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## **NADEC Trade Policy: Looking Forward**

A key component of the overall mission of the NADEC is the development and sustainment of new markets for our members throughout the 61 Regional DEC organizations. Of course, non-DEC member businesses benefit from the NADEC's mission, although they are probably unaware of the NADEC or even their local DEC organization. The principal way in which the NADEC undertakes this mission is through its Trade Policy Committee which includes legislative affairs and advocacy.

We are now in the wind-down of an Administration in Washington which has been less interested in trade. You have witnessed the focus shift away from negotiating new Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) to an emphasis on regional trade "frameworks." These are essentially inconsequential to our members, other SMEs, and to exporting businesses generally as there are no new markets being opened by these "frameworks." In addition, these "frameworks" do not improve or eliminate existing barriers to entry for exporters to these markets.

The NADEC Trade Policy Committee has, over the few years, ramped up its efforts to find ways to improve market access for the small business community by undertaking a number of initiatives which are now well underway.

The first of these is the commencement of discussions with the British government as our oldest Ally, looking towards the eventual execution of an MOU between the U.K. government and the NADEC to enhance and coordinate relationship between the private sectors of both countries. The intent behind these efforts is to also rekindle the interest up on the Hill to get the United Act passed which would direct the Federal Government to re-engage with the U.K. on the subject of an eventual FTA which was partially completed during the previous Administration.

A second initiative undertaken by the Trade Policy Committee has been to begin to build a database of local experts on the ground in key African countries which will be in a position to assist DEC members in getting underway in new markets on that continent. This database will be housed on the NADEC website. Its preparation is now underway.

Another initiative we have undertaken has to do with opening up new markets for our DEC members in Central Asia. We have been advised of all kinds of new opportunities in this Region and interest in U.S. made exports in these countries. One of our key Committee members, Peter Jones from Tennessee, has just returned from a comprehensive trade mission to this Region and will be briefing the Trade Policy Committee about the time this article is published. We are currently looking at the development of a NADEC trade mission to selected countries in this Region for next year.

One of our earlier initiatives is now firmly in place. That was to bring the agricultural sector of our exporting community securely within the focus of NADEC emphasis. Over the last 2 Annual Conferences we have had specific programs discussing ag-specific issues. Moreover, we have also seen the emergence of a new DEC organization in the all-important ag exporting region of California's Central Valley. This inclusion of the ag sector in our exporting mindset has been an important sea-change.

There is much work to be done by the Trade Policy Committee globally: the ASEAN Region in Southeast Asia boasts strong economic performance and opportunities; the potential exists for an EU - NADEC MOU to improve private sector-to-private sector trade; there is the new Luzon Economic Corridor being set up in the Philippines; and, the new Tri-Lateral alliance between Japan, the United States and the Philippines contains increased opportunities for American exporters.

All of the work of the NADEC's Trade Policy Committee is set against the unsettling backdrop of conflict in the Ukraine and the Middle East, with elements of the same potentially with China in the West Philippine Sea, Taiwan, and the Senkaku Islands (Japan). If we shift from the geopolitical to the business side, the old global trading system is evolving into trading blocs in the future. China's economy is doing poorly and this has exacerbated the collapse of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into China and accelerated the move-out of many thousands of foreign firms out of China, looking for new homes and new supply chains under the near-shoring or friend-shoring concepts. This brings us back to the Americas. The NADEC and its Trade Policy Committee will be looking hard at what initiatives we might generate in the near term to assist in improving trade within our own hemisphere.