

AIF PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

By: Nathan Notah

February 16, 2010

The American Indian Foods (AIF) Program had three events during the fall and winter season of 2009. These included an International Food Show in Cologne Germany, a Foreign Press Mission in the Northwest United States and a Food Export Readiness Seminar.

The semi-annual ANUGA Food Show in Cologne Germany offered our Native American producers the opportunity to uncover target markets, conduct primary consumer research, and connect with potential international buyers in the European Union. In fact, the Native American Natural Foods Company, a Tribally (Sioux) owned entity from Kyle, South Dakota used this occasion to explore exporting opportunities for their 100% Natural Bison-Cranberry energy bar to Germany, France and England.

The company marketed two specific products including the energy bar and a recently unveiled Bison sausage. As a result of their participation and their growing exporting sales combined with their domestic sales growth, the company is looking to add new facilities and new products and an increase in staff in the next year or so. At the show they met with representatives of the Vestey Foods Group comprised of thirteen food companies specializing in import, storage and distribution of a wide variety of foodstuffs from global suppliers into the various local market places in Europe. In particular Native American Natural Foods (NANF) is looking at possibilities in the convenience store and health & fitness food markets in Germany, France and England. A representative from Vestey Foods is planning on coming to the US in April to meet with NANF staff to observe the Bison first hand and the processing experience and look at options in developing a promotional program in Europe.

The AIF program also conducted a foreign press mission in Washington and Oregon for eight members of foreign press from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, Belgium and Italy. The task of this mission was to inform the international press of American Indian culture and the availability of American Indian products. In Washington State we visited with the Lummi Indian Nation Seafood's Company, their shell fish operation, the Yakima Indian Nation Buffalo Ranch, The Yakama Nation Land Enterprises which include the following products: apples, fresh & pickled asparagus, hops and other tree fruit crops. We also toured Yakama's fruit packaging facilities.

In Oregon, the foreign press had the opportunity to meet with Native American cookbook author and renowned Chef Fernando Divina at his Native American style & good taste restaurant. Chef Divina discussed his work in various up-scale restaurants throughout the United States, his experience working with wineries and his experience in food education. He also provided the group a nice, trendy and tasteful food sampling demonstration. Also in Oregon the press-group toured Umpqua Nation Foods who specialize in handmade beef jerky, meat sticks, various snack foods and gift baskets. The Press Tour concluded with a visit to the Coquille Nation's Organic Cranberry Farm and a viewing of the Cranberry harvesting process. (See attached article of one of the Foreign Press writer's article)

Finally in December, AIF completed the program year with a Food Export Readiness Seminar for 15 new prospective participants in our program. Teresina Chin, FAS Marketing Specialist and Administrator Frank Lee from Foreign Ag Services (FAS) were there to give a presentation and answer questions. The seminar will help AIF participating companies in all aspects of International exporting. These include developing export marketing plans and teaching exporting techniques such as: marketing, locating interested buyers, preparing a contract, financing a sale, shipping the product and properly locating research data to assist in the effective identification of countries on which to focus their efforts.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272(voice), or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).