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PROEXAG II



COMPONENTE AGRICOLA DEL PROYECTO DE APOYO TECNOLOGICO PARA LAS INDUSTRIAS DE EXPORTACION DE CENTROAMERICA Y PANAMA

TRIP REPORT CENTRAL AMERICAN SECOND SYMPOSIUM ON CULTIVATED SHRIMP Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Assignment Number: ST-162

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NANCY J. TUCKER, PMA PROEXAG II - TRIP REPORT

I. DATES AND DESTINATIONS. April 25 to April 30, 1993. To Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

II. PURPOSE OF TRAVEL. To attend and critique the II Simposio Centroamericano Sobre Camarón Cultivado, evaluate its prospects for growth, and determine its potential to become the premier show for Central American Aquaculture.

III. PERSONS CONTACTED. Main contacts were FPX staff, namely Richard Hopper, Roberto Chamorro, María Eugenia de Ruiz, Yamilet Caballero, and Mitzi Gouyt.

IV. ACCOMPLISHMENTS. John McClung, United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable and I interviewed participants and exhibitors, evaluated the symposium, and made recommendations to FPX.

We toured the booths, and asked the following questions:

- Do you consider this a successful show for your organization?
- Who are your buyers?
- How do you normally find new buyers?
- What other shows do you attend?
- What do you feel are the key issues, concerns, and problems in the industry?
- What suggestions would you make to improve the show?

We talked to the participants and speakers to get the answers to the following questions:

- Why did you attend the symposium?
- What do you feel are the key issues, concerns, and problems in the industry?
- What is the status of the industry?
- Do you prefer large, general sessions or smaller workshops?
- What other topics, speakers would you like to see at the symposium?
- What other shows do you attend?
- What suggestions would you make to improve the symposium?

We held discussions with FPX to determine the following:

- What are the goals for the symposium?
- What are the current target audiences, to whom do they promote the show?
- What are their marketing strategies?
- Are facilities available to accommodate growth?
- Are suitable services available to accommodate growth?
- What staff and resources are available to run the show?

Evaluation/Recommendations

TARGET AUDIENCES/GROWTH. The target audiences for participants are the following, with the greatest emphasis on the first four:

- Aquaculture farmers (primarily shrimp)
- Producers and packers
- Academicians/researchers
- Government officials and regulators.
- Investors
- Buyers (importers/exporters, brokers, wholesalers)
- Transporters

The target audiences for exhibitors are:

- Feed companies
- Packaging companies
- Equipment companies
- Financial service companies (e.g. banks)
- Laboratories
- Companies providing technology
- Transportation organizations (airlines, shipping lines, ports, etc.)
- Refrigeration companies

Judging from our talks with industry members on the status of the industry and its potential for growth, we estimate that the symposium is likely to increase its attendance and number of exhibitors by 25%- 50%. That means, with proper promotion and organization, attendance at the next show would be between 500 - 600 people and 50 - 60 exhibit booths would be sold.

In order to accommodate this potential growth, the necessary facilities and services must be available. Depending on the amount of growth, FPX may need to use more of the ballroom for the general sessions. (For the 1993 symposium, half the ballroom was used for the seminars and half was used for the exhibits.) As the hotel/convention center may convert the upper parking level to an exhibit hall, this would provide needed space for the exhibits.

According to the FPX staff, the two main hotels (Honduras Maya and Plaza San Martin) and some of the smaller hotels should be able to provide rooms for a symposium of up to 600 people (some of the people live in the area and just come in for the day). Staff should work closely with the hotels to determine exact number of rooms used for the 1993 symposium and the numbers of rooms the hotels could dedicate to future events.

EXPANSION INTO AQUACULTURE. There had been discussion about broadening the symposium to include all aquaculture. Compared with shrimp farming, the amount of other aquaculture is quite small. However, the industry has potential for growth and should not be ignored. To allow for this growth while still maintaining a "home" for the shrimp farmers, we suggest the new name for the show be the "Central American Shrimp and Aquaculture Symposium". The central focus should remain on shrimp farming with gradual expansion into other forms of aquaculture.

REGISTRATION. The growth of the 1993 symposium put a large burden on the registration system. There needs to be:

- * more space/tables dedicated to registration
- * areas for registration broken down alphabetically by last name (or other system)
- * more staff (consider supplementing FPX staff with trained temporaries from the city)
- * registration signs suspended from the ceiling or registration booths built so that signs are visible above people's heads.
- * badges for participants with the person's first name in large, bold letters, person's entire name, company, city, and country.
- * advanced registration list of participants given to participants as they register. A supplemental list of on-site registrants could be compiled and made available during the latter part of the symposium.

(Note: an outline with suggestions for in-house registration systems can be found in Attachment I.)

EXHIBITS. Extensive discussions with exhibitors yielded the following ideas and suggestions. We realize that ANDAH coordinated the exhibits and we encourage FPX to share these thoughts with them.

1. Change the design of the exhibit construction to give exhibitors a full 10 feet of space in each booth. A flat panel between booths (instead of the wide partition) would suffice.
2. Begin exhibit construction a day earlier to be sure that the booths are ready for the exhibiting companies at the time promised.
3. More booths could fit into the same area with a different floor plan. Either PMA or UFFVA could submit a new plan, if desired. Putting the ANDAH information booth outside the exhibit hall would provide additional room as well.
4. Exhibitors need dependable freight, warehousing, and custom broker services. Organizers need to work with each company to be sure that services are provided in a timely, cost conscious manner.
5. Complete information on using the above services needs to be sent to exhibitors that should include (but not be limited to) deadlines that need to be met, addresses/labels, rules, regulations, costs, etc.

While the exhibitors, overall, were very pleased with the show, many complained that there were long stretches of time when no one was in the exhibit area. They did not really mind the concurrent sessions, but wanted ways to encourage people to be in the exhibit areas during breaks. One way to increase traffic in the exhibit area would be to hold coffee breaks in the exhibit hall. (The exhibitors thought that the shrimp dish offered during the opening of the exhibits was a nice touch and very effective.)

The exhibitors are very important to the financial well-being of any convention. To work to build good relations with the exhibitors, consider the following:

1. Survey the exhibitors to determine what worked and what did not work for them.
2. Start an exhibitor advisory committee.
3. Provide a folio or other welcome gift for the exhibitors.
4. Give programs and registration lists to the exhibitors.

5. Continue providing one free ticket to the receptions per booth.
6. Work to continue and improve good, timely communications with exhibitors.

POSSIBLE COMPETITION. The following is a list of other aquaculture shows we learned about. We were told that the publication *Seafare* could offer a more complete list.

1. Pesca, Mexico, held in late July through early August.
2. World Aquaculture Show, Spain in May, 1993 and St. Louis in 1994.
3. Seafare Show, New Orleans.
4. Ecuador Shrimp Congress, Ecuador, October.
5. Chilean Aquaculture Show (mostly trout, salmon, & equipment), November
6. U.S. buyer shows in Boston and Southern California.
7. U.S. state/regional technical symposiums.

The show in Mexico and Ecuador probably offer the greatest competition. These are annual shows. The symposium held in Honduras is the only show in Central America and has great potential to serve the area and attract international participants. John McClung met a participant who is also very involved with the World Aquaculture Show. The World Aquaculture Society is interested in working with regional groups (perhaps co-sponsoring a symposium). This should be considered.

PROMOTION/PUBLICITY. FPX has a large database of current and prospective participants (currently 1500). We urge them to continue to expand this list and verify the accuracy of the existing information. They should review the list and target under-represented areas to receive the most attention for expansion. Getting lists from other organizations, such as the World Aquaculture Society, can be a big help.

When we asked how participants learned of the show, many responded that an advertisement had triggered their interest. Staff should concentrate their ads in publications that serve the desired target audiences.

To increase publicity, staff should invite the international trade press. Offer trade-offs of free registrations for free advertising in their publications.

SPONSORSHIPS. Attachment II lists the sponsored events for the PMA Convention and Exposition. This may provide some ideas for additional sponsorship opportunities. FPX staff mentioned that they need a strategy as to how to answer requests for exclusivity from sponsors. We encourage staff to look for potential sponsors from companies outside Honduras.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE. We suggested to the FPX staff that they make the symposium an annual event. This was carefully considered, but staff decided to recommend holding the next symposium in 1995. It was felt that the technology did not change enough in a single year to provide new information for the seminars. The symposium is also a large drain on staff time and they felt the extra time would allow them to do a better job.

After the next symposium, we encourage staff to again consider making this an annual show for the following reasons:

- * Revenue
- * Ability to build on the experience of staff (have a person/people dedicated only to the symposium).
- * Integration of work load into regular operations of association (so it is not a special event people have difficulty fitting into their normal jobs).
- * Image and increased recognition within the industry.

To make this an annual event, FPX would have to hire staff and dedicate the person/people to the symposium. This improves the organization and professionalism of the event, but adds long-term costs and therefore should be evaluated carefully.

FPX staff want this event to remain a technical symposium. If there comes a time when the staff would like to consider additional ways the symposium could grow, they should look at adding a marketing component that would attract international buyers. The farmers could be the exhibitors and display their product for international buyers. In addition, seminars on business practices could be made available to the farmers.

(An idea for workshops for the next or future symposiums is to put together panels of farmers from the various countries to share what has worked and not worked for them.)

Note: We met attenders and exhibitors whose products cross over to fruits and vegetables, and encouraged them to come to Agritrade. Their names were forwarded to Carlos Larraondo at GEXPRONT in Guatemala.