Sustainable Business Practices Highlighted in Visit to Seattle Plants

This July, a nationwide facilities tour of leaders in sustainable business practices was launched in Seattle, Washington. The kick-off event and subsequent tours will highlight the importance of using practices that bring environmental and economic benefits.

By Matthew Howard

On July 13, 2009, the importance of sustainable manufacturing and supply chain practices to companies’ bottom lines was highlighted at a Seattle, Washington, tour called “Sustainability 360: An Aerospace Supply Chain Event.” Mary Saunders, acting assistant secretary for manufacturing and services, launched the first of this series of 2009 tours throughout the country.

Sustainability 360 showcased the benefits of sustainable business practices in an aerospace manufacturing supply chain. It began with a presentation at Puget Sound Energy, a local utility, and continued with site visits to Tyee Aircraft, Goodrich Aerospace, and Boeing Company.

“When suppliers become more sustainable, the benefits extend throughout the supply chain,” said Saunders. “It decreases risks and costs for the OEMs [original equipment manufacturers] because components can be made more efficiently, with fewer hazardous materials and often at a lower cost. Supplier competitiveness then translates into OEM competitiveness.”

Sustainable Manufacturing

The Department of Commerce defines sustainable manufacturing as the creation of manufactured products that use processes that minimize negative environmental impacts; conserve energy and natural resources; are safe for employees, communities, and consumers; and are economically sound.

Recently, interest in sustainable manufacturing practices has grown because companies have realized that they can incorporate...
Sustainable Business Practices

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manufacturing processes that are both environmentally and economically sound. Firms can then gain a competitive advantage through cost savings, lower costs of compliance with environmental and health regulations, and potentially increased marketability for their products and services.

Today, manufacturers face many pressures to become more environmentally sustainable. For example, many retailers, OEMs, and consumers now demand more sustainable and cost-competitive products. Also, government regulators often require more environmentally sound and safe products. And manufacturers face internal cost pressures from rising energy and materials costs and competition.

Industry’s Influence and Role

The environmental impact from U.S. industry is significant, although many advances in natural resource efficiency and pollution prevention have been made in recent decades. Today, industry uses around one-third of all generated energy in the United States, and it consumes many natural resources, including 9 percent of U.S. water withdrawals. Therefore, as energy and materials costs grow, so do the potential benefits of sustainable manufacturing practices to U.S. global competitiveness and firm profitability.

The Sustainable Manufacturing Initiative

In 2007, to enhance U.S. competitiveness and firm profitability, the Manufacturing and Services unit of the International Trade Administration created the Sustainable Manufacturing Initiative (SMI). Its goals are to identify U.S. industry’s most pressing sustainability challenges and to coordinate public- and private-sector efforts to address those challenges. (See sidebar.)

SMI has worked to achieve its goals by conducting regional facilities tours similar to Sustainability 360. In 2008, such tours were held in St. Louis, Missouri; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Rochester, New York.

Typically, each of the events has drawn approximately 30 local business and government representatives, who were able to see the benefits to U.S. companies. For instance, those benefits come from incorporating cleaner, more resource-efficient technologies and product life-cycle approaches in companies’ manufacturing processes.

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With the end of the apartheid regime in 1994, international sanctions that had been imposed on South Africa were lifted, and the country’s economy opened to foreign business and investment. Since the early 1980s, the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service (USFCS), a part of the International Trade Administration, has had a presence in South Africa. Craig Allen spoke recently with Doug Barry of the Department of Commerce’s Trade Information Center about opportunities for U.S. exporters in South Africa.

Barry: Africa too often brings to mind headlines about the AIDS pandemic, civil war, tribal difficulties in certain places, and other misfortunes. But, as so often is the case, that image is not the entire picture. Can you give us some perspective behind the headlines on South Africa and its role on the continent?

Allen: One has to be careful about paying too much attention to last night’s news and missing the main story. Africa is growing at an unprecedented rate of about 7 percent a year, and South Africa is growing at about 5 percent. That growth has created tremendous opportunities for U.S. exporters. South Africa is also a stable market for U.S. companies. There is rule of law, with an excellent court system that you can really trust, and very good infrastructure as well—be it ports, highways, or “human infrastructure.”

Barry: If you were a small or medium-sized enterprise in the United States, what would be the reasons for looking to a somewhat far-off country such as South Africa?

Allen: I can think of three reasons. First, South Africa benefits enormously from the global demand for commodities, such as gold, diamonds, chromium, iron, and magnesium. Prices are high, and South Africa is benefiting more than any other economy. Second, there is a growing middle class that is looking for brands and products that the middle class around the world is looking to. Third, there is the 2010 FIFA [International Federation of Association Football] Soccer World Cup, which will be held in nine cities in South Africa next year. South Africa is expected to invest approximately $60 billion in infrastructure.

Barry: Would an additional fourth reason be that South Africa could be an inviting platform from which to spring into the surrounding area?

Allen: Absolutely. South Africa and four of its neighbors—Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland—have the oldest customs union in the world, which started in 1910. Therefore, if you come into South Africa, you have simultaneously entered five markets. A little bit further afield, you find the very...
important markets of Angola, Mozambique, and Zambia, all of which are growing very rapidly.

**Barry:** What about the business culture in South Africa? What does an exporter need to know to avoid blunders and cultural mistakes?

**Allen:** English is the language of business throughout the region. Contracts are made and enforced in English, so there is virtually no linguistic barrier between Americans and South Africans. By law and culture, there is an emphasis in South Africa on righting historic injustices and providing opportunities for the historically disadvantaged. There is a body of law titled Black Economic Empowerment. And thus, while positioning an American company, it is important, particularly if you are selling to the public sector, to consider the Black Economic Empowerment bona fides of agents and distributors.

**Barry:** What time commitments need to be made when considering doing business in South Africa? Is there anything unusual that would make the time horizon longer or shorter?

**Allen:** South Africa is really very similar to dealing with Australia, Western Europe, or other developed economies. The business cycle is perhaps a little bit slower than in the United States. Public tenders particularly can be a bit drawn out and take longer than anticipated. But the public tenders are usually fair and are awarded in a transparent and open manner. We’ve had no occasion to raise concerns about such tenders.

**Barry:** Are there trade shows and other opportunities to fly in, get a feel for the country, and maybe make a quick sale?

**Allen:** Trade shows are not as developed here in South Africa as they are in the United States. South Africa does not really have the critical mass or the infrastructure to become a global trade exhibition center. There are some national-level shows, but no continental-level shows. I would recommend that readers contact our office in Johannesburg before committing to a show.

**Barry:** I’m assuming that you are not alone there in Johannesburg.

Database Points Way to Business Opportunities in Africa

Multilateral development banks (MDBs), such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, are international financial institutions that promote economic and social progress in developing member countries. Every year, MDBs extend about $10 billion in loans, grants, and investments to the public and private sectors for economic and social development in Africa.

The projects offer qualified and funded supply opportunities for U.S. companies in the African market. However, many U.S. exporters may miss out on these extremely lucrative opportunities because they lack the necessary information about the projects or are unfamiliar with the tendering procedures of the MDBs and the participating foreign governments.

In an effort to make the procurements more accessible to U.S. companies, the US-FCS in Johannesburg has put together the Africa Multilateral Donor Project Database (AMDPD). This resource is available on Export.gov’s Africa portal at www.export.gov/africa/eg_main_016853.asp.

“The genesis of this project was discussions with the Department of Commerce’s Advocacy Center on the poor record that U.S. companies have at winning World Bank and African Development Bank tenders,” noted Craig Allen, senior commercial officer in Johannesburg, South Africa. “American taxpayers supply about 17 percent of funding to these lenders, but U.S. companies win less than 1 percent of the tenders.”

Exporters can access listings by industry through the AMDPD. The listings offer detailed information on active procurements, including full descriptions, procurement values, current status, links to project documents, and points of contact at the respective MDBs and the Department of Commerce.

The database has been available for less than a year, but has already proved useful. “In Johannesburg, a number of American companies have used it to discover projects that they did not previously know of,” noted Allen. “It is a good start, suggesting that the data [are] useful.”

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Taiwan’s Accession to Government Procurement Agreement to Create Opportunities for U.S. Businesses

After a seven-year wait, Taiwan acceded to the World Trade Organization’s Agreement on Government Procurement. Membership will further open a large potential market to U.S. exporters wanting to sell to government entities in Taiwan.

By Joshua Pierce and Katrice Kelly

On July 15, 2009, Taiwan acceded to the Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA) of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The GPA is a plurilateral WTO agreement, and Taiwan is the 41st WTO member to join. The agreement requires its signatories to provide national treatment to the goods, services, and suppliers of the other members.

More Than 30 Ministries Covered

As part of the accession agreement, Taiwan has offered extensive coverage of its central and local government entities, as well as a number of universities and other state-owned enterprises. U.S. industry will now have access to procurements for more than 30 ministries and commissions, including the Ministry of National Defense and Ministry of Transportation and Communications. U.S. industry will also have access to Taipei City and Kaohsiung City governments, 48 universities and technical schools, three veterans’ hospitals, and numerous service sectors that include engineering, information technology, and certain telecommunications. Conversely, Taiwan’s firms will be eligible to compete for U.S. government procurements that are covered by the GPA at both the federal and subcentral level. In 2007, Taiwan’s government procurement market was valued at more than $21 billion.

Procurements Published on the Web

Taiwan is now obligated to open much of its government procurement to international bidding by suppliers from other GPA members. Taiwan’s procedural obligations under the GPA will provide U.S. companies with concrete guarantees that covered procurements will have a high level of transparency and predictability. Furthermore, Taiwan will publish procurement opportunities on its Government Procurement Information System Web site at http://web.pcc.gov.tw/newweb/new2/english/index.html. Procurements covered by the GPA will be noted and summarized in English on the site.

The GPA also requires that members treat the products, services, and suppliers from other members in a non-discriminatory manner and provide them with “national treatment.” This means that Taiwan must conduct covered procurements with a blind eye to whether the vendor is a domestic supplier or a foreign supplier from a GPA member economy. Finally, Taiwan will be required to provide a domestic review mechanism to address complaints about the conduct of covered procurements, including complaints lodged by U.S. companies.
Visits to China, Russia Highlight Trade Ties

U.S. trade relations with China and Russia were the focus of two trips made by Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke in July.

On July 6–8, Locke was in Moscow, Russia, where he was the only Cabinet member to accompany President Barack Obama at the U.S.–Russia Summit. It was announced at the summit that Locke would co-chair a working group on business development and economic relations with Russian Minister of Economic Development Elvira Nabiullina, as part of a new U.S.-Russia bilateral presidential commission.

In remarks made at the summit, Locke urged continued Russian integration into the world economy. "We support Russia’s accession to the World Trade Organization and encourage Russia to pursue opportunities to increase its bilateral trade and investment with the United States as well as other countries.”

Locke later travelled to China July 14–17, together with Secretary of Energy Steven Chu and Chris Lu, White House Cabinet secretary. The purpose of the joint visit was to highlight the potential for cooperation between China and the United States in the clean energy sector. Locke met with senior Chinese leaders, including Premier Wen Jiabao, Vice Premier Wang Qishan, State Councillor Liu Yandong, Zhang Ping, chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission, and Chen Deming, minister of commerce. Their discussions focused on potential areas of cooperation in clean energy and climate change and other trade matters between the two countries, including the need to avoid protectionism and efforts to stimulate domestic demand.

On July 17, Locke travelled to Shanghai to participate in groundbreaking ceremonies for the U.S. pavilion at the 2010 Shanghai Expo. He also had the opportunity to witness Walmart’s announcement on July 16 in Beijing of a $2 million pledge toward the construction of the pavilion.

Third Americas Competitiveness Forum to Take Place September 27–29 in Santiago, Chile

The Chilean Ministry of Economy will convene the third Americas Competitiveness Forum (ACF) on September 27–29, 2009, in Santiago, Chile. U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke will travel to Chile with other department officials to participate in the forum. In addition to Locke, other participants will include Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, president of Brazil; Michelle Bachelet, president of Chile; and Leonel Fernández, president of the Dominican Republic.

In its two previous sessions, both held in Atlanta, Georgia (see April 2008 issue of International Trade Update), the ACF offered a unique opportunity for leaders from the private sector, government, and academia to collectively discuss and share ways...
Fourth U.S.–Brazil CEO Forum Meets

The U.S.–Brazil CEO Forum held its fourth meeting in Washington, D.C., on July 20–21, 2009. The forum, which consists of 20 chief executive officers (CEOs) from Brazil and the United States, meets twice a year in Brazil or the United States to make recommendations to both governments on ways to strengthen the U.S.–Brazil economic relationship. The July meeting was cochaired by Gary Locke, secretary of commerce, and Michael Froman, deputy assistant to the president and deputy national security adviser for international economic affairs.

“The United States enjoys a strong commercial relationship with Brazil, representing nearly $63 billion in bilateral trade in 2008,” said Locke. “The CEO Forum provides recommendations to the two governments to strengthen our bilateral commercial relationship.”

During the two days, participants discussed a number of critical business issues, including the negotiation of a bilateral tax treaty and a bilateral investment treaty, customs facilitation, and energy and infrastructure issues. The forum’s recommendations have advanced discussions between Brazil and the United States on other important issues, such as visas, customs procedures, education, and infrastructure reforms.

In 2008, U.S. exports to Brazil were $32.3 billion, which is an increase of 34 percent over 2007. Brazil is the ninth-largest export market for the United States.

House Subcommittees Hear about Africa Trade

On June 24, 2009, Holly Vineyard, deputy assistant secretary for Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, testified before a joint meeting of two subcommittees of the House of Representatives about the state of U.S. trade relations with sub-Saharan Africa.

“With the continued growth of representative governments, and the recovery from several lengthy conflicts, much of sub-Saharan Africa is poised to see more robust economic growth and an improvement in living standards in the years ahead,” said Vineyard. “Many sub-Saharan African countries are becoming, or have the potential to become, key emerging markets for U.S. companies.”

U.S. trade with sub-Saharan Africa is small when compared to trade with larger, more developed countries and regions. But it has been growing rapidly in recent years. From 2001 to 2008, total two-way trade between sub-Saharan Africa and the United States more than tripled to $104.5 billion.
August 2009

International Trade Calendar

August 4
Webinar: Getting Your Products into India: Understanding Indian Customs
Washington, D.C.
www.export.gov/eac/show_detail_trade_events.asp?EventID=29659
India continues to be a vibrant growing market despite the economic downturn. One of the main challenges for entering the Indian market is to understand the Indian customs process. This Webinar will feature USFCS experts and freight forwarders specialized in customs clearance in India. For more information, contact Barbara Lapini of the USFCS, tel.: (202) 482-0499; e-mail: barbara.lapini@mail.doc.gov.

August 10–12
Third Renewable Energy India 2009
New Delhi, India
www.renewableenergyindiaexpo.com
This show will present excellent opportunities for U.S. exhibitors to sell their products and to learn about the latest technology trends (bioenergy, wind energy, hydro energy, and solar energy) in India. It will also be an excellent venue for cultivating business relations and preparing for the expected growth of the renewable energy market. For more information, contact Mark Wells of the USFCS, tel.: (202) 482-0904; e-mail: mark.wells@mail.doc.gov.

August 13
Webinar: Increase International Sales without Spending More on Advertising
Fargo, North Dakota
www.export.gov/eac/show_detail_trade_events.asp?EventID=29674
The USFCS and Manufacturing Extension Partnership have organized this Webinar on marketing. Nationally recognized expert Richard Johnson will be presenting this hands-on workshop. There is a $40 fee to participate. For more information, contact Heather Rank of the USFCS, tel.: (701) 239-5080; e-mail: heather.rank@mail.doc.gov.

August 18–20
Concreto LatinoAmerica 2009
Mexico City
www.export.gov/eac/show_detail_trade_events.asp?EventID=29579
This show will feature the latest advances in concrete and cement machinery, equipment, and technology worldwide. It will be housed in Centro Banamex, a state-of-the-art convention facility, and will offer many opportunities for exhibitors to connect with potential buyers in Mexico and elsewhere. For more information, contact Graylin Presbury of the USFCS, tel.: (202) 482-5158; e-mail: graylin.presbury@mail.doc.gov.

August 25
Webinar: Upgrading China’s Farm Equipment
Shenyang, China
www.export.gov/eac/show_detail_trade_events.asp?EventID=29679
This Webinar will look at the modernization of China’s farm equipment and the potential for U.S. agriculture equipment exporters, with a focus on the northeast region of China. It will provide participants with an excellent overview of current and projected demand for U.S. agricultural machinery. For more information, contact Kellie Holloway of the USFCS, tel.: (503) 326-3002; e-mail: kellie.holloway@mail.doc.gov.

August 27–29
Natural Products Expo Asia 2009
Hong Kong
www.export.gov/eac/show_detail_trade_events.asp?EventID=29068
This event will be an ideal platform to meet with potential buyers, distributors, agents, importers, and retailers of natural products. Specific areas include organic foods, Western and Asian herbs, bee products, vitamins and food supplements, natural fibers, natural remedies, nutraceuticals, functional foods, cosmeceuticals, and natural personal care items. For more information, contact Sam Dhir of the USFCS, tel.: (601) 965-4130; e-mail: sam.dhir@mail.doc.gov.

Here is a selected list of international trade events of interest, including ITA-sponsored events, as well as a selection of upcoming international trade fairs. The U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service (USFCS) maintains a comprehensive listing of industry shows at www.export.gov.
On The Horizon

September 7–10
Product Literature Center at Asian Aerospace 2009
Hong Kong
www.export.gov/eac/show_detail_trade_events.asp?EventID=28849
This event is one of the world’s largest single-focus exhibitions for the commercial aerospace and civil aviation market. Through the display of its literature in the U.S. Department of Commerce’s booth, a company can exhibit in a cost-effective manner at the show, which is a strictly business-to-business event. For more information, contact Deborah Semb of the USFCS, tel.: (202) 482-0677; e-mail: deborah.semb@mail.doc.gov.

September 9
Webinar: How to Identify Potential International Markets for Your Products
Washington, D.C.
www.export.gov/eac/show_detail_trade_events.asp?EventID=29647
Identifying market segments for products is critical to the success of any business, but especially for exporters. Much information must be known about each country market and its economic environment. After participating in this Webinar, attendees will be able to better identify appropriate potential markets for their products. For more information, contact Abdul Shaikh of the USFCS, tel.: (202) 482-1619; e-mail: abdul.shaikh@mail.doc.gov.

September 9–10
Trade North America Conference
Detroit, Michigan
www.export.gov/eac/show_detail_trade_events.asp?EventID=29436
This two-day conference will feature business experts and government officials who will speak on export opportunities and regulations in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. There will also be one-on-one appointments with commercial specialists and a keynote address by John Engler, former governor of Michigan and president of the National Association of Manufacturers. For more information, including registration, hotel information, and a draft agenda, visit www.tradenorthamerica.com.

Featured Trade Event
U.S.-Iraq Business Investment Summit
October 20–21, 2009
Washington, D.C.
http://trade.gov/iraq/

With improving security and rising living standards, Iraq presents a unique opportunity for Iraqi, regional, and global investors. This two-day international event will offer U.S. companies the opportunity to learn about business and trade opportunities in that country. Iraq’s market of 28 million people, along with its considerable wealth, abundant natural resources, and decades of under-investment, provide potential opportunities in such sectors as energy, transportation, construction, agriculture, and manufacturing.

About 500 attendees are expected at the summit, including representatives of top U.S. and international businesses and senior U.S. and Iraqi government officials. General sessions will provide keynote presentations on Iraq’s current trade and promotion activities. Break-out sessions will focus on specific industry sectors, and a matchmaking event will offer the opportunity to facilitate partnerships between U.S., international, and Iraqi businesses. Private meeting rooms will also be available to provide attendees the opportunity to hold one-to-one business dialogues.

The conference is being hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and is a joint effort of the Iraqi Commercial Office, the Departments of State and Defense, and the Department of Commerce’s Iraq Investment and Reconstruction Task Force.

To obtain more information about the U.S.-Iraq Business Investment Summit, go to the Web site of U.S. Department of Commerce’s Iraq Investment and Reconstruction Task Force, wwwtrade.gov/iraq, or contact the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Middle East and Africa Department at middleeastandafica@uschamber.com.
SME Focus
SMI has been particularly successful in getting small and medium-sized enterprises to tour facilities in a given regional supply chain that use sustainable manufacturing or business processes—or otherwise encourage the use of those practices. The tours give participants an opportunity to ask questions and to see real-world demonstrations of how sustainability practices have helped firms compete.

“The event was a great networking opportunity to hear about what our peers in the aerospace industry are doing to become more sustainable and ultimately more competitive in a market that is becoming increasingly difficult due to the entrance of foreign firms,” remarked Rachel Kosmin of Avtech Corporation, a participant in the Sustainability 360 tour. “You often hear about companies who have implemented lean practices, but seeing them in action helped me see how we could integrate these ideas into our daily processes.”

Matthew Howard is team lead for industry competitiveness and outreach in the International Trade Administration’s Manufacturing and Services unit.

Taiwan Accession
With its accession to the GPA, Taiwan fulfilled a commitment that it made when it became a WTO member in 2002. In December 2008, after several years of negotiations, the WTO Committee on Government Procurement approved the terms of Taiwan’s accession to the GPA.

Infrastructure Projects Prominent among Upcoming Procurement Opportunities in Taiwan
Taiwan and the United States are already significant trading partners, with two-way trade of more than $61 billion in 2008. From 2005 to 2007, government entities in Taiwan awarded approximately 2,170 procurements that could have been covered by the GPA.

In addition to normal government procurement activities, Taiwan is engaged in two major infrastructure programs to improve transportation, communication, and education. The first program is the Special Act for Expanding Investment in Public Works to Revitalize the Economy, which uses vouchers for immediate stimulus. It also creates a four-year plan (2009–2012) for improving public works worth approximately $15 billion.

The second program is the i-Taiwan 12 Project. This eight-year (2008–2016) infrastructure project is worth more than $4 billion. Among other things, it will expand science parks, revitalize industrial parks, and create more and better-organized free trade zones and trade logistics centers.

For more information on those and other export opportunities, visit the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service Web site in Taiwan at www.buyusa.gov/taiwan/en. To report a trade barrier in Taiwan or any other country, visit the Department of Commerce’s Trade Compliance Center at http://tcc.export.gov.

Joshua Pierce is an international trade specialist with the Market Access and Compliance unit of the International Trade Administration. Katrice Kelly is an international trade specialist with the Manufacturing and Services unit of the International Trade Administration.
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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A Day in the Life of a Commercial Officer: Ricardo Palaez, commercial officer with the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service, talked about the activities that fill his working day on his first overseas tour of duty in Taipei City, Taiwan: “The most exciting part of the day was the final event on my schedule. After several months of planning, long hours, and hard work, CS Taipei finally kicked off the first of three ‘America Month’ retail events promoting several hundred U.S. brands to Taiwan consumers.” (July 2)

Learning the Ropes of Government: David Kincaid, presidential management fellow who recently finished his graduate studies and began work at the International Trade Administration, describes his transition to the world of government:

“There was no course on TMs and IBPs, FSNs and SCOs, or how OSP works on PIPs for MAS, CS, MAC, ODUS, OCF, and IA through WBTs developed by folks in OCIO! It’s true; the alphabet soup was at best daunting to learn.” (July 8)

Sustainability 360: Mary Saunders, acting assistant secretary for manufacturing and services, wrote from Seattle, Washington, about participating in Sustainability 360: An Aerospace Supply Chain Event: “We just concluded our first Sustainability 360 event here in Seattle, and the experience was outstanding — lots of good, practical examples of how implementing sustainable manufacturing practices can reduce environmental impact and improve the bottom line for businesses.” (July 15)

To read the full text of these and other postings, visit the ITA Blog at http://blog.trade.gov.