



Small-, medium-size firms aid Texas' export fortunes

By Walt Nett | AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

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Texas has developed a nation-size export economy, and small-to-medium-size companies are at the heart of that growth, an official from the international business and recruitment program in Gov. Rick Perry's office said Wednesday.

And the state offers a variety of services to help small companies reach out, not only to the state's existing foreign trade partners, but to help identify possible business opportunities in emerging markets, said Mortada Mohamed, regional trade director for Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

Mohamed was one of several state officials to speak Wednesday at the West Texas Economic Opportunity Forum.

The daylong event, hosted by Texas Tech, was meant to help small-to-midsize businesses make contact with state agency procurement officers and learn about other ways the state can help their businesses grow.

"We have ways to help you use the state's banner as a brand name to tap into new markets," Mohamed said, as he outlined options for companies to seek Texas' representation through foreign trade missions, where state businesses can be showcased in other countries.

In addition, the state offers "reverse trade missions," in which international buyers come to Texas cities to visit companies whose products are of interest overseas.

The state's two main forms of assistance to businesses wishing to test the global market involve export education and market development.

In 2008, Texas businesses exported goods with a total value of \$192.1 billion, an amount that has increased by some \$74 billion in the past four years.

Mohamed noted that nearly 21,000 Texas companies exported products in 2007, and that 91 percent of those companies were considered small-to-medium size - companies with 500 or fewer employees.

Much of the export success comes from close relations, and improving infrastructure to better move goods across the border in the wake of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

About \$62 billion of Texas' imports last year went to Mexico; Canada was second on the global list with \$19.2 billion.

Texas also is the nation's fourth-largest exporter of agricultural products, with nearly \$6 billion worth of materials placed overseas. Cotton shipments represented \$1.6 billion of that, Mohamed said.

Texas' four leading manufacturing exports for 2008

- **Chemical products** - \$38 billion.
- **Computers** - \$35 billion

- **Machinery** - \$27 billion

- **Petroleum and coal products** - \$25 billion

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