



**NEWS RELEASE**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Indiana Dept. of Agriculture sets sights on growing access to international markets**

**INDIANAPOLIS (Dec. 12, 2017)** — International trade continues to be critical for food and agricultural companies in Indiana. In order to grow this important sector of the state's economy, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture ([ISDA](#)) is working to expand access to international markets by strengthening its partnership with the Food Export Association of the Midwest USA ([Food Export-Midwest](#)).

"It is vital we are doing everything we can to help grow Indiana's exports of value-added food and agricultural products," said Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch, Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development. "I applaud ISDA's efforts in lifting up trade and look forward to seeing their progress in the coming months."

Food Export-Midwest is a non-profit organization that promotes the export of processed food and agricultural products from 12 Midwestern states, including Indiana. The organization provides a wide range of services to facilitate trade between local agribusinesses and importers around the globe.

One of the most accessible of these is the [Branded Program](#). This program provides 50 percent cost reimbursement for a wide variety of international marketing activities, including fees for overseas trade shows, label modifications, product demonstrations and freight cost for samples to name a few.

"Providing greater access to international markets will strengthen trade between local food suppliers and importers around the world," said Melissa Rekeweg, ISDA interim director. "We want food and agricultural companies that are looking to expand internationally to know that resources and tools are available through Food Export-Midwest."

To help businesses get started with the Branded Program, and other services through Food Export-Midwest, ISDA hired Robert Warner to serve as the department's International Trade Program Manager. Among other duties, he has been tasked with operating as a liaison between businesses owners and the export organization.

"ISDA's partnership with Food Export Midwest offers numerous resources for Indiana agribusinesses in every stage of the export market," Warner said. "Some companies shy away from exporting because they are unsure what their first step should be, while others want to expand international sales and enter new markets. My goal is to be that point of contact for them to connect to Food Export-Midwest and take full advantage of these valuable programs."

Warner brings experience from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation where he served as the Small Business Ombudsman. Prior to working with the state, he spent over 15 years in the banking and finance industries, gaining knowledge and expertise in commercial lending, financial

planning and risk management.

Warner's other roles include organizing trade missions, hosting international buying delegations, and representing Indiana agricultural companies at domestic and international trade shows.

Visit [www.foodexport.org](http://www.foodexport.org) to learn more about Food Export Midwest or [www.in.gov/isda/2346.htm](http://www.in.gov/isda/2346.htm) for information about ISDA's International Trade programs.

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## **ABOUT ISDA**

*The [Indiana State Department of Agriculture \(ISDA\)](http://www.in.gov/isda) was established as a separate state agency by the Legislature in 2005. Administratively, ISDA reports to [Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch](#), who also serves as Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development. Major responsibilities include advocacy for Indiana agriculture at the local, state and federal level, managing soil conservation programs, promoting economic development and agricultural innovation, serving as a regulatory ombudsman for agricultural businesses, and licensing grain firms throughout the state.*

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### **Media Contact:**

Ben Gavelek

Phone: 317.690.3303

Email: [bgavelek@isda.in.gov](mailto:bgavelek@isda.in.gov)



Indiana State Department of Agriculture • [www.isda.in.gov](http://www.isda.in.gov) • (317) 232-8770