

# Conduct Guide for International Trade Shows and Missions

## American Softwoods



USDA funds provided to American Softwoods cooperators under the Foreign Market Development Program and Market Access Program are targeted for the generic promotion of U.S. forest products. When marketing domestic softwood lumber and engineered wood products, products are promoted generically under the “American Softwoods” (AMSO) banner. Everyone who participates in an American Softwoods trade show or mission is viewed as an AMSO representative.

While business-to-business sales are the ultimate goal, AMSO representatives must understand and respect the limitations as to where and how private business can be conducted. Individual participants cannot use a program activity or program funds to promote private self-interests or conduct private business. Fellow team members must treat each other with respect and the AMSO brand must be represented professionally, both in bearing and appearance. Trade show and mission participants will adhere to the following:

### **Sharing Sales Contacts**

Participants who take the opportunity to participate in trade shows or missions have the advantage of making first-hand contact with import prospects. However, contact information for these potential customers must be shared.

*Example:* A prospect enters the trade show booth and hands a business card to Joe, an AMSO representative. Joe then turns the card over to booth staff to record on the Contact Sheet. After the show, this contact information is attached to the mission Trip Report and made available to all team members.

Information on the nature of the visitor’s inquiry should be as complete as possible. This will enable the appropriate follow up to be made after a trade show. One word descriptions such as ‘Decking’ or ‘Southern Yellow Pine’ are not sufficient. Ideally, the grade, dimensions, and lengths of lumber required should be recorded.

### **Business Sales Talk**

Sales talk must be conducted outside and away from the USDA funded promotional area. This “promotional area” can be defined as a trade show booth, seminar room, demonstration project, etc.

*Example:* After booth staff records the prospect’s contact information, the business card is returned to Joe. After discussing the general advantages of American softwood lumber, the prospect begins to probe on quantities, ports and pricing. Joe asks the prospect to step out of the booth and invites him to continue the conversation over a cup of coffee off-site.

## **Promotional Literature & Samples**

Participants are encouraged to bring business cards and product display samples. These aids may be used to provide personal contact details, discuss general company information, services, and products inside the USDA funded promotional area, but again, when the topic turns to sales and price, the discussion must move off-site.

## **Booth Attendance**

Timely attendance on the part of each AMSO representative is vital to the success of every trade event. Attendees should plan to attend each event from beginning to end. Personal time spent staffing trade show booths is to be shared equally by all team members under supervision and scheduling set by the managing AMSO consultant. Participants must attend the booth for a minimum of 75% of the trade show hours. It is understood that some “down time” is needed to manage company business or personal affairs; however, it must not be abused to the detriment of fellow team members.

## **Dress Code**

Mission attendees represent the American Softwoods brand first and their respective companies second. AMSO representatives will dress appropriately and professionally on mission, either in the booth or on the road. Our “grade mark” for attire is BC & Better - Business Casual or Better. Business casual means nice slacks and shirt (knit, sport or dress) for the men, the appropriate business casual counterpart for ladies, and business-like shoes. No jeans, shorts, T-shirts, sneakers, or beach sandals.

## **Consequences**

Participation in American Softwoods trade shows and missions is a privilege, not a right. For mission success, our team conduct, personal demeanor and attire must reflect positively on the AMSO brand and demonstrate respect for colleagues and customers. If the guidelines outlined above are not followed, future trade show and mission participation could be suspended.