

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Mid-year Marketing Updates from Canada

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and Shows

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Report Highlights:

FAS/Canada reflects on an exciting and busy year of marketing activities, including a host of events under the *tasteU.S.* brand. Building on successful restaurant and retail promotions featuring U.S. agricultural products as diverse as sweet potatoes, watermelons and peanuts, FAS/Canada is looking forward to bringing *tasteU.S.* into francophone Canada as *Prenez Goût aux États*.

Overview

The many grand celebrations of Canada's 150th anniversary have really set the tone for 2017. FAS/Canada kicked off the year with a **tasteU.S.** event in Ottawa in recognition of the 150 years of the Canada-U.S. friendship in agricultural trade, followed by cooking demos at the Restaurants Canada Show in March and at SIAL Canada in May. FAS/Canada conducted two restaurant promotions in Toronto featuring more than 20 U.S. cooperators food and beverage products. FAS/Canada welcomed Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue on his first international trip in June and hosted a trade mission from Nebraska led by Governor Ricketts in August. FAS/Canada Marketing Specialists have also been successfully collecting stamps in their passports with attendance to major trade shows in Chicago, New York City and Los Angeles, in addition to numerous Canadian shows. In November, FAS/Canada will sponsor two consumer-oriented shows under the **tasteU.S.** banner: EAT! Vancouver Food Festival and Live the Smart Way Expo in Ottawa. In addition, FAS/Canada will launch a Fresh Produce Column in the Canadian Grocer with the aim to further educate the Canadian grocery trade on American produce.

tasteU.S. Highlights

Pickle Barrel Limited Time Offer (LTO) Breakfast/Brunch Menu, four-weeks of May

The first-ever **tasteU.S.** breakfast and brunch menu was offered throughout Pickle Barrel's 11 locations in the Greater Toronto Area, showcasing 18 U.S. ingredients. The restaurant reported 29 percent of the breakfast meals served in May were ordered from the **tasteU.S.** menu – this high percentage exceeds LTO industry standards which average 15 percent of total meals.

Marché Restaurants Canada LTO Menu, June 5-18

Seven U.S. foods and beverages were featured during the two-week promotion that was inaugurated by Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue's first visit to Canada. During the promotion, there was a 14 percent increase in sales of menu items featuring U.S. ingredients and a 10 percent retention for the **tasteU.S.** menu items two weeks following the promotion.

tasteU.S. Opportunities

As mentioned initially, several opportunities remain before we close the books for 2017. This Fall, there will be a Fresh Produce Column in the Canadian Grocer addressing trending produce topics while highlighting the superior traits of U.S. products. The first issue in November will feature **tasteU.S.** and highlight our cooperators and the benefits of U.S.-origin produce. Cooperators are offered to developed content in subsequent issues.

tasteU.S. will be Gold Sponsors at the Live the Smart Way Expo in Ottawa, November 11-12. We are looking forward to the exhibit, including a cooking-demo and starring role on the CTV Morning Live Ottawa show.

Looking ahead

The 2017 GBI *Prenez Goût aux États* campaign kicked off on July 1 with what seems to be nothing but a *bien pensée* plan to increase the U.S. market share in the French-speaking province of Quebec. We are looking forward to supporting upcoming retail, HRI and trade show promotions.

Cooperator Happenings

American Peanut Council (APC)

In the first six months of 2017, APC developed the foundation for connecting with consumers, social influencers and health professionals through peanut-inspired recipes. The APC teamed up with some of Canada's most talented recipe developers and photographers to create 12 inspiring, unique and delicious recipes to share with consumers and media. APC also developed 10 new videos featuring peanut butter hacks and recipe combinations that consumers can use on a daily basis. The recipes, photography and videos help start and engage viewers in conversations about the quality, nutrition and versatility of U.S.-grown peanuts.

To encourage consumption, the APC has worked with a team of peanut ambassadors - notable media and social media influencers, to share recipes and nutrition information with readers and viewers. Throughout January, February and March, APC partnered with multiple daytime television programs and food and lifestyle bloggers across Canada, resulting in more than 2.5 million audience reach impressions.

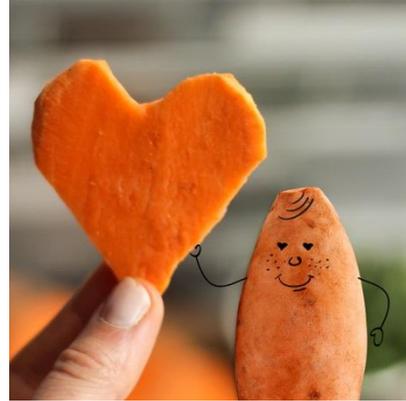


On August 14, APC hosted a baseball game and bloggers event at Left Field Brewery in Toronto. Foodie, lifestyle and mommy bloggers were invited to view a Toronto Blue Jays baseball game and interact with special guests and colleagues. Event activities included sampling peanut-themed recipes and the opportunity to hear about peanuts' nutritional benefits from a registered dietitian. 17 influential guests attended the event and generated more than 52.4K social media impressions.

American Sweet Potato Marketing Institute (ASPMI)

To increase awareness and drive sales of U.S. sweet potatoes among Millennials, ASPMI launched an Instagram account in November 2016. The channel [@Lifeofasweetpotato](https://www.instagram.com/lifeofasweetpotato/) continues a source of inspiration and information for consumers and food influencers. The account's impactful content includes American sweet potato images and videos to educate consumers on sweet potato versatility and health benefits. To apart from other food accounts, ASPMI developed an animated sweet potato character who appears in stylized recipe images and carries out messaging in a fun, engaging way. The Instagram account can be viewed at:

<https://www.instagram.com/lifeofasweetpotato/>



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To date, [@Lifeofasweetpotato](https://www.instagram.com/lifeofasweetpotato/) has over 340 followers who engage with weekly recipe content. During Sweet Potato Month (February) and Nutrition Month (March), two promoted recipe video posts allowed ASPMI to share sweet potato usage ideas with over 132,000 Canadians, increasing followers by 309 percent while promoting consumption and purchase.

Bard Valley Date Growers (BVDG)

Always innovating, BVDG introduced an energy bar made with its own Medjool dates across Canada this past winter. Four flavors were launched, made with all-natural ingredients including natural sugar. The bars are high in fiber and potassium and are non-GMO and kosher-certified. In the first four months of production, the bars were listed, merchandised and promoted in almost five hundred independent and chain supermarkets nationally, including Metro in Ontario and Sobeys (IGA) in Québec. Through mid-June, more than four thousand cases were exported, valued at well over USD \$100,000, with close to another thousand cases on order for July.

Natural Delights has increased its consumer marketing in Canada by running constant digital programmatic advertising targeted at health- and fitness-minded Canadian consumers. In addition, geo-targeted (by postal code) Facebook and Instagram ads have been used extensively to raise awareness of the brand and inform consumers that the products are available in their local grocery store's produce department. Also of note, two brand ambassadors in Canada have been retained who are regularly developing recipes and talking about them on all major social media channels in Canada.

California Ag Export Council (CAEC)

For California summer & fall field-grown vegetable farmers, packers and exporters, Canada remains their most important export market. California is among the most favored and trusted source for imported field-grown vegetables in Canada. From June/July through October/November, export sales of California vegetables to Canada remain well north of 50 percent. While Canada may be viewed by many as a mature export market, Canada continues to defy export market prognosticators as year-over-year export sales and volume continues to scale new heights. Every one percent increase in export sales to Canada is equivalent to many other country exports worldwide for California producers/exporters

combined! With strong year-over-year growth among Canada's retailer, foodservice and wholesalers communities, the CAEC's third-year MAP-funded export program has now seasonally commenced.

CAEC's continued strategy this summer / early Fall is to protect and ultimately grow sales of field-grown California vegetables, this against growing competition from Mexican and Canadian greenhouse and field vegetable producers, while continuing to expand market share within the retail, wholesale and foodservice sectors, and consumers.



California Dried Plum Board (CDPB)

CDPB has received MAP funding for a Canadian marketing campaign that began in August 2017. The program, created by Harbinger Communications, is designed to create awareness about the nutrition benefits, in particular bone health benefits and the versatility of California prunes. Harbinger will be targeting both English and French healthcare professionals and active nutrition-conscious women aged 45+ as well as millennial women.

Food Export Midwest & Northeast

Food Export Association of the Midwest and Food Export Northeast continues to educate, support and assist U.S. Suppliers exporting to Canada. In February, Food Export conducted a Focused Trade Mission to Canada for Specialty, Natural and Private Label Products, and offered its Food Show PLUS!™ services to exhibitors at SIAL Canada this past May. Export also brought 13 companies to Toronto for a Focused Mission for Specialty and Natural Products on September 6 &



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So far this year, companies that have participated in Food Export's Canadian activities have gained over 115 new Canadian contacts and reported over \$2.4 million in new export sales to Canada.

Looking ahead to 2018, Food Export will be offering Food Show PLUS!™ services to exhibitors at the Canadian Health Food Association West show and at the SIAL Canada show. The service aims to help suppliers find qualified buyers and become better exhibitors, making the most of their tradeshow participation.

The National Sunflower Association (NSA)

NSA recently produced a new video— [Does Your Kitchen Need Oil Change](#) —promoting the benefits of sunflower oil to people working in the Canadian foodservice industry. Health Canada is currently proposing a ban on partially hydrogenated oils, and as many foodservice operators are looking for alternative oils.

Supported by Canadian sunflower oil distributors, this educational is currently posted on the NSA’s YouTube channel and can be viewed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQppyFDD_Lc

The video has been shared with potential customers through NSA suppliers’ sales networks. It was also promoted through a digital advertising campaign focused on industry publications, and through Facebook and TrueView ads targeting individuals who in the foodservice industry.



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National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB)

U.S. watermelon continues to enjoy strong retail support across Canada, the industry’s #1 export market. Over the Father’s Day weekend, Quality Foods (Qualicum Beach, BC) conducted their Seaside Cruisers event, an event Oprah Winfrey once recommended to Americans who love food and classic cars to add “bucket list”. Collectively Quality Foods and the NWPB positioned and marketed a new California and Arizona variety watermelon as the event’s primary featured item. Focus was on key consumer experiences fun, health and nutrition. And to amp up messaging, the 2017 National Watermelon Queen, Miss Madison, interacted with event attendees. Though Vancouver Island's weather that weekend was less than ideal, cool and overcast, sales of first-of-the-season Arizona- and California-U.S. watermelon more than doubled (+135 percent) compared to Father’s Day the previous year (whose weather then was simply spectacular).



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Through the USDA and SUSTA (the latter who graciously funds the NWPB's 2017 MAP program), Canada remains the U.S. watermelon industry's most important export market worldwide with exports of U.S. watermelon to Canada annually topping well over 330,000,000 pounds with an export value of over \$80-million.

USA Rice

USA Rice Canada developed four new recipes that were featured in a spring media kit that was sent to food and lifestyle. The recipes, Supergreen Shrimp and Rice Salad; Miso Collard with Rice; Savoury Rice Waffles; and Fudgy Cherry Brown Bars, along with key messages, were featured in a nationally-syndicated food column run by the Sun Publication Chain, positioned rice as The Mighty Grain. Twenty-one papers covered the article.



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The Restaurants Canada Food Show provided the ideal opportunity to engage with foodservice influencers. Funding through FAS DC and FAS Ottawa supported a **tasteU.S.** partnership opportunity with RC 2017, that included USA Rice along with two other cooperators. The opportunity included a live cooking demonstration with Chef Sang Kim, a popular local chef, serving as the brand ambassador. During the demonstration, Chef Kim entertained and educated the audience, sharing personal stories about how his Korean upbringing continues to influence his cooking and the role of rice in his Asian diet. He spoke about his genuine love of and preference for California medium grain rice. He recalled that in his sushi classes he conducts blind taste tests using Japanese short grain rice and medium grain California rice. He said, "Eighty per cent of people in the classes said they hands down preferred California rice." He's been using this rice for the past eight years. Chef Kim's key messages provided third-party credibility and helped educate target audiences about the nutrition, versatility and quality benefits of U.S.-grown rice and why it should be a preferred ingredient choice among foodservice influencers.

USA Tomatoes (Florida Tomato Committee)

Canada is the Florida tomato industry's most important export market, annually importing as many as one-sixth of all Florida tomatoes grown and marketed. The Florida tomato industry nonetheless continues to face tremendous challenges, especially within the foodservice sector as Canadian and Mexican producers expressly target this market segment. Canada's foodservice sector accounts for just over one-half of all Florida tomatoes exported to Canada. To strategically counter this competitive intrusion and to re-energize the foodservice trade's demand for Florida tomatoes, the Florida Tomato Committee via the MAP-funded USA Tomato program successfully executed a four-week national promotion in April. FTC partnered with Sysco Canada to execute a promotion during peak spring production season of Canadian and Mexican grown greenhouse tomatoes. The promotion's results: Over 25,000 boxes of fresh Florida tomatoes, collectively valued at almost \$240,000.00 were sourced

from eight different Florida tomato producers, and nationally marketed and sold through Sysco Canada's 23 units, coast-to-coast.

This promotion was made possible by the Florida Tomato Committee's participation in the Market Access Program (MAP). With ever increasing controlled environment tomatoes grown in Mexico and Canada, the USA Tomato's MAP-funded program vitally helps U.S. (Florida) field tomato producers to strategically and successfully execute customized trade promotion like this that helps preserve AND incrementally expands and opens new export sales channels in their #1, most important export market: Canada.

Multiple-Cooperator Retail Promotion – *tasteU.S.* GBI

In partnership with the 25-store, upscale Ontario retailer, Longo's, a *tasteU.S.* promotion was executed January 13-26, 2017 to engage Longo's customers and enhance awareness of U.S.-sourced food experiences through cross-platform touchpoints. The focus was on U.S. products in the retail aisles and also in Longo's Kitchens, the store's prepared foods/meals-to-go section. This first-ever promotional format combination at Longo's aimed to help Canadian consumers recognize the great value of and the selection of high-quality, safe and nutritious foods from the United States, ultimately generating greater interest in and sales of these products. Participating cooperators included; USA Rice, Pear Bureau Northwest, Florida Department of Citrus, and California Wines.

Program elements included *tasteU.S.*-branded exposure during the two-week event: print and online flyer homepage and on pages where partnered cooperators' products were featured; in-store pop-up banners and advertising on Longo's digital screens; 150 demo days in Longo's Kitchens and 50 demos days in the produce section of Longo's stores; Digital ads on Grocery Gateway, Longo's home shopping website.

Combined, Longo's Kitchen cooperator participants' featured commodities' and in-store demos resulted in \$7,024 in demo-week sales, a lift of 134 percent over the non-feature/demo period, and a lift of 23 percent over the post-feature/demo period.