



## Lu's Experience Makes Her Ready to Help Exporters

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This story is one of a series of feature stories highlighting DATCP employees and the programs they work in.

MADISON – Jennifer Lu knows how hard it is for a business to make that first sale to an international marketplace. After 20 years working for private Wisconsin businesses, she brought her experience to the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) as a valuable member of the Wisconsin International Trade Team.

“We are extremely fortunate to have Jennifer working to help grow Wisconsin agriculture through international trade,” said Mike Powers, DATCP’s Agricultural Development Administrator. “Jennifer bridges languages and cultures. She is among the best at creating the opportunity for Wisconsin agricultural companies to introduce themselves to a growing market of buyers, where Wisconsin products are recognized for the quality and innovation.”

Lu grew up in Beijing, China. When she first came to the United States to finish her last year of college, Lu was studying international finance. After seeing all the products and fashions in this country, she thought everyone should have these choices and changed her major to international marketing. Ever since her graduation, she has worked in exporting and distribution including her time at DATCP which has been almost three years.

“I am excited to come to work, because it is really rewarding to feel that as a state employee, you can make an impact on a larger level,” explained Lu. “The Asian market is so dynamic with so many opportunities for Wisconsin to take advantage of.”

Her ability to speak Mandarin Chinese allows her to work with her contacts here at home and around the world. She uses her iPad and a subscription to a Chinese newspaper to stay up-to-date on current events in economics, politics, culture and cooking. She notices changes in the Asian lifestyle, such as people using more cheese and dairy products in their cooking, which could ultimately benefit Wisconsin.

Lu’s role at DATCP means regular trips abroad promoting Wisconsin or helping state businesses make international contacts. She emphasizes the importance of ‘being there’ in-country at international events such as the large dairy show in China.

“It is important to be there in front of the Dutch, in front of people from Australia and New Zealand, and in front of our domestic competitors,” added Lu. “When the world thinks of dairy, they need to think of Wisconsin. This leads to new trading partners.”

Hosting international visitors in Wisconsin is as important as traveling around the world. Visitors can tour our farms and businesses, participate in meetings and build a trade relationship. Lu can use her knowledge to clarify cultural differences.

“When Chinese investors came to Wisconsin to learn more about dairy processing, they were intimidated by the need to work with government inspectors in a plant,” said Lu. “I was able to explain



Jennifer Lu is an Economic Development Consultant at DATCP.

that the officials are there to help reach the quality and safety needed to sell a good product as much as they are to regulate. That was very encouraging to the investors.”

Wisconsin agricultural exports to China increased 49% in the past year. In 2012, Wisconsin exported \$1.5 billion of agricultural products to China, including hides and skins, animal feed and dairy-related products.

Each fall, Lu coordinates a Buyers Mission, where Wisconsin suppliers of animal feed, feed ingredients and growers can meet one-on-one with qualified buyers from the Middle East and Asian countries right here in Madison. These personal meetings allow our state’s businesses to build contacts and gain market insight into how to increase export sales to these countries. In 2012, buyers from China, Indonesia, Korea, the United Arab Emirates and Vietnam attended. Lu is working to identify other upcoming markets to bring buyers in from additional countries.

“There is financial support for export activities to travel to international markets or bring in visitors. You just have to know how to apply for it,” said Lu. “Funding from a Small Business Association’s STEP (State Trade and Export Promotion Program) grant will allow us to bring Wisconsin wood companies to China in March to learn more about market potential for Wisconsin wood products and to build business contacts there. This grant is working to give the state’s forestry industry a collective voice in the international marketplace.”

Lu has experienced several “firsts” while working at DATCP. She traveled with Secretary Ben Brancel on Wisconsin’s first trade visit to Vietnam. This one visit led to an ongoing trade relationship including a visit to Wisconsin from an official ambassador and a feed procurement manager as well as the country’s first ever dairy delegation to World Dairy Expo. While in Vietnam she saw Wisconsin’s trade efforts first hand when she discovered dried distiller grains and soybeans from the DeLong Company of Clinton, Wisconsin.

Another first was when the Taiwan Agricultural Goodwill Mission made its inaugural stop in Wisconsin in September 2011. Taiwan is one of Wisconsin’s major agricultural export destinations, and this visit from influential buyers has spurred more visits.

Problem solving comes with the territory and Lu enjoys helping Wisconsin businesses that may be facing export challenges. Hearing several concerns on the same issue, Lu identifies what needs to be changed in the process and works with associations and governments to provide information and assistance that will help advance the cause of Wisconsin’s international trade.

“Change takes a lot of people and a lot of time to get done, but if we never start, it will never happen,” concluded Lu. “I am glad to be a part of it.”

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