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AGEXPORT: Guatemalan Intermediary



Photo: AGEXPORT

Make Guatemala an exporting country is the mission of the Guatemalan Exporters Association, AGEXPORT, AL-Invest IV Programme Partner in Guatemala. This private nonprofit entity, carries out, since 1982, many activities to promote Guatemalan exports, by providing services to the entrepreneurs, private industry organizations, government agencies and institutions that believe that international trade is the way to generate development and end poverty.

AGEXPORT has been defined as a dynamic, innovative and proactive institution that has had the ability to assemble a great number of exporting firms of which 84% are SMEs.

This association is responsible for the coordination of the AL-INVEST IV Programme in Guatemala as a member of the being part of the Central America, Mexico and Cuba Consortium (CAMC), led by Mexico's Nacional Financiera (NAFIN) and composed of Mexican partners and the Federation of Chambers

and Exporters Associations of Central America (FECAEXCA).

Through the application of the tools available from AL-INVEST IV Programme, and seizing the opportunities offered by Regional Integration and the Free Trade Agreements the country has negotiated, the Guatemalan partner is responsible for raising the competitiveness of SMEs, making them incorporate technologies and know-how to their processes, facilitating national and regional relations.

Thanks to the AL-INVEST IV Programme, 19 training projects and technical assistance, 2 entrepreneurial missions for business familiarisation, 2 Awareness Day on Innovation and 2 Institutional Strengthening actions, those make a total of 25 initiatives approved.

Guatemalan SMEs will soon participate in the following events: Training for the use of websites for the Services Sector, Training in Spanish market intelligence for the ICT Sector Training in collection designing for the Crafts, Gifts and Decorative Items Sector, and an entrepreneurial Mission on business familiarisation with the food industry in Barcelona, as well as an Awareness and Innovation Day for the Food Industry.

AGEXPORT together with representatives of SMEs attached to the European Programme analyzed tools, benefits, procedures and requirements of both financial and technical manual, and has made various recommendations to improve the utilization of the resources it contains.

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The European Union is composed of 27 Member States that have decided to share their knowledge, resources and destiny. Together, during an enlargement period of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development maintaining, at the same time, the cultural diversity, the tolerance and individual liberties.



Editorial...



AGEXPORT

ASOCIACION GUATEMALTECA DE EXPORTADORES

As a result of this analysis, instructions have been developed in order to complement the communication and promotion strategy of the Programme. Instructions such as defining general and specific objectives, preparing a well defined target group as well as a comprehensive secondary entities group (SMEs associations and chambers, private, public, academic institutions and media), with the aim of approaching SMEs through different paths. The campaign must use the communication channels by placing the message set for the primary target group, the secondary groups and potential partner institutions. It observes free participation of the Media in the events funded by the AL-INVEST IV Programme, as to achieve free coverage of the activities carried out.

AGEXPORT considers essential that this strategy is permanently assessed in order to measure its impact by indicators. In the case of Guatemala there have been already used several tools such as digital presentations, dissemination of the link to the web portal, flyers and periodical newsletters and other printed material (promotional brochures, blankets, banners and posters), not only of the Programme but also of the different projects already finished as well as those still to be implemented.

Regarding public relations, articles in specialized written press, radio interviews, press releases and press conferences have been conducted.

In addition, informative talks to

the 4 sectors supported by the Programme have been carried out. Besides, the official launching of the Programme and the presentation of the initiative to the partners was a success.

We also believe that in order to address ideas and develop projects that incorporate the real needs of SMEs is essential that the different sectors are in constant communication with entrepreneurs and open to suggestions of various kinds.

Haroldo Zaldívar

Gerente del Programa AL-INVEST IV,
AGEXPORT Guatemala

Activities...

How should I export? CAINCO knows



Photo: RA Consortium

"Thanks to AL-INVEST project and CAINCO we already know some rules that we didn't even know

existed; now we have legal insight on how to export our product".

Claire Silvia, owner of *Miel de Caña Cayana* – company member of the CAINCO Entrepreneurial Food Group – valued this way the course on Standardization of Exports Strategies for SMEs organized from 24 to 26 of February.

The seminar, conducted by Carlos Prommel, Food Industrial Engineer in Argentina, was designed with the objective to training small and medium enterprises e-

xecutives in how set an standardization strategy for exports.

Export rules and regulations and technical commercial negotiation were some of the contents of the seminar designed to enhance export capacity of Latin American SMEs.

As a consequence of this seminar, entrepreneurs, managers, executives and employees of the participating companies now have the tools to identify what it's needed to export potential products and establish a specific strategy for it.

Activities...

Mexican SMAGUA goes



Photo: CAMC Consortium

SMAGUA Fair 2010, held from 2 to 5 of March in Zaragoza (Spain), hosted an entrepreneurial mission of Familiarization addressed to Mexican companies in the environmental sector. The event was organized by the Nacional Financiera (NAFIN) EuroCenter.

The mission, which was attended by 14 Mexican SMEs, included a series of actions that began with a Training and Technical Assistance in Cluster Formation, and was aimed at strengthening the internationalization of SMEs in this sector.

The primary objective of the meeting was to show the latest technologies in areas such as purification and water treatment to companies involved in this activity.

Thus, Mexican SMEs had the opportunity of making a direct contact with European companies and of knowing their technologies in order to be able to commercialize them now in Mexico. In this way, they can increase their competitiveness against international companies based in the Latin American country.

To support this sector at national level, Training on How to Develop a Marketing Strategy and Industrial Cluster Formation will be carried out in April, which will allow a better market access for companies operating in the area of the environment.

Amazing future for Mexico's internationalization in milk



Photo: CAMC Consortium

From 27 of February to 10 of March, Nacional Financiera (NAFIN) Eurocenter, organized in Aguascalientes (Mexico) Training and Technical Assistance in Traceability and Quality of Milk and Dairy Products, address to SMEs from the food industry.

The main objective of this seminar was to show the participant Mexican companies the best practices of European ones in the process of dairy farming and dairy industrialization, in order to create value chains between producer SMEs and transforming industry.

29 companies attended this training, among which accounts 6 producers,

21 farms and 2 technological companies.

Under the program, from 28 of February to 9 of March have been carried out in situ assistances aimed at promoting the implementation of an action plan to improve the milk quality and therefore make these small and medium companies more competitive.

To close the event, the last day of the seminar, a meeting took place to discuss methodologies that will, among other things, raise awareness and strengthen the productive sector and Mexican dairy industry.

Reflections in the software



Photo: CEDIAL

Since November last year until March this one, a technical assistance Corporate Strategic Reflection has been developed, framed within a cooperation agreement between the Center for Business Cooperation and Industrial Development (CEDIAL) and the Consortium for Commercial Promotion of Catalonia, Spain (COPCA).

In this initiative, Paraguayan enterprises of the software industry have received more than 30 hours of individual technical assistance by Catalan advisers experts in entrepreneurial strategy. Moreover, during the mentioned initiative, there have been analyzed the current competitive positioning of each company as well as their environment - international markets and their trends, customers, etc.- companies need to face to carry out their internationalization plans.

The aim was that companies clearly define their Strategic Business Units, as well as action plans to support their internationalization initiatives.

Brussels paid a call on CAINCO



In order to evaluate results achieved through the actions conducted in the first year of the AL-INVEST IV Programme in the Andean Regio (AR), Vittorio Tonutti, head of the EuropAid sector of the European Commission, and Joaquim Cordeiro, coordinator of AL-INVEST IV office in Latin America, traveled last February to Countries in this region to pay some visits to members of the Programme in Peru, Colombia and Bolivia and, in particular, the leader of the Consortium: Chamber Industry, Trade, Services and Tourism of Santa Cruz (CAINCO).

The meetings had a very positive output. They were able to appreciate the progress of the institu-

tions of each country in relation to supporting SMEs.

A Thematic Seminar was set for mid-2010 to enable an open exchange of experience among all Programme Latin American partners.

Regarding the meeting with CAINCO, they evaluated role that this Chamber has played as executive office for the Andean Region countries as well as raised new challenges for this year. The main objective will continue to be to encourage the promotion of the Entrepreneurial Groups and the Chambers Network as tools for internationalization of SMEs from the region.

New markets for the Food Entrepreneurial Group

CAINCO food entrepreneurial group participated last 24 of February at a business meeting with representatives of Paraguay who visited Bolivia with the intention of buying food product for supermarkets, such as fruits, vegetables and rice.

The meeting, organized by CAINCO in collaboration with the Co-



chabamba Valley Foundation, provided grounds for several deals, for example, the beekeeping company Las Liras sent samples of their products to Paraguayan supermarkets.

"Our honey jelly, honey and pollen, propolis and honey are the more attractive products for the Paraguayan market; we are still waiting for a positive answer in the next few days on the samples sent in order to prepare a first shipment of 1000 boxes", said Hugo Navia, manager of The Liras.

The results of this meeting will enable Bolivian producers to improve their prices and be present in international markets.

Technical training in Paraguay

With funds from the AI-Invest IV Programme and managed by the Center for Entrepreneurial Cooperation and Industrial Development (CEDIAL), the first stage of Training in CMMI Process Areas – a model for improvement and development of software systems – has concluded after six months.

In the closing ceremony, both managers, executives and technicians from the companies that enjoyed the benefits of this action as well as representatives of the European Commission delegation in Paraguay participated, among others.

Thanks to this training programme, between 35 and 50 technicians were able to receive more 120 hours of training, and develop implementation pilot projects as part of the training.



The next stage, which involves the implementation of the Quality System, will begin this March and will last 12 months. At the end of it, companies should be able receive an audit for international certification.

The aim of this activity is providing Paraguayan companies with management and production processes to increase the confidence of local and international customers who demand software development.

All this work will increase the number of qualified software firms producing under quality standards of international recognition.

Interview...

Álex Bonjour,

Vertex Ray Technology & Design Managing Director.

The world's largest trade fair of information technologies and communication (ITCs), CEBIT 2010, took place from 2 to 6 of March in Hannover (Germany). AL-Invest IV Programme has participated in this fair with 61 companies from 7 Latin American countries members of CAMC and MCV Consortia. An example of this is Vertex Technology & RAY Design, member of the second consortium, whose Managing Director, Alex Bonjour, told us how his participation was.



Photo: VERTEX RAY

How would you rate your satisfaction on your company participation at CEBIT 2010, the first world fair of ITCs Industry –Information Technologies and Communication-?

Undoubtedly, CEBIT 2010 has given Vertex Ray an overview of the technological lines interesting to follow and which are the new approaches to business in such a competitive and interlinked world.

What most surprised us was the way in which firms are willing to collaborate globally, regardless the cultural barrier, in order to be more competitive and realize that they have a completely open mind towards new alliances.

What do you think about the new technologies presented in this fair?

From the technological point of view, many innovative products have been presented. However, I was struck by the importance of the concept 'green technology', to the point that it has a room devoted exclusively to this type of applied technology.

The event has allowed the encounter between different companies and self-employed to exchange points of views

on this market. Have you participated in any of these meetings with the European companies of your sector? If so, how does you assess such meetings?

We have participated in Future Match and other events where we had the opportunity to exchange different opinions on the European and Uruguayan market. In both cases we have observed that the former is not as closed as people believe and that there is lack of knowledge about the Uruguayan potential in the technology sector.

European companies need skilled labour and the Uruguayan ones delivered it at a very competitive price.

At this exhibition, in which companies from all over the world have participated, have you discovered aspects of ICTs that you did not know until now?

There are many problems in ICTs that are common to other markets as it is the lack of qualified resources. However, my impression is that companies in Europe are more advanced and tend to collaborate more between them than the Uruguayan ones.

Your company has been able to participate in CEBIT thanks to the intermediary role that AL-INVEST IV Programme has played, how would you define the actions being carried out within the mentioned Programme?

I think the Programme has played a very important role in the presentation of Vertex Ray at CEBIT 2010, since there the company is exhibited under a working framework in which many other compa-

nies are aligned with the same purpose.

Without the AL-INVEST IV Programme it would have been much more difficult to carry out many activities.

A value that we'll take home with us is the collaboration among Latin American companies supported by AL-INVEST Programme. This union has helped us to be more competitive when confronted with European companies.

In this 2010 edition, Spain was the special guest country. Do you think that the current Spanish Presidency of the European Union at the moment will achieve bringing together the borders of Europe and Latin America?

I think Spain has a good chance of bringing the European Union closer to Latin America, especially if they join forces in the different programs that currently exist, where Latin American trade is encouraged.

It would be a good time to bring the European market closer to Mercosur and achieve tangible agreements that could boost the entire region.

What does European ICTs sector look from Uruguay?

I think that Uruguay does not see the opportunities that Europe offers to Uruguayan ICTs and that there are many prejudices to access this market.

The AL-INVEST Programme was a very important possibility to participate at CEBIT. Yet, few companies attended and that actually caught my attention given the scale of the fair and the importance it provides.

In Brussels they talk about...

Peru and Colombia already have their Free Trade Agreement with EU

The past first of March, after a week of talks in the IX round of negotiations, Peru and Colombia were able to lay the foundations of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that will improve trade relations between both countries and the EU.

The pact opens "a new framework for bilateral trade between the EU and the signatory countries" according to what the European Commission has declared through a press release. The EU has set a new agenda of economic opportunities for both regions. In particular, the agreement grants liberalization in industrial goods and fisheries trade. That means a liberalization of 80% and 65% for Peru and Colombia respectively.

Moreover, the Commission highlights that exporters of fruits and vegetables, wines, or electronics from signatory countries have better prospects of access to EU market. To that end, the agreement takes into account the different levels development of the participants by establishing a chapter of cooperation aimed at enhancing competitiveness and innovation.

Luis Guillermo Plata, Colombian Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism, said that the agreement has achieved consensus "in fundamental elements of great interest for Colombia".

On the other hand, James Brown, head of the Chief Negotiator Team for Colombia, stressed that this "ambitious" agreement sets a "new stable framework for trade relations and investment with the EU".

Banana wins

With respect to bananas, one of the products of special concern to these countries, Colombia's exports have achieved an even more favorable treatment compared to the last Most Favoured Nation Tariff achieved in the World Trade Organization (WTO) last December, as the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism of Colombia has stressed.

The market access package is complemented by a set of rules that ensure the respect of common disciplines in areas such as intellectual property.

Bolivia disagrees

Peru and Colombia have been the only two countries of the Andean Community (CAN) who have reached the end of the negotiations since Bolivia and Ecuador were abandoned them in November 2008 (the first) and last year (the second), due to discrepancies with the EU.

Bolivia considers that the agreement reached by the two Andean countries and European Community violates agreements that should be conducted among the four members of CAN by blocks. "Peru and Colombia are relegating to a second-rate position Andean integration by signing the FTA with the EU", said 4 of March Pablo Guzman, Bolivian vice minister of Foreign Trade and Integration, prior to the Joint Commission between the Andean Community and the EU. "Just as the EU calls for respect for the Treaty of Lisbon, we demand the same for the Cartagena Treaty, so to respect the already signed agreements", said Guzman.

Mexico and Chile are the only two States that, so far, have signed an FTA with the EU, while those from Mercosur - Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay - are trying to resume negotiations, stalled since 2004.



Photo: European Commission

EU toughens its stance on Cuba



The rope of relations between the EU and Cuba is tense after the 11 of March when the European Parliament plenary session in Strasbourg approved, with 509 votes for, 30 against and 14 abstentions, a resolution strongly condemning the "preventable and cruel" death of the dissident Orlando Zapata after a hunger strike of 85 days, and the Castro Government's attempt to prevent the Zapata's family to hold his funeral and pay their last respects to him.

The text was presented jointly by six political MEP groups: People's, Socialists, Liberals, Conservatives and Reformers, Greens and European Liberty and Democracy.

In it, they urge the Council and the European Commission to intensify measures to demand the release of political prisoners and ensure the work of human rights defenders.

MEPs have expressed their concern over the "alarming state of the journalist and psychologist William Fariñas, whose persistence in the hunger strike could lead to a fatal outcome".

They have also asked Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Policy of the EU, to engage "immediately" in a "dialogue

structured "with Cuban civil society and with those sectors that support a peaceful transition in Cuba.

Regarding the Common Position adopted in 1996, there is no unanimity. The People's Party and the European Commission advocate to maintain it, while the Socialists and the Left want it to be withdrawn for considering that it has become obsolete and it is an impediment to the relations between both powers.

In the second group, we can also find Willy Meyer, vice president of the Euro-Latin American Assembly (EUROLAT), who explained that Cuba need "to establish a relationship as equals, based on dialogue about issues of common agenda including human rights". "We demand the withdrawal of the Common Position because it implies an Exception treatment that EU has with no other country", he added. Thus, the United Left Group has put forward an amendment to withdraw it, not contemplated in the original draft.

Luis Yáñez-Barnuevo, coordinator of the Socialists for the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, advocates for opening "a period of calm reflection" in which "points of encounter, policies to assist the Cuban people" should

be sought.

The Spanish Presidency already proposed to withdraw the Common Position, but other powers such as Germany showed their deep rejection, claiming that the island should first make a progress in respecting human rights.

Cuban Position

The Cuban National Assembly has criticized the position of the MEPs in a statement claiming that "the European Parliament has adopted after a nasty debate, a resolution of condemnation against our country that manipulates feelings, misrepresents facts, wields lies and hides realities.

The statement also mentions that the death of the inmate occurred because he "voluntarily refused to eat despite the warnings and the intervention of specialized Cuban doctors". It goes even further by ensuring that beyond the condemnation "there is a profound cynicism". "How many children's lives have been lost in the poor nations by the decision of the rich countries represented in the European Parliament, of not delivering their commitments to development aid" says the text.

"It also offends the Cubans the attempt to lecture us on a time when in Europe immigrants and unemployed people are suppressed while here the people freely, proposes in neighborhood meetings candidates for municipal elections without intermediaries" concludes the press release.

