



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

AGRITRADE & AGRIFLORA MEETINGS

Assignment Number: ST-170 A & B

PREPARED BY:

Nancy J. Tucker & Connie Akin
Produce Marketing Association

THROUGH

Chemonics International Consulting Division
2000 M Street, Northwest
Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20036

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UNDER THE AUSPICES OF:

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I. DATES AND DESTINATIONS. June 6-9, 1993. To San Jose, Costa Rica.

II. PURPOSE OF TRAVEL. To meet with the staff and members of the floraculture and exporter associations, to determine support for a Central American floral and plant convention in Costa Rica, to evaluate existing facilities for such an event, and to provide information needed by the groups to decide whether or not to hold the event.

III. PERSONS CONTACTED. We worked with Doris Osterlof, Ana María Vásquez, Gabriela Sánchez and Sandra Redondo of CADEXCO¹; Rodolfo Castro, President of CADEXCO, Cecil Alfaro, Plantas y Flores Ornamentales, President of ACOFLOR and board member of CADEXCO; Jilma Ramirez, CINDE; Rodolfo Orlich, Inversionista Palmareña, S.A., President, Caneplanta; Esteban Montero, Propica, board member of CADEXCO; Fritz Haas and George Pettengill, both ornamental plant growers and exporters and members of the board of Caneplanta.

IV. ACCOMPLISHMENTS. We met with board members from CADEXCO, ACOFLOR, and Caneplanta, as well as staff members from CADEXCO and CINDE. From all the industry members, there was strong support for a floral convention and exposition to be held in San Jose, Costa Rica. Unlike the last time the idea was considered, this year the support and drive for the event is coming from the growers and exporters.

Purpose. Members of the industry feel the event should provide the opportunity for buyers and sellers to get together.

Regional representation. Each chamber strongly supported the concept of a regional event, with participation from all the countries of Central America. This makes the event stronger and also more attractive to foreign buyers. In one place, buyers can meet people from the entire region. With this event, Costa Rica becomes the showplace for the region's floral industry.

Staff/organization. Of the associations/chambers with whom we met, CADEXCO is the best equipped to be the focal point for organizing and running the conference. ACOFLOR has a very small staff and Caneplanta has none at all. CINDE is still involved with a major reorganization. CADEXCO has the office facilities and support to give a convention/exhibit manager as well as a strong commitment to making this a Central American event. CADEXCO has had experience holding an exporters' convention which draws 200-250 people for a day and they have held several smaller meetings.

¹Please refer to Glossary on Page 6 for acronyms information.

We highly recommend that someone should be hired to be the convention/exhibit manager. They need a professional, preferably with experience in running seminars and conventions, who will be devoted only to organizing, promoting and holding the event. There are good opportunities for additional training for this person:

- Internship with the Gremial before and during Agritrade
- American Society for Association Executives (ASAE) courses in the U.S (August)

Marketing. Using Agritrade's marketing activities as a guide, PMA can help develop a plan of action for the event. A list for direct mailings can be developed from the Floral Marketing Association registration list, floral participants of Agritrade, and information from each Central American association.

Board of Directors/Planning Committee. For both the PMA convention and Agritrade, a vital role is played by the Board of Directors (in PMA's case, we call the group a Convention Committee). A similar group needs to be developed for the floral show. The group should be composed of representatives of each business group that will be involved in the convention (including suppliers/exhibitors). As with Agritrade, it might work best to have a group of Costa Ricans who could provide timely, more frequent advice and guidance, and a group of Central American/international advisors to provide marketing, promotion, and some planning support. The latter group would meet less frequently (perhaps 2-3 times a year).

Date of event. Four factors need to be considered when determining the time of year to hold a convention and exposition:

- 1) **The time when products are in season.** Exhibitors need to be able to show good quality products.
- 2) **Work load for participants/exhibitors.** The dates of the show should not conflict with peak harvesting time, holidays, or other factors.
- 3) **Other international conventions in the industry.** The event should not be scheduled near other major conventions.
- 4) **Climate of host city.** For example, in the U.S., we would not hold a convention in Michigan in January.

In 1992, PMA surveyed our floral members to determine when they thought would be the best time for them to attend an international floral convention. August was the month that received the highest rating.

To get feedback from the floral industry in Costa Rica you might consider conducting a survey to determine the best time for the convention and exposition.

Target Audience. To make this a viable event, organizers need to stay focused on the industry and participants. We recommend that this event targets only the floral industry (flowers, ornamental plants, foliage, and related businesses). It will be easier to attract floral importers and buyers if the convention and exhibits are dedicated solely to the floral industry.

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Tours. A key benefit to holding the event in Costa Rica is the abundance of quality floral farms. Tours of selected facilities need to be part of the program, perhaps after the convention and exposition.

Budget. It would be very helpful to use the budget of Agritrade as a blueprint. Carlos Larraondo of Guatemala's Gremial would be an excellent resource to help develop the floral event budget. Expenses for training the new convention manager should be included in the budget.

Benefits. For growers and exporters a trade show and convention can be one of the most efficient ways to meet buyers. It is very difficult and expensive to go to Europe and the U.S., seek out buyers, and talk to them in their offices. It is better to entice them to go to Costa Rica and attend the show. In this manner, growers and exporters are able to display products. Buyers can tour the production areas. For those who already have buyers, a show is an important opportunity to promote the image of the product, solidify the relationships with their buyers, and perhaps plan for expansion (insure future market).

Developing support for the show. CADEXCO board members said they would like to invite some of the Guatemalan grower/exporters who started Agritrade to talk to a large group of Costa Rican growers. The Guatemalans could share some of the problems, successes, and experiences in starting and expanding Agritrade.

Facilities. To hold an event such as this, certain requirements must be met:

Exhibits

- Adequate space
- Accessible to freight
- Air conditioned
- Attractive
- Good lighting
- Good contractor with proper equipment for building booths

Meal functions

- Adequate space
- Catering services with quality food
- Tables, chairs, linens, staff, etc.
- Audiovisual and sound capacity if necessary

Seminars

- Adequate space
- Audiovisual capacity
- Microphone and sound system
- Good lighting system
- Provisions for instantaneous interpretation

Storage and offices

- Room for storage of items that staff needs
- Offices for staff

Registration

- Open area, easy to find
- Adequate space for tables/booths and signs

We evaluated four facilities in San Jose. Here are our findings:

Hotel Herradura and Convention Center. This would be our first choice for the event. It has the best facilities for an event that includes exhibits, meal functions and seminars. It is conveniently near the airport. The Cariari hotel is next door to receive overflow guests and provide additional space for entertaining. The following provides more specific information on the facility:

- Good registration area, well lit, attractive, and convenient
- Office and storage space readily available and close
- Flexibility in accommodating exhibit, meal and seminar space needs
- Atrium area surrounding the grand ballroom (prospective exhibit area)
 - * Excellent lighting
 - * Easy freight access
 - * Very attractive room
 - * Drawback - not air conditioned, but hotel is considering this
- Grand ballroom (convention center)
 - * Partitioned areas on side could be used for exhibits, leaving center of the ballroom area for meal functions (center can hold 300 for a meal).
 - * Excellent lighting, sound and AV
 - * Equipment for instantaneous interpretation built in
- Hotel ballroom
 - * Can hold 250 people for meal functions
 - * Not possible for exhibits because not accessible to freight
 - * Could be used for seminars, along with other small meeting rooms in the hotel.

In the Convention Center there are also three small meeting rooms (holding 30-40 each, theater style) that can be combined into one, narrow, long room.

The event could be laid out as follows. Meal functions and receptions in the center portion of the grand ballroom of the convention center. Exhibits would be in the atrium area (back). If additional exhibit space is needed, expand exhibits to hallway around the ballroom and if necessary to atrium in front, near registration. Hold seminars in side wings of grand ballroom or lower level meeting rooms. Other scenarios, using the rooms in the hotel, could be developed as well.

With a room block of approximately 150 rooms, staff should be able to negotiate for complimentary meeting and meal space. Try for exhibit space as well, although the possibility of this is less likely. Also, ask for special convention rate for hotel rooms for participants.

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Cariari. While this facility has a very nice exhibit area, the meal function and seminar rooms are not as good as the Herradura. Here are some specifics:

- Hotel ballroom
 - * Divides into three rooms
 - * Can hold 500 people
 - * Drawback - the wood floor does not absorb sound well
 - * Room not as attractive as ballrooms of other hotels
- Country Club exhibit area
 - * Air conditioned
 - * Carpeted, large, well-lit space
 - * Accessible to freight
 - * Small rooms for office & storage available
 - * Drawback - it is a distance from the main part of the hotel where the meals and seminars would be held. People could be distracted by the lovely attractions of the hotel (golf course, pool, etc.) and not make it to the exhibits.
 - * Drawback - this is the only area with proper space for registration. When coming from the hotel, it is a difficult to find the first time.
- Meal area
 - * The hotel uses their restaurant (90 people), casino area (80 people and not air conditioned), and a room off the pool (70 people) for meal functions. The first two can only be used for breakfast and lunch. Using multiple rooms like this is not acceptable for a convention meal function. It precludes any speeches, presentations or acknowledgements.
 - * Part of the main ballroom could be used for meal functions, but then it is unclear as to whether there would be enough room for the seminars.

Corobici. This hotel could host the event for the first year, but does not have the necessary room for the event to grow.

- Exhibits
 - * The main ballroom contains 10,000 square feet of exhibit space and would be the only suitable area for exhibits. This would provide space for 50/60 10' X 10' booths. It is likely that this would provide barely enough room for the first year and no room for growth in future years.
 - * Freight dock areas are not easily accessible to ballroom

This would be a good facility for a small regional trade show because of its adequate meeting rooms and good support through audiovisual systems, knowledgeable staff, sleeping rooms, suites, and nice amenities with large pool and spa.

Fercori. This facility is not suitable for the prospective floral show. There is no suitable space for meal functions, no facilities for seminars, no air conditioning, there is much noise from street traffic, and the necessary support systems are not present, (staff, audiovisual, equipment, etc.).



GLOSSARY

CADEXCO	Cámara de Exportadores de Costa Rica	Costa Rica
CINDE	Coalición Costarricense de Iniciativas de Desarrollo	Costa Rica
ACOFLOR		Costa Rica

NANCY J. TUCKER, PMA
CONNIE AKIN, PMA

PROEXAG II - TRIP REPORT

I. DATES AND DESTINATIONS. June 3-6, 1993. To Belize City, Belize and San Pedro, Belize.

II. PURPOSE OF TRAVEL. To meet with the staff of BEIPU¹ and identify how PMA can work with them to identify and respond to member needs. To participate in the planning and promotion meeting for Agritrade '93 and offer suggestions for promotion and marketing.

III. PERSONS CONTACTED. In Belize city we worked with Santiago Gomez, Martha Marín-Guerra, and Bibi Gaznebbi, as well as meeting many more of their staff.

Those attending the Agritrade meeting in San Pedro were: Eduardo Gonzalez, Banco del Cafe (GEXPRONT); Emilio Santano, INEXA (GEXPRONT); Jandira Thomsen, GEXPRONT; Carlos Larraondo, GEXPRONT; Santiago Gomez, BEIPU; Martha Marín-Guerra, BEIPU; Bibi Gaznebbi, BEIPU; Orlando (?) (BEIPU); Ana María Vásquez, CADEXCO; Gerardina Gonzalez, CNAA; Ricardo Suárez, FUSADES; Romeo Calderón, FUSADES; Wendy Marisol Elias, COEXPORT; Medardo Galindo, Isidro Antonio Badla, B.B.S. Agroindustrial (FPX); Ricardo Koyner, GREXPAN; Patrick Bolaños, APENN; Chuck Emely, UFFVA; and ourselves.

IV. ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

BEIPU

A. Currently there are 450 paying members in BEIPU (plus an additional 150 on delinquent list). Their goal is to have 2000 members in 5 years. From our discussions, I understand that most of the larger firms are already members. Since the smaller companies require the most in terms of assistance and services, which could be a financial drain on BEIPU, the organization may want to reevaluate their goal of 2000 members. The goal may need to be revised downward to make sure BEIPU has the resources to meet member needs.

B. BEIPU is about to conduct member phone interviews to determine needs of members. We suggested they also conduct focus groups. PMA conducts focus groups of industry segments (e.g., brokers, transporters, grower/shippers, etc.) which generate a number of good ideas and help us know about the needs of these groups. When the needs analysis is completed, PMA staff would be happy to review the results and work with BEIPU staff to start developing a plan of action and consensus for that plan.

C. During the visit, we were asked about the benefits BEIPU could offer to their members as

¹1-Please refer to Glossary on Page No. 5 for acronyms information.

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a result of their membership in PMA. Some of these follow:

- Access to PMA's marketing and training products (member rates on all products when ordered through BEIPU)
- Use of PMA's Information Center (requests need to be funneled through BEIPU)
- Opportunity to attend, network, and conduct business at PMA Convention and Exposition
- Professional development opportunities through seminars and educational programs
- Access to PMA membership directories and buyer's guides

D. Turning the tables, PMA would be glad to receive specialized information from Belize on their fruit, vegetable, and floral products so we could offer this to our other members through the PMA Information Center.

E. We discussed the subject of trade missions during our short meeting. If BEIPU members need a specific, tailored mission to the United States, PMA would be willing to help them find the right contacts and help organize the mission. Currently, PMA does not organize trade missions of our members to other countries. However, this is a possibility for the future. Depending on the needs of the group, we would consider including Belize in a trade mission to Central America.

AGRITRADE

A. During the meeting, there was obvious concern about the political situation in Guatemala. Eduardo Gonzalez gave a very good synopsis of the situation and events that eased the concerns of many. In case the publicity created a negative impression of Guatemala, Bruce Brower suggested that the next promotional mailing to the U.S. contain a letter from the U.S. Ambassador which would explain the situation and reinforce the fact that Guatemala and Central America are good places to do business.

This was an excellent idea. While the following may already be taken into consideration, we suggest the letter not mention the past situation - only note who is in charge and that the condition is stable, and perhaps stronger than the past regime (if so). Americans tend to have a short memory. Specifically mentioning the past crisis will only draw more attention to it. If any of the other Central American associations feel their members may be concerned, perhaps a similar letter from their ambassador could be written.

B. Representatives from each country discussed the benefits received from the 1992 Agritrade as well as difficulties they thought they would have in getting more individual companies to exhibit. To help people sell the show, a list of benefits and success stories is needed.

A representative from each country should write down the benefits received and contacts made, as well as individual success stories (such as the ginger grower from Honduras). These should be sent to the Gremial and combined into a list of benefits/success stories that each group can use to sell the show.

C. It was noted that the purpose of Agritrade is not to teach people how to export. The purpose is to promote Central America as a serious and beneficial place to do business and explore export opportunities. However, if they want to hold a seminar on exporting, this could be held during a Mini-Agritrade or just prior to Agritrade '93 in December.

D. During the meeting, Orlando ... suggested that a person from the board of Agritrade should talk to groups of growers/shippers/suppliers in each country. This should be done within the next two months.

E. To help international participants feel at home and receive more benefits from attending Agritrade, we suggest a hospitality suite for them during the convention. This room or set of rooms could be staffed by a person who would provide information and answer questions.

Here are some of the services that could be offered:

- Translation assistance
- Information about each Central American country
- Detailed information about the matchmaking seminar
- Information about the city (restaurants, etc.) and surrounding area
- Refreshments
- Small tables and chairs for impromptu meetings
- Detailed information on the conference and exhibits

F. In addition to the experience that PMA's staff obtains from running our convention each year, our staff learns a great deal by working with other groups. PMA's convention staff have worked with other associations during their convention and exposition. As they work, they see other procedures, get new ideas to apply to PMA, and offer suggestions to their hosts.

PMA would like to offer such an opportunity to Carlos Larraondo of the staff of the Gremial. He could work as an intern with Connie Akin, Director of Trade Shows, for two days before the convention, as the booths are being set up, and then again on Tuesday during tear down.

G. PMA has an exhibitors' advisory committee. This group is a governing body representing all PMA exhibitors. They determine policy related to the exposition, rules & regulations, and show hours; and they provide suggestions and feedback. Such a committee might be beneficial for the Gremial. Listening to the exhibitors will provide valuable information to improve Agritrade each year, and keep exhibitors coming back.

H. The Gremial might consider using one or more of the following incentives to encourage companies to exhibit, year after year:

- Reduced rates for early sign-up (on site or immediately following exposition)
- Priority placement for long term exhibitors
- Awards for years of exhibiting

I. It is important for an exposition to maintain a focus and image. Exhibitors should be directed to the target audience of the exposition. Unrelated exhibitors will have no market in the show (and will be dissatisfied with their participation) and they will detract from the image of the exposition. It could give the impression that the association had trouble finding exhibitors and took anyone they could.

J. An important part of a show manager's position is to bring awareness of his/her show to the industry. This is something that all associations need to work on. Through marketing and promotion, you will reach new people each year. PMA averages approximately 95 new exhibiting companies each year, some of which had not heard of the show, even though the show has been held for the past 44 years.

GLOSSARY

GEXPRONT	Gremial de Exportadores de Productos No-Tradicionales	Guatemala
INEXA	Industria Exportadora de Alimentos	Guatemala
BEIPU	Belize Export & Investment Promotion Unit	Belize
CADEXCO	Cámara de Exportadores de Costa Rica	Costa Rica
CNAA	Cámara Nacional de Agricultura y Agroindustria	Costa Rica
FUSADES	Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social El Salvador	El Salvador
COEXPORT	Corporación de Exportadores de El Salvador.	El Salvador
FPX	Federación de Productores y Exportadores Agropecuarios y Agroindustriales de Honduras.	Honduras
GREXPAN	Gremial de Exportadores de Productos No-Tradicionales de Panamá.	Panama
APENN	Asociación de Productores y Exportadores Nicaraguenses de Productos No Tradicionales.	Nicaragua
UFFVA	United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Association.	U.S.A.