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NEW BEDFORD HOSTS NEW ENGLAND TRADE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT MORE THAN 100 PARTICIPANTS ATTEND

NEW BEDFORD, MA- In its second year, participation at the 2012 New England Trade Development Summit has more than doubled. This heightened interest level could translate into a significant economic boost to the local and regional economy if the Port of New Bedford becomes an international import and export hub for produce, which is the hope of many attendees.

In his remarks, Mayor Jon Mitchell told the group the Trade Summit was the result of the public and private sectors partnering to create an all water shipping service between New Bedford and Tuxpan, Mexico. With the signing of the Sister Port Agreement with the Port of Tuxpan this past July, the commitment to promote an all-sea service was embraced by ProMexico and the New England Produce Council. The public/private partnership is growing and the hope is this Summit will help make Meximar, a 7-day ocean transit shipping service, become a reality.

Today, attendees were introduced to this new, cost effective direct link to the Mexican market. Shipping produce, compared to trucking, can save as much as 25% off the transportation costs to the buyer. That translates to over \$1,600 in savings per trailer load of produce. This could mean less costly produce to the New England market. Additionally, since Tuxpan is the closest port to Mexico City, the opportunity for New England producers to ship their goods, such as fish, apples and cranberries, has never been better.

David Wechsler, President of Maritime International, said “With the dramatic consolidation of supermarkets over the past 10 years, one of the larger, more progressive cost-conscious, fresh produce buyers could easily fill up half the anticipated ships and be at real competitive advantage.” No surprise then to see that buyers from Market Basket, Sid Wainer & Sons and Stop & Shop were in attendance.

A new component to this year’s Summit was a “speed dating” session morphed to introduce the 15 Mexican producers to US and Canadian buyers. It was the brainchild of Ed Anthes-Washburn, Director of Operations for the Port of New Bedford and the Summit’s organizer. “Last year’s Summit started the dialogue. What a difference a year has made to help us get the right people in the room so they can make the deals. Fifteen producers from Mexico are here to meet with US and Canadian grocery chains and produce suppliers, like New Bedford’s Sid Wainer & Sons. It’s exciting to think of what’s possible when you have government support opening the gates,” said Anthes-Washburn.

“The key objectives of the Trade Summit are to highlight the advantages of ocean shipping to and from the Port of New Bedford and our sister port –Tuxpan. We believe this will increase trade opportunities for New Bedford and the entire New England region. The enthusiastic participation of Mexican producers, New England buyers and sellers, and both governments lays the groundwork for New Bedford to have significant import and export activity with Tuxpan and the entire Mexico City market,” said Jeffrey Stieb, Executive Director of the Harbor Development Commission.

The Port of New Bedford Harbor Development Commission would like to recognize and thank Daniel Hernandez Joseph, Consul General of Mexico in Boston for being a guest speaker along with the New England Trade Development Summit sponsors, without whom this forum could not take place: The Admiral Sponsor is Maritime International, Inc. Other sponsors include Apex, New Bedford Whaling Museum, CLE Engineering, PARE Corporation, Russell Morin Fine Catering and Whaling City Seafood.

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