Trade in Washington State

Since 2001, the value of Washington exports has averaged more than $44 billion annually, making Washington the most trade-dependent state in the nation of a per capita basis. According to state economic estimates, one out of every three jobs in the state is linked to trade. While the state contains 2 percent of the country’s population, it accounts for 7 percent of the country’s exports (think airplanes). It is typically the country’s fourth-largest overall exporter, behind Texas, California and New York.

Ports
With 76 port districts, which include 16 shipping ports and 31 airports, Washington has the largest locally controlled public port system in the world. The major international ports are the Port of Seattle, which also includes SeaTac airport; the Port of Tacoma; and the port of Vancouver. Washington’s marine ports are particularly busy because they are the closest to Asia – more than one sailing day closer than California ports. The port of Tacoma also accounts for 70 percent of the waterborne commerce from the continental US to Alaska.

Two Way Trade
In 2011, Washington State ports handled $78 billion in two-way trade. Seattle ranked #12 and Tacoma #14 in that year. Two-way trade includes imports that are destined to stay in the state and pass-through trade – products that are from outside the state but are shipped from one of the state’s ports on their way to a final destination.

Washington Exports
In 2012, total exports from Washington reached $75 million, about 5% of US total exports. It is no surprise that aircraft sales accounts for almost half of the total. Soybeans, wheat, apples, potatoes, corn and wood products were also in the top 10. We will see first hand the impact of globalization of agricultural products in our visits with wheat farmers and fruit orchardists.