proclamation by President Franklin D. Roosevelt that designated the third week of May as "National Foreign Trade Week." In the intervening 72 years, the annual event has been renamed World Trade Week and has expanded its scope to include many activities throughout the country in recognition of exporters and the importance of international trade to the U.S. economy.

This year, World Trade Week will be observed May 21–25. New York and Los Angeles are two centers of celebration. In New York, World Trade Week activities are organized by the event's steering committee and partners, which include chambers of commerce; local, state, and federal government agencies; libraries; educational institutions; foreign consulates; and international trade organizations, such as the New York District Export Council. The International Trade Awards Breakfast kicks off the week with U.S. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney as keynote and awards presenter. A calendar of events is available on the Internet at www.worldtradeweeknyc.org/.

In Los Angeles, World Trade Week events have been held since 1927, when the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce first organized events in honor of world trade. This year, more than 30 events are planned for Southern California. A complete list is available on the Internet at www.worldtradeweek.com.

Many U.S. Export Assistance Centers (USEACs) will also be holding events in celebration of World Trade Week. For more information, contact your local USEAC or visit www.export.gov.



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For more information and news, visit ITA's Web site at www.trade.gov or contact the Office of Public Affairs, International Trade Administration, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20230; tel.: (202) 482-3809.

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Americas Competitiveness Forum Update

Education and small business development are two of the four areas of focus at this June's Americas Competitiveness Forum in Atlanta, Georgia.

BY DAVID WEEMS



**THE AMERICAS
COMPETITIVENESS
FORUM** Promoting Prosperity
and Economic Opportunity
JUNE 11-12 2007 | ATLANTA, GEORGIA | USA

With registered attendees from 20 countries already confirmed, the upcoming Americas Competitiveness Forum is looking to fulfill its promise of being a “a launching pad for a continued, practical dialogue on competitiveness in the Western Hemisphere.” The forum, hosted by Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez, is scheduled to take place June 11–12, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia.

In last month's *International Trade Update*, two of the four issue areas at the forum—innovation and supply-chain strategies—were explored. Here is a look at the details of the other two issue areas: creating solutions in education and workforce development and fostering small business development and growth.

Creating Solutions in Education and Workforce Development

The relationship among education, training, and workforce development and the crucial role those factors play in strengthening competitiveness will be the focus for the education track of the forum. Specialists in the field of economic development, members from the academic community, and representatives from creative public-private partnerships will engage government officials and each other in a series of panel discussions from both topical and regional perspectives. Four panels will be featured: “Building a Bridge: The Link between Education and Business,” “Maximiz-

ing Public-Private Partnerships,” “The Global Model: What Can We Learn from Other Regions?” and “The Quality of Education in the Americas.”

Fostering Small Business Development and Growth

The goal of the small business track will be to identify tangible ways to facilitate business creation and growth. Panelists will discuss ways to make financing more available for small businesses, to minimize the regulatory obstacles involved in starting and operating a business, and to encourage a regional spirit of entrepreneurialism. Three panels will be featured: “Financing,” “Shaping the Business Environment through Innovative Policies,” and “Entrepreneurship.”

More information about the panels and a detailed agenda of the entire two-day forum are available on the Americas Competitiveness Forum's Web site at <http://trade.gov/competitiveness/acf>.

David Weems is an international trade specialist with the International Trade Administration's Market Access and Compliance unit.

For More Information

Information on the Americas Competitiveness Forum is available on the Web at <http://trade.gov/competitiveness/acf>. Registration can also be made through the Web site. Information on the forum agenda, speakers, and panelists will be updated on a regular basis, and questions about the forum can be submitted through the site. Questions regarding the Americas Competitiveness Forum can also be directed to Alysia Wilson of the ITA's Market Access and Compliance unit, tel.: (202) 482-5327; e-mail: alysia.wilson@mail.doc.gov.

U.S. Export Assistance Centers

U.S. Export Assistance Centers (USEACs) are located in more than 100 cities throughout the United States. They are supported by five federal agencies, and serve as one-stop shops that provide small and medium-sized businesses with hands-on export marketing and trade finance support. For more information, visit the U.S. government's export portal, www.export.gov.

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Oakland: (510) 273-7350

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Dialogues on Standards

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In both of those standards dialogues, participants included not only government officials, but also representatives from national standards developing bodies, testing laboratories, and companies. Private-sector participation is critical to the process because the dialogues present an opportunity to showcase the market-driven, private sector-led standardization system that exists in the United States—a system that encourages innovation, competitiveness, and economic growth.

Although there are no specific plans to launch dialogues with other trading partners, it is quite possible that there will be more in the future, because such dialogues afford a rare opportunity for information exchange and relationship building in a complex area of trade policy.

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For More Information

Information from past and present standards dialogues is available on the Web site of the Department of Commerce's Office of the ITA Standards Liaison at www.trade.gov/standards. This site contains records from each session of the Brazil dialogue, including the presentations made by each country, and it serves as a useful resource for those interested in learning more about standards, testing, and conformity assessment practices in major export markets.

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