

Nigerian Trade Team Coming to Kansas

Nine representatives from the top milling and food companies in Nigeria will travel to four states to survey the new wheat crop from June 2 to 12 as part of an annual trade team visit to four U.S. states, including Kansas. .

Year in and year out, Nigeria is one of the largest buyers of U.S. wheat, including nearly 2.4 million metric tons, or nearly 100 million bushels, of hard red winter wheat in marketing year 2012-13. For a firsthand look at this year's hard red winter (HRW) and hard white (HW) crops, the team will meet with university researchers and tour grain and wheat foods facilities, plus visit farmers in Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado and Nebraska.

The team will be in Manhattan June 6-7 with stops at the Kansas Wheat Innovation Center and the International Grains Program at Kansas State University.

"Having the Nigerian trade team come to Manhattan allows us to demonstrate the investment in research by Kansas wheat farmers. The farmer investment in the industry reassures the Nigerian buyers that we are constantly seeking to improve the wheat they buy. Nigerian millers continue to be good customers because they appreciate the reliable supply of high-quality wheat they can find in the U.S," said Aaron Harries, director of marketing at the Kansas Wheat Commission.

Trade teams are important because they introduce foreign customers to both the beginning and end of the grain chain, said Gerald Theus, assistant regional director for the U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) Sub-Sahara African Office in Cape Town, South Africa. "Visits like this one allow our Nigerian customers to make a personal connection with U.S. wheat farmers - who consistently produce the high quality wheat Nigeria's industry needs."

Theus and Muyiwa Talabi, USW's marketing consultant based in Lagos, Nigeria, will accompany this year's team. The Nigerian team is sponsored in part by the Oklahoma Wheat Commission and funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's market development programs. USW also collaborated with Kansas Wheat, the Colorado Wheat Administrative Committee and Nebraska Wheat Board to organize this year's Nigerian team. Trade teams like this one reinforce the reliability, quality and value of the U.S. wheat crop to wheat buyers from around the world.

This team includes representatives from Nigeria's leading flour mills, including Flour Mills of Nigeria, is the world's largest importer of HW wheat, shipped from its own export elevator in Corpus Christi, TX. This company and other Nigerian flour mills also import significant amounts of HRW, hard red spring (HRS), soft red winter (SRW) and durum.

Nigeria is the ultimate success story for the U.S. wheat industry, with a rapidly expanding flour milling industry that is undaunted by a lack of steady electricity, a transportation infrastructure that is yet to be created and national poverty beyond the understanding of the average American.

USW's long-term presence in Africa, market research, and strategy targeting the local milling industry helped build this market and led to opening an office in Lagos, Nigeria in 2001. USW also works collaboratively with leading Nigerian millers to develop the local market for products made with U.S. wheat flour and semolina.

The United States dominates Nigeria's wheat import market with close to a 90 percent market share, despite increased price competition from Canada and the Black Sea region. Nigeria was the United States' largest wheat export market in the 2009/10 marketing year (June-May).

USW's in-country service office in Lagos and a long-term commitment to technical training and exchanges have combined to build strong Nigerian loyalty to U.S.-origin wheat. Yet, Nigeria has tremendous untapped potential for increased milling capacity and, along with continued purchases of HRW, an interest in increasing consumption of other U.S. wheat classes, particularly HW.

That commitment to building lasting trade partnerships - coupled with USW's long-standing presence throughout the African continent - has earned U.S. wheat a reputation for high quality and reliability.