



INVITATION FOR BIDS

Food Export–Northeast is seeking a marketing and communications firm based in France to assist with development and execution of a three-year campaign to raise awareness and demand for live oysters, American lobster and Jonah crab products from the northeastern U.S. among the seafood trade and HRI sector within France. The project will run from 2022 through the end of 2024.

The [recent announcement](#) of the re-opening of the shellfish trade between the U.S. and the E.U. after more than a decade-long disagreement on regulatory standards provides an exciting opportunity to introduce live oysters from the northeastern U.S. to France. Before the ban took place, there were limited exports from the region and, in the ensuing decade when trade was halted, tremendous growth in both the number of producers and volume of production in the region. These factors set the stage a unique opportunity to introduce a truly novel product.

Another Northeast U.S. seafood product that is largely unknown in France is Jonah crab. This crab is similar to the French torteaux for which French consumer demand outstrips domestic supply. Jonah crab is available in several frozen product formats.

The final product for promotion is processed American lobster. France is a top market for live American lobster exports. In recent years, high-quality frozen products processed in the northeastern U.S. have been developed to increase convenience and reduce waste.

A secondary, and smaller, focus of this RFP is to create a strategy and activities to educate northeastern US oyster producers about the French market and to develop opportunities to introduce US oyster producers to French buyers.

Attached please find the official Request for Proposal for details, requirements, and deadlines. The deadline for proposals is 12:00 noon ET on Wednesday, March 30, 2022.

Please forward completed proposals via email to:
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Email: jcanono@foodexport.org

Questions should be directed to:
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Request for Proposals Northeast U.S. Seafood Marketing Initiative in France

Background

Food Export USA – Northeast (Food Export–Northeast) is a not-for-profit export association whose primary function is to develop export markets for northeastern producers and processors of value-added fish, shellfish, food and agricultural products. Our members include state agricultural promotion agencies from ten northeastern states. Food Export-Northeast has a strategic partnership for more than twenty years with Food Export–Midwest in order to enhance our ability to carry out our shared missions.

Food Export–Northeast is a participant in the Market Access Program (MAP), a federal program handled by the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The program is intended to boost the export of value-added food and agricultural products from the U.S. through a partnership between FAS and approximately seventy-five other industry-based trade organizations. This includes primarily commodity-specific groups, as well as two other unaffiliated regional groups similar to Food Export - Midwest and Food Export–Northeast that handle the southern and western regions of the U.S.

The products covered for export promotion by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast include a wide variety of processed and semi-processed products found throughout the retail, foodservice, and food processing sectors. These include products or derivations of meat, dairy, poultry, seafood, grains, fruits and vegetables, salty and savory snack foods, confections, beans, sauces and condiments, pet foods, beverages, canned foods, animal feeds, bakery products, pasta and many others. Marketing channels include mass market retail, specialty foods, convenience foods, private label, healthy/organic, food ingredients, frozen foods, and others. Additionally, Food Export – Northeast promotes benchmark fish and shellfish products from the northeastern U.S. including lobster, scallops, monkfish, squid, dogfish, oysters, Jonah crab and skate.

The Food Export–Northeast region encompasses the states of New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Delaware, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

Food Export – Northeast offers a Seafood Program to fish and shellfish suppliers from the northeastern member states. The program is focused on developing export opportunities and support for international promotion for the benchmark species which include American lobster, squid, scallops, monkfish, oysters, Jonah crab and dogfish. A menu of annual activities and services is developed and offered to the U.S. industry to create opportunities for them to enter new markets and expand sales.

The organization has a network of in-market representatives (IMRs) that conduct trade servicing activities to connect US suppliers with international buyers. Under direction from the US head office, IMRs identify, negotiate and oversee product promotions with importers, foodservice operators, and retailers. They also serve as a liaison to the US Agricultural Trade Offices at US embassies.

More information about Food Export–Northeast is available on the Internet at: www.foodexport.org. Additional information on the seafood program is available at: <https://www.foodexport.org/import-seafood-from-the-us>

Scope of Work

Food Export–Northeast is seeking a marketing and communications firm based in France to assist with development and execution of a three-year campaign to raise awareness and demand for live American Eastern oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*), American lobster (*Homarus americanus*) and Jonah crab (*Cancer borealis*) products from the northeastern U.S. among the seafood trade and HRI sector within France. Activities may combine one or more products or be limited to product-specific activities when/if warranted. (For example: announcing that US American Oysters are arriving in Europe).

The project will run from 2022 – through the end of 2024, based on a renewable annual contract.

A secondary focus of this RFP is to create a strategy and activities to educate northeastern US oyster producers about the French market and to introduce US oyster producers to buyers.

Target Market(s): Initially France with strategy and creative assets possibly adaptable or customizable to other European markets. (Note: Several major Dutch wholesalers supply shellfish to the French market.)

Key Performance Indicators: The following are some of the measures we would use to evaluate the initiative's success

- Increased awareness of product by target population
- Increased likelihood to purchase
- Trade leads (would be facilitated by our In-Market Representative)
- Buyer/seller introductions
- New distributorship relationships
- Export sales

Other Potentially Useful Information:

- Re-opening of shellfish trade (February 2022) provides a unique opportunity to introduce American Eastern oysters to Europe.
- Major 2022 European trade events where Food Export-Northeast has an exhibiting presence
 - Seafood Expo Global (Barcelona, Spain * April 2022)
 - SIRHA (Lyon, France * January 2022)
- Possible Event Venue: Ambassador's Residence, US Embassy and Hôtel de Talleyrand

- Joining or producing other recommended events is possible, such as:
 - Trade advertising
 - Webinars/seminars/tasting events
 - Implementation of chef ambassador program
- To encourage trial/expanded use of these products by importers/chefs, Food Export–Northeast can provide product samples for evaluation and sampling by the trade.
 - It is not possible to provide product samples for activities targeting consumers.
- The organization has additional and separate funding to support importer and menu promotions

Information About Products:

Oysters

Introduction: Food Export–Northeast seeks to announce that European importers, chefs, and consumers can now explore and enjoy the distinctive delicious flavors of the Eastern American Oyster grown in the cold pristine waters of the US Northwest Atlantic.

Statement of Work: To devise a dynamic marketing and communications campaign that introduces the American Eastern oyster to fish and shellfish buyers and distributors and HRI decision-makers in France. The campaign should include the creation of a strategy that incorporates materials and measurable (virtual and in-person) activities.

Important Background Information:

Species and production information is available in text and videos on our multilingual oyster buyer toolkit: <https://seafoodbuyersguide.foodexport.org/oyster/>

Shellfish trading between the US and EU has been banned for more than a decade due to differing methods of insuring healthy products. The EU tests meats and the US tests water quality to determine food safety. It has now been determined that both methods are equivalent, it is expected that shellfish trade can resume by the end of the first quarter of 2022. Initially, shellfish producers in Spain and The Netherlands will be able to sell into the USA and producers from the states of Massachusetts and Washington will be allowed to sell into the EU. The state of Massachusetts is within our organization’s region. It is expected that more states and European countries will also soon be able to resume shellfish trade after the initial starting period. Therefore, though our initial focus is to help oyster producers from Massachusetts, messaging and activities should focus on the whole of the northeastern US coastline from the state of Maine southward through the state of Delaware.

US shellfish exports to the EU were not significant prior to the shellfish trade ban. At the time, US oyster aquaculture operations were too small and too new. Few Europeans are aware of, or have ever tasted, an American Eastern Oyster while on European soil. Therefore, messaging focus should be to introduce our US-farmed oyster species as a new-to-market product rather than a reintroduction. Oyster production in the USA has doubled over the past five years and is tracking to double once again. American oyster production has advanced quickly and the variety of oyster flavors available is significant. Developing new markets and sales opportunities is The American Eastern oyster is a different species than those produced in Europe, with some

distinctive differences in both flavors and storage that are noteworthy, but perhaps unknown in Europe.

Target audiences:

- Importers/wholesalers (We can supply some contacts)
- Chefs (Need to identify contacts and possible formation of chef ambassadors)
- US oyster producers (include a strategy and activities for French market education and buyer introductions)
- Influencers and journalists

Key attributes that messaging could incorporate:

- Merrior – Like wines, each oyster farmer produces a deliciously distinctive-flavored oyster
- Farmers are small, often family-owned, businesses. Each and every oyster is tended to by the hands of individual farmers who take great pride in the taste and quality of the oysters they produce. Their brands are backed by an earned and seasoned reputation.
- With the reopening of trade, the European Union recognizes that American oysters are grown in the cleanest waters and handled with great care.
- Our species of oyster is able to withstand being out of the water for longer periods than other species. There is no need to hold/store this oyster in tanks of water. In fact, doing so will destroy their unique flavors because as filter feeders they would take on the characteristics of the water they are stored in.

American Lobster Products

Introduction: Food Export-Northeast seeks to promote the wide variety of American lobster products available from the northeastern USA to French importers, processors, chefs and retailers.

Statement of Work: To create awareness and demand by devising a marketing and communications campaign that introduces the American lobster products to France. The campaign could include the creation of a strategy that incorporates materials and measurable (virtual and in-person) activities.

Important Background Information:

Species and production information is available in text and videos on our multilingual lobster buyer toolkit: <https://seafoodbuyersguide.foodexport.org/american-lobster-products/>

The northeastern US lobster industry has primarily exported live lobster to France. Historically, most frozen processed lobster was sold into France by Canadian producers and the bulk of the product sold, primarily at retail, were small lobsters frozen in a brine solution known in the trade as popsicles. (It should be noted, that Canada traditionally purchases a significant volume of US American lobster each year to support its processing industry.)

In recent years, a US lobster processing sector has emerged. Canada's free trade agreement with the EU, known as CETA and implemented in 2017, upended the strong market share American

suppliers had for sales of live lobster, and breaking into the frozen lobster market with new products was prohibitive due to US product costing more because of custom duties. In late 2020, a more level playing field emerged when the EU announced that live and processed (in-shell) lobster products from the USA would enjoy the same duty-free status as Canadian lobster products.

Target audiences:

- Importers/wholesalers (We can supply some contacts) that supply retail and catering sectors
- Chefs (Need to identify contacts and possible formation of chef ambassadors)
- French processors that could utilize some product formats, such as minced lobster meat, in meal formulations
- Influencers and journalists

Key attributes that messaging could incorporate:

- US American lobster is sustainably managed utilizing science-based conservation methods that were initially introduced nearly 150 years ago
- Lobster harvesters and dealers carefully handle and inspect each lobster to ensure that buyers obtain the best quality.
- Processing top quality products starts with using the best raw material – much of the lobster processed outside the USA is harvested from the USA
- State-of-the-Art handling and processing practices producing an array of lobster products that offer good quality, convenience, and versatility.
- New processed lobster products may appeal to a broader range of chefs than might ordinarily consider featuring lobster. It can be used in less formal and more accessible preparations. European producers of value-added seafood products may also be interested.

Jonah Crab Products

Introduction: Food Export–Northeast seeks to introduce frozen whole Jonah crab and crab products into France.

Statement of Work: To create awareness and demand by devising an educational and promotional campaign that introduces the American Jonah crab products to France. The campaign could include the creation of a strategy that incorporates materials and measurable (virtual and in-person) activities.

Important Background Information:

Species and production information is available in text and videos on our multilingual Jonah crab buyer toolkit: <https://seafoodbuyersguide.foodexport.org/jonah-crab/>

Jonah crab is emerging as a new harvest and is being processed into a variety of products. Lobster harvesters from southern New England (NY, CT, RI, and MA) are increasingly catching Jonah crab in lobster traps that traditionally caught only lobster. Lobster populations are moving northward to colder waters as climate change is warming waters in their historical southern

range. In their wake, Jonah crab are being caught in numbers not previously seen and, as a result, there has been little prior effort to market this crab.

If markets are developed, lobster processors can process Jonah crab during those times of the year when processing plants would otherwise be idle.

France is viewed as a potentially good market for US Jonah crab (*Cancer borealis*) because this species closely resembles, and is closely related to the European brown crab (*Cancer pagurus*), which is known in France as tourteaux. Tourteaux has good French consumer demand but supplies are increasingly too tight to support demand.

Target audiences:

- Importers/wholesalers (We can supply some contacts) that supply retail and catering sectors
- Chefs (Need to identify contacts and possible formation of chef ambassadors)
- Processors that could utilize some product formats, such as minced crabmeat, in meal formulations
- Influencers and journalists

Key attributes that messaging could incorporate:

- US Jonah crab may be a good alternative for tight supplies of the European brown crab
- Jonah crab claws are meat-filled and available in several easy-to-enjoy formats
- Jonah crab has a delicate taste that is described as being somewhat sweeter than Dungeness crab. This crab is often called the Dungeness crab of the Atlantic.
- State-of-the-Art handling and processing practices producing an array of crab products that offer good quality, convenience, and versatility.

Requirements

The bidder must be able to cite previous experience in communications and market promotion/public relations activities. Previous project experience with the seafood industry, projects targeting the HRI sector and strong relationships with culinary press should be detailed in the response. Past experience with not-for-profit groups, international marketing, and food and/or agricultural groups will be considered favorably. The contractor must also be financially and legally capable of entering into and executing a contract for the above stated projects.

The proposal should estimate the costs for any activities it proposes including fees, venue, chefs, audio/video rental, catering, materials and any other appropriate costs. Proposals should provide detailed proposals for activities in 2022 and a summary of likely follow-on activities for 2023 and 2024. It is anticipated that for 2022, preparation and planning would commence immediately upon award of contract with core activities to begin in the autumn 2022.

The successful vendor will gain access to use of Food Export-Northeast's digital seafood asset library for sole use within the contracted project.

In addition, please provide the following information:

1. Name of Entity (as it would appear on contract/invoices)
2. Main point of contact
3. Complete Mailing Address / Physical Office Address
4. EIN/TIN/SS number (or if an overseas entity, the equivalent tax identification number in your country)
5. Type of Structure (choose one):
 Individual Corporation LLC Partnership Sole Proprietorship

Food Export–Northeast is not liable for any costs associated with any company’s response to this RFP. Food Export–Northeast reserves the right to not award this contract if, in the opinion of the evaluators, no suitable proposal is received. The awarded contract may be renewed for up to three (3) years.

The selected contractor must agree to abide by Food Export–Northeast Terms and Conditions:

Food Export - Northeast does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Persons with disabilities who require alternate means of communication of program information should contact us. Food Export – Northeast does not tolerate fraud in their programs or services, and expect all participants to comply with our code of ethics (www.foodexport.org/codeofethics).

If you suspect any instance of fraud, please contact our Ethics Reporting Line at: www.foodexport.ethicspoint.com or 1-855-727-6715 (domestic toll-free.)

We reserve the right to deny services to any firm or individual which, in the sole opinion of Food Export–Northeast does not comply with MAP; FAS; Food Export–Northeast regulations or policies, or otherwise reflect positively on them; their members states; FAS; or USDA, in pursuit of their mission of increasing food and agricultural exports, or for continued public support for their programs. For more information please see our Terms and Conditions located at www.foodexport.org/termsandconditions.

The selected contractor must agree to abide by the provisions contained in Section 202 of Executive Order 11246 (30 Federal Register 12319) with regard to employment and contracting practices. In addition, Food Export – Northeast requires that its contractors may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Food Export – Northeast’s acceptance of proposal is conditional upon contractor disclosing all existing relationship with another party that has the potential of impacting and/or influencing the contractor’s ability to carry out the scope of work.

By responding to this request for proposal, you are certifying that your company nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily

excluded from participation in this transaction by any Federal department or agency. If you are unable to certify to the preceding statement, but wish to proceed with a proposal to this request, you will need to include an explanation as to why you cannot certify this statement as an attachment to your proposal.

The contents of this Request for Proposal and Scopes of Work are confidential and business proprietary. They may not be re-used for any purpose, in whole or part, including any text, or related concepts, strategies or tactics described, without written permission from Food Export – Midwest and/or Northeast.

The deadline for proposals is 12:00 noon ET on Wednesday, March 30, 2022.

Please forward completed proposals to:

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Email: jcanono@foodexport.org

Questions should be directed to:

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