



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **US Frozen Potato Importers Tour US Frozen Potato Industry**



**DENVER**—(November 4, 2008) Thirty-seven importers and distributors of US frozen potato products recently joined the United States Potato Board (USPB) for a Reverse Trade Mission (RTM). Their First-hand experience, with the US potato industry included a special emphasis on the US frozen potato product segment. The importers traveled from the Latin American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, Dominican Republic and Mexico, as well the Pacific Rim nations of Malaysia, Indonesia, China, the Philippines, Japan, and Thailand. The USPB was assisted in the hosting of this event by the Washington state growers and the Washington State Potato Commission.

“Central America is a new target market for US frozen potato products as of this marketing year,” said Susan Weller, USPB Manager of International Marketing—Frozen. “To ensure these US importers fully understand the high quality of the US potato products they are purchasing and assist in increased usage and sales, we orchestrated this RTM.



“This intensive one-week “Potato 101” course covers not only knowledge about US potato production and US frozen potato product handling information, but also offers ideas on foodservice usage they can relay to their in-country customers.

“It was the largest group I have trained during an RTM, but we certainly produced an excellent ROI by having this many participants learn about potatoes from the ground to the table. It was wonderful to see such a high level of interest and excitement by the participants. They asked a plethora of questions throughout the week. As importers and distributors, taking this opportunity to learn about US potato production will certainly be effective for them in marketing US frozen potato products to their customers.”

The RTM began in eastern Washington with a potato industry orientation followed by tours through the fresh packing facilities at Skone & Connors Produce and Washington Potato Company in Warden, WA. The importers and distributors next toured harvest operations in progress at Nelson Cox’ farm.

After gaining insight about potato field and storage operations, the group visited the local frozen potato processing facilities. These tours were followed by visits to local supermarkets to see how US frozen potato products are displayed and stored in retail settings.

The group then traveled to the Port of Seattle to see cargo and freight handling export operations. They learned about the requirements for cold chain shipping, storage and sanitation practices, followed by a tour through the cold storage warehouses of SCS Refrigerated Services, LLC.

At the Seattle Central Community College Culinary School, the importers and distributors received instruction on potato nutrition and foodservice trends with frozen potatoes. This was followed by kitchen demonstrations by culinary instructors.

The participants valued the productive, informative agenda of this RTM. One associate from Indonesia said, “I would like to express my sincere thanks for the superb arrangement and dedication of the USBP in holding this RTM. I learned a lot of things about potatoes and products made with potatoes.”

Another importer from El Salvador wrote: “It is very difficult for me to find the right words to express my feelings of gratitude to the USBP. Simply saying ‘thank you’ is not enough. You were a wonderful host and you have empowered us to increase the sales of US potatoes around the world.”

An attendee from China wrote: “I really enjoyed the trip and learned a lot about US potatoes, especially the cold chain training. I will be relaying all that I have learned.”

The RTM group would especially like to thank the many Washington growers for their generosity. They are appreciative to the Washington State Potato Commission for the hospitality extended to them.

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David Fairbourn is Manager, Industry Communications & Policy, at the United States Potato Board in Denver. The mission of the USBP is to increase demand for potatoes and potato products through an integrated promotion program, thereby providing US producers with expanding markets for their production. David can be contacted at 303-369-7783 or david.fairbourn@uspotatoes.com. For complete information about the programs, ROI results, resources and tools available to all members of the industry through the USBP, please visit [www.uspotatoes.com](http://www.uspotatoes.com). The United States Potato Board -- Maximizing Return on Grower Investment.

