



Fruitful Partnership Between Hong Kong and France Set to Blossom Further

(12 March 2010) Hong Kong and France have enjoyed a long and fruitful business relationship, based on a varied range of products and services. Hong Kong-based trade fairs are an important channel for buyers and suppliers in both economies to increase their business activities.

Mr Benjamin Chau, Deputy Executive Director of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC), is visiting France for a programme of meetings and functions with a variety of organisations in Bordeaux and Paris with the aim of further strengthening ties between Hong Kong and France. There was particular emphasis on the wine industry.

In 2009, Hong Kong's total exports to France were valued at EUR2.7 billion (US\$3.7 billion). The major export categories included apparel and textiles, which shared 11% of the total; telecommunications equipment, which accounted for 8%; toys, games & sporting goods (6%); jewellery (6%); and travel goods & handbags (5%).

In the other direction, France exported EUR2.2-billion-worth (US\$3-billion-worth) of goods to Hong Kong in 2009. Products included travel goods & handbags, sharing 26% of the total; alcoholic beverages (8%), perfumery, cosmetics & toilet preparations (6%); jewellery (6%); and telecommunications equipment (5%).

France has substantial investment in Hong Kong, with total stock of direct investment amounting to EUR2.4 billion (US\$3.3 billion) as of the end of 2008. Hong Kong has one of the highest concentrations of French companies in Asia; these enterprises are involved in a wide range of operations including banking, insurance, transport, information and communications technology as well as the high-profile luxury goods industry. Among the most recent is a French company that has taken a stake in Hong Kong's historic and famous tramway system.

French companies are strong supporters of HKTDC's portfolio of fairs. Over the past three years a total of 266 French exhibitors and over 16,000 buyers have joined various HKTDC trade shows.

Mr Benjamin Chau, Deputy Executive Director of HKTDC, speaking at a meeting with media, said: "The relationship between Hong Kong and France goes back as far as 1895 when Banque Indosuez opened a branch in our city. Trade, investment and cooperation between us has blossomed ever since, and grown to encompass a wide range of goods and services. Both economies have their unique features that complement and enhance each other's well. We are always happy to welcome French exhibitors and buyers to HKTDC trade fairs, and we know that many business relationships have been forged

and strengthened as a result. As our fairs get bigger and stronger, we know this relationship will grow.”

French participation at Hong Kong’s top wine event

Following the Hong Kong Government’s decision to abolish duty on wine and beer in 2008, the territory has emerged as a vital wine hub in Asia. HKTDC was quick to react to the government’s move by creating the HKTDC Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Fair, which debuted in 2008 to industry acclaim. The 2009 edition was even more successful, and featured France as the official fair partner country.

In 2009, exhibitor numbers at the show more than doubled to 525, representing 34 countries and regions, while buyer numbers increased by 36%, with almost 12,000 buyers from 62 countries & regions. One of the major draw cards for the fair is the access to the Chinese mainland market that Hong Kong offers.

On February 9 2010, Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland signed a co-operation agreement on customs facilitation measures for wine entering the mainland market through Hong Kong. This will enhance co-operation on wine-related matters, fortifying Hong Kong’s position as a regional wine-trading hub. This is a very significant initiative, given the growing demand for wine on the mainland. It will also facilitate tourists from the mainland to purchase fine wines from countries such as France in Hong Kong. The measures are due to be implemented as a pilot in Shenzhen in the second quarter of the year.

Among the highlights of the second edition was the inaugural Cathay Pacific Hong Kong International Wine & Spirit Competition with some 1,300 wines from around the world, judged by a pan-Asian panel. It was organised in conjunction with London’s renowned International Wine & Spirit Competition, and was the world’s first authentically Asian wine competition, and its largest. The Asia Top Sommelier Summit chose the fair as its platform and brought in luminaries from both Europe and the USA to share their experience with Asian sommeliers. The fair also featured the prestigious Wine Industry Conference.

The involvement of France as partner country was a great boon to the show. The French pavilion was coordinated by Sopexa, the marketing arm of France’s Ministry of Agriculture, while Bettane & Desseauve made an impact with a grand tasting pavilion. Among the other highlights were a “French Night” reception and a seminar on the “ABC Guide to Bordeaux Wine”. Wines from Alsace, Bordeaux, Burgundy and Lyon were featured at the fair, and French wine accessories were on display at the fair’s Wine Gallery. There were a total of 56 exhibitors from France at the show.

France is the biggest supplier of wines to the Hong Kong market. In 2009, wine worth EUR125 million (US\$171 million) was imported into Hong Kong from France, representing a 32% increase over the previous year – which is very impressive considering the overall global economic performance during that period.

“Hong Kong is rapidly gaining the distinction as Asia’s wine trading and distribution hub, especially because of its unrivalled access to the Chinese mainland market,” said Mr Chau. “The HKTDC Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Fair has already become the city’s keystone event in just two years. It attracts market leaders in wine and spirits distribution in the region, as well as winemakers and purveyors of wine, spirits, beer and other beverages from around the world.

“We were particularly honoured that France was our partnership country for 2009. Winemaking in France is legendary, and it is still the first name that comes to mind when people think of top-quality wine. The partnership with France worked extremely well for our fair, and we look forward to even more cooperation between the HKTDC, Hong Kong’s wine industry and the French wine industry in the future.”

Portfolio of strong fairs

Alongside the Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Fair, HKTDC organises more than 30 world-class international trade fairs in Hong Kong each year, many of which are the largest in Asia, and some are the largest of their kind in the world.

April is perhaps the busiest sourcing period for enterprises from all around the globe. HKTDC caters to the demand by staging seven major shows at this time of year, including the Hong Kong Electronics Fair (Spring Edition), International ICT Expo, Hong Kong International Lighting Fair (Spring Edition), Hong Kong Houseware Fair, Hong Kong International Printing & Packaging Fair, Hong Kong Gifts & Premium Fair – the largest of its kind in the world – and, making its debut this year, Hong Kong International Home Textiles Fair.

Switched on to electronics sector

The Hong Kong Electronics Fair (Spring Edition) is Asia’s biggest electronics event. A new product zone of Testing, Inspection & Certification will be introduced this year. This zone caters to growing demand in the industry for top-quality internationally recognised inspection and verification services. And one of the most popular parts of the fair is the Hall of Fame, a premium section dedicated to branded electronics products. This year, over 300 elite brands will be featured, including newly-joined renowned brands: AEG; Changhong; Daewoo; HP; Philips, etc.

Running concurrently with the electronics event are the HKTDC International ICT Expo and Hong Kong International Lighting Fair (Spring Edition).

Leading light

The lighting show includes a specialist zone on LED lighting, which is attracting attention for its low-energy consumption. The zone features top-quality exhibitors showcasing a wide range of innovative LED lighting for a variety of applications, including indoor, outdoor and handheld lighting.

Powerful connections

The International ICT Expo brings information and communications technology product and service providers into direct contact with solution seekers. Industry leaders from all over the world attend this event, making it a valuable networking opportunity. In 2009, it attracted over 560 exhibitors from 16 countries and regions showing the best in the business of information and communications technology.

Homing in on success

The Hong Kong Houseware Fair is Asia’s biggest show of its kind. Turkey has a long history of glassware and ceramic production reflecting distinctive Turkish art. For this year’s event, Turkey is named as the partner country of the fair and will make good use of this platform to promote their products, designs and culture. In particular, a central product display will be set up to illustrate their workmanship and creativity.

The show’s acclaimed Hall of Elegance, home to top-notch design-led, branded collections, is a well-established fair favourite. The elegant surroundings of the hall

reflect the quality of the products and the exhibitors' image - it's the perfect place to conduct serious business negotiations. An exciting new addition to this year's fair is ASEAN Select. This special section in the Grand Hall includes group pavilions from ASEAN countries, showcasing the exquisite styles and designs of houseware products unique to each of these nations. Also making their first appearances are a number of themed zones - World of Fine Dining, Home Accents, Home Living and Outdoor Living, all focusing on growing sectors in the world of houseware. A special highlight is the World of Pet Supplies. Launched in 2009, this feature returns with even more quality exhibitors and become more international, ready to tap into the growing demand for pet-related products and services, aquatic products and veterinary products, plus shop fittings & packaging.

Opening up new markets in home textiles

The popularity of the home textiles zone at previous editions of the Hong Kong Houseware Fair has led to the establishment of a new show - Home Textiles Fair. Staged concurrently with the houseware show, this new event creates an upmarket environment where exhibitors can showcase stylish, quality products with an emphasis on creativity and up-to-the-minute design.

Gift wrapped

The Hong Kong Gifts & Premium Fair is the largest of its kind in the world. More than 4,000 quality exhibitors from 38 countries and regions will gather for the 2010 edition. The show incorporates a number of themed zones, focusing on key market segments, including the well-established and acclaimed Hall of Fine Designs. Several zones are making their debut, including World of Gift Ideas, Figurines & Decorations, Outdoor & Travel Goods, and Wedding Favours.

Hong Kong's expertise

Hong Kong is one of the major printing centres in the world. This fact alone draws the attention of buyers from all over the world to the Hong Kong International Printing & Packaging Fair. In 2009, the fair attracted 11,324 buyers from 108 countries and regions, 60% of whom were from outside Hong Kong. Timing is superb as the fair coincides with the peak sourcing season in Hong Kong and Guangdong, bringing thousands more buyers to the region. Among the 240 exhibitors in 2009 were 16 printers from 'The Top 100' in the Chinese mainland. Besides, the Thailand Pavilion, which made its debut in 2009, has committed to return in 2010 to feature market leaders from that country.

One-stop platform

Mr Chau said: "By staging more than 30 trade fairs every year, covering a wide range of industries, HKTDC offers the best one-stop platform for buyers to source new and innovative products, as well as a great channel for exhibitors to expand their business by presenting their latest items as well as brand image. We look forward to welcoming more and more French exhibitors and buyers in the future at our fairs."

Media Enquiries

Please contact the HKTDC Paris Office:

Ms Dominique Duchiron

Tel: 33-(1)-4742 8853

E-mail: dominique.duchiron@hktdc.org