

2-6-23-Spronk-Panama-Colombia

SPEAKERS

John Herath, Randy Spronk

John Herath 00:00

On a recent National Pork Board mission to Panama and Colombia, U.S. Meat Export Federation staff helped the delegation get a first hand look at the expanding market and growing demand for U.S. pork in the region. USMEF chair-elect Randy Spronk, a longtime pork industry leader, was in the region four years ago and he says the promotion of U.S. pork by local retailers has been greatly improved.

Randy Spronk 00:19

Seeing the retail stores, then versus now - at that time, you know, it was a frozen product but sliced, not packaged, and in an endcap. And I'm just going to be honest with you, I thought it was a very poor display of the product - to coming back in here now how we saw, still was frozen product that was sliced, but it was actually on the foam tray packs and actually wrapped individually. So presentation within the grocery stores is really improved from four years ago. So we do see this gradual evolution of the growth of the market and I think actually the presentation of our product, as the cold chain matures.

John Herath 01:00

As the U.S. pork industry seeks to diversify global demand, Central and South America will be key growth areas.

Randy Spronk 01:06

We have a tendency to look to Asia and think that's our only potential for exports, but really, when you look at Central, South America, Latin America, you roll up all those countries, they have the population and the opportunity to be another Mexico. And so I think when you talk about diversification, actually, we need to be actually looking south here to actually looking to Latin America to look at Central America and look in South America countries. The difficulty is is each one of them is an individual country that we have to look at and grow that market. But Colombia and Panama are just two excellent examples of what we can do. Colombia in particular, when we got a free trade agreement with them in 2012. So we've been in that market for 10 years here, how we started out with \$10,000 of Checkoff money just working with producers and there again, marketing generic pork, today here to look at the tonnage and the product that we're moving into that Colombia in a 10 year period is phenomenal.

John Herath 01:59

For more, visit [USMEF.org](https://usmef.org). For the U.S. Meat Export Federation, I'm John Herath.