

Trade Mission to Costa Rica

This spring, the Kansas Department of Agriculture led a trade mission to Costa Rica to establish and strengthen relationships with Costa Rican beef producers. The KDA delegation of Billy Brown and Caitlyn Maloney was joined by Galen Fink, owner of Fink Beef Genetics in Randolph, Kansas, and project partner David Hobbs, director of activities for the American International Charolais Association.

KDA has partnered with the Costa Rican National Institute of Innovation and Transfer in Agricultural Technology (INTA) to demonstrate the benefits of utilizing U.S. beef genetics in the national herd of Brahman-based cattle. A field day exhibiting the offspring of U.S. Charolais and Red Angus-sired calves was the focal point of the mission, as over sixty Costa Rican cattlemen were in attendance. Through visits to Costa Rican ranches, genetics centers and academic institutions, the team gained useful insight on industry issues, listened to producers' needs, made invaluable industry contacts, and solidified existing partnerships. Over the course of the week, the group was presented with numerous partnership opportunities in both the national and private sectors of the beef industry, which helped participants achieve useful insights for the future as the project moves forward.

"[This was] the best meeting INTA has ever put on," said Fink. "It was in an area where there are a lot more cows, and producers were very serious about what they were doing. Some traveled up to 10 hours to get to the field day. Tour stops were outstanding."

While U.S. exports of beef and beef products to Costa Rica have increased from \$1.7 million in 2009 to \$15.1 million in 2016, there has been a sustained decline in the cattle herd in Costa Rica, raising concerns about the sustainability of the local cow herd. "By utilizing U.S genetics through F1 crosses, Costa Rican producers can increase growth, reduce time to harvest, and improve overall efficiency while simultaneously being more environmentally friendly and sustainable," said Brown, agribusiness development coordinator at KDA.

KDA strives to be a liaison and partner for the entire Kansas agricultural sector from farmers and ranchers to agribusinesses and food establishments and is dedicated to providing support, assistance, and opportunities to enhance Kansas businesses and grow agriculture in Kansas.

The trade mission was funded in part through U.S. Livestock Genetics Export, Inc. If you are interested in participating in upcoming trade missions, please go to

**agriculture.ks.gov/international or contact Suzanne Ryan-Numrich at
suzanne.numrich@ks.gov or call 785-564-6704**