

## DAILY NEWS

# Casting a wider net: More local small businesses are looking to drum up sales overseas

City to announce new program to promote exporting

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SUSAN WATTS/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

*Kara Ross, the owner of a high end handbag and jewelry company, derives 20% of her sales from overseas markets.*

A Brooklyn company is proving you don't have to be Jewish - or even American - to love herring.

A year and half ago, Acme Smoked Fish decided to test the waters in Japan after store reps there began knocking on its doors eager to sell the company's Blue Hill Bay herring.

Since then, Williamsburg-based Acme - a leading smoked fish supplier dating back to the early 1900s - has expanded in other countries including Guatemala, Costa Rica and Mexico, where locals favor Acme's whitefish salad.

Today, foreign sales account for 2% of the company's sales and could reach 8% as Acme starts to make a bigger push into Asia.

"We have just scratched the surface," said Gabriel Viteri, Acme's vice president of strategy and business development. "We have identified the markets that value products from the U.S."

With the domestic economy still rocky, a growing number of New York City small businesses are looking to export their

goods and services - and now the city wants to help them along.

Tomorrow, the city's Department of Small Business Services will announce a partnership with the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Ex-Im Bank), a federal agency that provides export financing and credit insurance to businesses who might otherwise be turned down by commercial banks because their loans are deemed too risky.

Business Solutions Centers across the five boroughs soon will be promoting loan programs and products offered by Ex-Im.

Counselors in the centers have been trained to spot small businesses that would make good candidates for exporting. One important target will be minority entrepreneurs who face fewer barriers in understanding foreign cultures and languages.

"There is a lot of untapped potential," said Colleen Galvin, assistant commissioner, financial services and capital access at the Department of Small Business Services.

Politicians on both the federal and local levels see exports as key to boosting jobs.

Two years ago, the White House set a goal of doubling exports within five years. City Council Speaker Christine Quinn has pushed for local government to grow small business exports as a way of spurring the economy.

Local companies appear to be getting the message: Of the \$280 million in loans authorized by Ex-Im Bank this year, 45% - \$125 million - went to small businesses. That's up from the \$120 million Ex-Im authorized for local small businesses in 2011.

Even so, the complexities of selling internationally - securing funding, navigating foreign markets and getting the appropriate licenses - can be a big turn-off.

"Exporting can be daunting," Ex-Im chairman Fred Hochberg told the Daily News. "We want to make it simpler and reduce the risk."

Steven Dreyfus, managing director of Dreyfus Global Trade, an export

management company in Manhattan, said small businesses could benefit from learning about credit insurance, one of Ex-Im's most popular products.

It is a means of insuring receivables in the event a foreign customer does not pay.

"It's my security blanket," Dreyfus said.

Kara Ross, the owner of a Garment Center-based luxury handbag and designer jewelry company that bears her name, said she faced serious roadblocks when she started exporting three years ago. Because she sells exotic skins, Ross must obtain special permits to sell overseas.

"It's not an easy process. It takes time and extra labor and a lot of paperwork," Ross said.

But there has been a payoff. Sales to foreign markets, including China, Europe and the Middle East, account for 20% of Ross' sales and the international business is growing.

The designer just learned that her exotic skin bags will be carried by a Neiman

Marcus website that is about to launch in China.

"The world is a big place," she said.

**The path to global sales starts here:**  
U.S. Trade Assistance Centers:

The U.S. Commercial Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce provides free help, including export counseling, market research and introductions to international partners.

It operates two trade assistance centers in the city: one in Lower Manhattan and one in Harlem.

Reps from Ex-Im, the Department of Commerce and the U.S. Small Business Administration are stationed at 33 Whitehall Street; 212-809-2650

The Harlem U.S. Export Assistance Center is stationed at 163 W. 125th St.; 212-860-6200

To learn more go to [export.gov](http://export.gov).

NYC Business Solutions Centers: There are seven offices around the five boroughs. To find one close to you, go to [nyc.gov/nycbusiness](http://nyc.gov/nycbusiness) or call 311.