



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 23, 2006

2006-002

U.S. Agency for International Development

Strategic Development Office (503) 2234-1471

U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section (503) 2278-4444, Ext. 2471

Email: kazucena@usaid.gov

www.usaid.gov/sv

<http://elsalvador.usembassy.gov/>

USAID TO CONTINUE SUPPORT TO SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

SAN SALVADOR— The U.S. Agency for International Development in El Salvador (USAID) has announced that it will continue its support to small and medium enterprise (SMEs) development.

At the first Exporters' Forum held last week in San Salvador, USAID Director Mark Silverman announced that the agency will continue working with the Ministry of Economy, El Salvador's Agency for Export Promotion (EXPORTA) and the private sector to promote SME production and export initiatives.

The forum, organized by the Export Promotion Fund (FOEX) of the Ministry of Economy, showed SMEs how to access international markets and shared experiences of successful SMEs in developing exports. The event included a demonstration session in which visitors learned about the quality of Salvadoran exports such as coffee, pastry, seasoned pre-prepared meat, frozen shrimp, toys, fruit juice, cookies, insecticides, trophies and natural medicines.

Through its \$9.8 million Export Promotion Program (USAID/EXPRO), USAID will expand interventions aimed at increasing SME exports and jobs; promote access to international markets; help build long-term business relationships between enterprises; improve El Salvador's capacity to facilitate exports; and seek to leverage private sector and donor resources to improve SME competitiveness and productivity.

USAID/EXPRO, which began in 2003, has supported over 400 SMEs, of which 190 have already increased their exports or have developed new exports for a total value of \$25 million. Through the program, over 1,500 small and medium entrepreneurs, GOES officials, and private sector representatives have received training in export development. The program has also supported 260 SMEs to participate in 65 international trade fairs and 27 trade missions and has organized business roundtables in El Salvador with important international buyers such as Wal-Mart, Marquez Brothers, El Pueblo Market, Bestway and other companies to promote business links.

Moreover, USAID's Agricultural Diversification and Marketing Program has helped over 1,500 farmers to shift into a diversified mix of high-value vegetable production and to create more jobs. Over 600 representatives from public and private sectors have learned about export requirements including sanitary and phytosanitary standards which are crucial for food exports to enter the United States.

###