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## Japan

**Post:** Tokyo ATO

### New TLS Seminar in Tokyo

**Report Categories:**

CSSF Activity Evaluation

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**Report Highlights:**

ATO held the very first dedicated Trade Lead System (TLS) Seminar in Tokyo on July 24, 2012 at Hotel InterContinental Tokyo Bay. The seminar had an excellent turnout of over 50 selected Japanese importers and buyers. According to a survey provided to the guests, all were satisfied with the series of the ATO presentations. Most of the participants indicated that they will try the TLS for their business soon or in the near future. Following the seminar, a trade reception was held at the same venue with a U.S. style buffet. At the reception, ATO showcased U.S. watermelon carving, a white sorghum dish, and U.S. craft beer to Japanese buyers. The food and beer samples were donated by local representatives and suppliers. As a favor, the hotel contributed the live watermelon carving performance.

**General Information:**

Activity Code & Name: CSSF 404003, Trade Lead Seminar in Tokyo  
Beginning/Ending Date: July 24, 2012  
City/Country: Tokyo, Japan

### 1. Market Constraints and Opportunities

**Constraints:**

- Lack of new Trade Lead System awareness by Japanese importers
- Lack of coordinated business communication between U.S. suppliers & Japan Importers

**Opportunities:**

- Increasing demand of fancy foods and imported food among Japanese consumers and the market
- Favorable exchange rate

### 2. Expected Results and Desired Outcome

ATO Japan has been in the forefront in utilizing the new Trade Lead System (TLS) since it first went into operation. ATO local specialists have visited hundreds of Japanese companies and have registered a total of 218 trade leads into the system. These marketing efforts have created 8 successes and there are over 100 active Japanese trade leads in the system.

ATO planned the latest TLS seminar to increase exposure and usage. The seminar was originally expected to have a total of 40 or more reliable Japanese food importers, and strengthen business ties between U.S. food suppliers and Japanese importers.

### 3. Actual Results and Outcome

In order to stimulate new TLS usage, ATO hosted the first dedicated Trade Lead System (TLS) Seminar in Tokyo on July 24, 2012, at Hotel InterContinental Tokyo Bay. The seminar had an excellent turnout of 57 selected Japanese importers and buyers.

To make the seminar as informative as possible, ATO Japan prepared a team of four speakers to convey FAS resources to Japanese importers. Steve Shnitzler, ATO Japan Director, gave opening remarks and a presentation including ATO/Japan functions and benefits for importers, as well as a presentation on U.S./Japan food trade. Alex M. Otsuka, ATO Marketing Specialist, gave a presentation on details of the TLS and import trends from the U.S. to Japan. Dr. Suguru Sato, OAA specialist, provided an update on the U.S. food safety system and Benjamin Petlock, ATO Deputy Director, promoted the ATO's "eNewsletter", a new ATO initiative focusing U.S. food trends. These

presentations bolstered awareness of the ATO/OAA and FAS roles in Japan.

Snap shots:



Participants at the Trade Lead Seminar



U.S. Watermelon Live Carving

Following the seminar, a trade reception was held at the same venue with a U.S. style buffet. At the reception, ATO showcased U.S. watermelon carving, a white sorghum dish, and U.S. craft beer to Japanese buyers. The food and beer samples were donated by local representatives and suppliers. The hotel contributed a live carving performance and excellent food displays.

ATO also invited several executive buyers from chain restaurants and national retailers to both the seminar and the following reception. Meanwhile, these buyers are customers for the rest of participants, Japanese food importers. In this way, these participants could meet and greet with those buyers at the trade reception, providing actual business opportunities to those importers and their U.S. food products.

#### 4. Follow-up Evaluation

According to feedback we received from the audience, a total of 32 replies out of 57, almost of participants were satisfied with the seminar. Asked if you would like to use TLS, 94 percent said they were “likely to use TLS soon” or “likely to use TLS in the near future.” Around one fifth of participants said they are willing to participate in 2<sup>nd</sup> TLS meeting if it is held again.

#### 5. Cost/Revenue

The total cost to ATO Tokyo for the promotion was about \$6,100, which was paid out of the Post’s CSSF budget. This included the fees for the hotel space and services that included two banquet rooms, a large screen for the seminar and the trade reception.

The National Watermelon Association, U.S. Grains Council and Yuwa Boeki, Co., Ltd./craft beer importer of Kona Beer contributed watermelon, sorghum and beer samples, including the fee for

delivery to the venue.

The Hotel InterContinental Tokyo Bay also contributed a considerable amount in discounts for use of spaces and services. The watermelon carving was performed by a renowned chef of the hotel and menu creation/cooking for white sorghum dishes were also contributed by the hotel, which enhanced the image of the event. The contributions both from the cooperators/agents and the Hotel InterContinental Tokyo Bay resulted in a 50 percent cost reduction for ATO Tokyo.