

## **International Backgrounder**

The Greater Omaha Chamber's Economic Development Partnership works to enhance the area's image as a center for international business and trade by helping Omaha businesses build their own foreign trade and by helping foreign-owned businesses establish locations in the area. It also works to build the area's business, government and cultural infrastructure supporting international trade and investment.

### **Activities:**

To do this it employs a full-time manager of international business development, hosts international trade-related events in Omaha, participates in international business associations and events and conducts international trade and recruitment tours to worldwide.

The partnership also works to broaden Omaha's international reach by encouraging companies to take advantage of Foreign Trade Zone No. 19, activated in northeast Omaha in 2006. The zone allows companies to reduce, defer or eliminate duty payments on imported foreign goods until they officially enter U.S. trading channels.

The Chamber tracks which companies are exporting, importing or investing in other countries and provides those companies with information and resources specific to their needs. It also translates and localizes marketing materials to appeal to a global audience.

More than 350 businesses in Nebraska are foreign-owned and employ more than 19,000 workers. They include Easyway (China), Claas (Germany), Evonik-Degussa (Germany), Praj Energy (India) and Novozymes (Denmark).

### **The numbers:**

- In 2007, 1,214 Nebraska companies exported goods. Of those exporters, 80 percent had fewer than 500 employees.
- In 2008, 16 percent of all manufacturing jobs in Nebraska (7.6 percent of all private-sector jobs) depended on exports.
- In 2009, processed foods were the biggest category of exports, more than \$1.5 billion of the total \$4.9 billion. Machinery accounted for \$876 million, chemicals \$416 million and transportation equipment \$333 million.
- In 2009, biggest export markets were Canada (\$1.4 billion), Mexico (\$1.1 billion), Japan (\$416 million), China (\$211 million), Australia (\$195 million).
- In 2008, Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area companies exported \$2.3 billion in goods, up from \$1.4 billion in 2006.

### **Recent trip to China:**

Marisa Ring, manager of international business development, recently spent two weeks in China to strengthen business relationships and promote Greater Omaha as a business destination. Following are highlights of the trip:

#### **Shanghai:**

Met with two business associations to discuss possibilities of partnering for bilateral investment opportunities. One of these organizations has a media arm and we discussed opportunities for articles about Omaha in their print and online newspapers and magazines. Also met with a construction company, a manufacturing company, a logistics company, a high-tech company and an alternative energy company to discuss the benefits of doing business in Omaha.

Met with a real estate developer who has some interest in hiring a U.S. architecture and design company to work on a new development in Shanghai. I also met with the department manager of the Shanghai International Development Department.

Xian:

Met with Easyway to discuss their business in Greater Omaha/La Vista. Also met with the director of the Shaanxi Foreign Affairs Office (Xian is in the Shaanxi prefecture). In addition, met with an agricultural company who has some interest in Greater Omaha, based on Easyway's experiences.

Yantai:

Went to Yantai as part of Mayor Suttle's Omaha Sister Cities Association delegation (Ring is a board member of OSCA). While there, met with government officials from Yantai to discuss opportunities for increased business between our two cities. Also met with the head of an investment company who is interested in investment opportunities in Greater Omaha.

Hangzhou:

Went to Hangzhou to meet with a company that might start doing business with a company in Greater Omaha. Helped the Omaha company do a check on the company from Hangzhou.

The overall reception was very good. Some of the people that Ring met with were through introductions from people met on previous trips. People seemed very interested in hearing about what Omaha has to offer and very interested to hear about the Easyway investment, and the high level of assistance that the Greater Omaha Economic Development Partnership gives projects.

**Ring's other affiliations:**

Omaha Sister Cities Association, board member  
Midwest International Trade Association, president  
District Export Council, U.S. Department of Commerce, member

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