

Food Risk Communications Training and Workshop – Southeast Asia Project

Applicant Name: The Office of Agricultural Affairs of the U.S. Embassy, Bangkok Thailand (FAS/Bangkok) together with the U.S. Pea and Lentil Council

Total Amount Requested: \$31,200

Proposal Title: Food Risk Communications Training and Workshop – Southeast Asia Project

Current Market Conditions:

The expansion of foreign trade and its importance to U.S. agriculture, global mass communications, and heightened government and consumer concerns over the issues of food safety have increased the importance of preparedness for a major problem in the food export supply chain. In recent years, there has been increased knowledge and training available on how to deal with such a crisis. Preparation and an action plan prior to the crisis are critical to effectively diffusing and handling the situations.

Constraints and Objectives:

Nowadays consumers have become more concerned about food related risks than ever before. Even though food industry has become better at risk management, including food safety, the consumers' expectations of the food safety has risen. Therefore, risk communication is one of the major aspects of food safety management that once utilized efficiently can ultimately strengthen the trade of U.S. food export to international market.

After complete this training course, the Post expects the participants to be able to draft a risk communication plan for each organization and guidance for best practice for engagement and involvement of stakeholders (industry, media etc.). Plus, the participant can timely apply the risk communication they learnt to any foodborne outbreak or food safety related concerns.

Justification for Federal Funding:

The effective and successful risk communication to all relevant USG parties can result in effective government policy initiatives and negotiations; better understanding of Thai consumers and all stakeholders on U.S. food safety; and eventually increase in U.S. food trade from Southeast Asia countries.

Activity Description:

It is proposed that a 2-day regional workshop be held for U.S. agricultural officers and staff and cooperators in Southeast Asia on Risk Communication. Risk communication is a science-based approach for communicating effectively in high concern, low trust, sensitive, or controversial situations. It would prepare participants to be ready for and deal with a crisis related to U.S. food and agricultural exports.

Many cooperators have attended this training in the US, but their local staff, who are very likely to be in the forefront in dealing with the local media and government officials,

have not received sufficient training or prepared action plans. The objectives of the workshop will be to:

1. Communicate the importance of crisis communication training;
2. Communicate research findings related to how consumers react in such situations;
3. Communicate key organizational and communication concepts for dealing with a crisis;
4. Prepare regional action plans for each cooperator for the process, staff responsibilities, and trade outreach;
5. Prepare messages that can be used in crisis situations; and
6. Receive training on how to deal with the media.

It is recommended that the workshop be conducted by Dr. George Fuller, Asia Biobusiness. His course will be based on the work of Dr. Vince Corvello and his colleagues at the Center for Risk Communication in New York. Dr. Corvello was Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's communications consultant for the years prior to and including the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and was in Singapore with WHO during the SARS crisis. Asian Biobusiness has offices throughout Southeast Asia and would be in a position to provide professional assistance in dealing with the media, if required, in a crisis situation.

Participants:

Approximately 30 participants will take part in the training. The session will be held at a major hotel in Bangkok. Because of the regional nature of many cooperator organizations in Southeast Asia, it is recommended that at least one staff person from each of the FAS offices in the Region attend the workshop as well as key regional staff of the cooperators. Participation by regional staff is regarded as essential as it is very possible that a crisis may occur in a country that is outside of the location of the Southeast Asia head office of the cooperator and preparation is needed for those situations as well.

Cooperators that may be involved in this training include the California Table Grape Commission, California Raisin Advisory Board, California Tree Fruit Agreement, Northwest Cherry Board, Pear Bureau Northwest, Wine Institute, U.S. Dairy Export Council, Washington Apple Commission, U.S. Pea and Lentil Council, U.S. Dry Bean Council, U.S. Poultry and Egg Export Council, American Soybean Association, U.S. Wheat Associates, U.S. Potato Board, U.S. Meat Export Federation, and others. If there is sufficient interest in and possible participation, a second workshop may be scheduled for the following year.

Format:

The format of the workshop is expected to consist of lecture, discussion, and role-playing. At least one day of the program will consist of work groups for the development of action plans and messages for each cooperator.

Timeline: October 2008-September 2009

Budget:

The total budget for this workshop is estimated at \$31,200. This includes venue, instructor costs, organization, and travel costs for regional cooperators and FAS staff. The budget assumes participation by 18 attendees from outside of Thailand.

Hotel and room rental costs (30 x \$100 + \$1,000)	\$ 4,000
Speaker Costs	5,000
Participants' Air tickets (\$500 x 18)	9,000
Participants' Per Diem (18 x 218 x 3)	12,800
Other	400
Total	\$31,200