

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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China - Peoples Republic of

Post: Beijing ATO

ATO Continuing Support for U.S. Ginseng Industry

Report Categories:

Agricultural Trade Office Activities

Export Accomplishments - Other

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Report Highlights:

ATO Beijing continued to support the efforts of the Ginseng Board of Wisconsin, organizing a number of supporting events throughout 2013, as exports hit a record \$10.8 million.

A Recent Chapter in a Long Story:

Of the U.S. agricultural products being marketed in China, Ginseng is unusual product, in that Wisconsin Ginseng, with limited name recognition in the United States, has a history dating back more than 200 years in China, and broad name recognition. FAS has worked with the Ginseng Board on a regular basis over the past ten years to help undo the damage caused by IPR theft and widespread counterfeiting. Although export values vary widely from year to year based on crop size (virtually the entire crop is exported), the recovery has been strong as exports to China rose from a low of \$1.3 million in 2000, to \$10.8 million in 2013.

ATO/Beijing has continued this long cooperative effort, working closely with the Ginseng Board of Wisconsin throughout the year. Early in the year, ATO organized the official signing ceremony at the U.S. Embassy for a purchase agreement their largest buyer, Tong Ren Tang. Governor Scott Walker and Ambassador Gary Locke participated as witnesses to the event. ATO followed up on this by incorporating Wisconsin into our New Media Tour during the summer. The Tour brought, among others, China's top blogger on nutrition issues, to Wisconsin. Between them, the bloggers on the tour have 2.2 million followers in China. The team learned about ginseng farming and participated in the harvest. In the process, they learned why Wisconsin's focus on small-scale production results in higher quality, making their product the gold standard. The Ginseng Board was instrumental in the success of this portion of the trip, providing not just support, but a personal touch that helped the bloggers to feel at home and gave them an appreciation for the values and hospitality of rural America. During the event, bloggers tweeted regularly, and upon returning home they have written extensively about their travel.

Consumer awareness not just of U.S. ginseng, but of how it is produced, is important to building the value of the Wisconsin Ginseng brand in this market. In the wake of ongoing scandals regarding food adulteration, Chinese consumers are extremely sensitive to issues of purity and quality. This goes double for ginseng, which is seen as much as a medicine as a food product.