

FLORIDA EXPORT GUIDE

HELPING FLORIDA COMPANIES GO GLOBAL

Made in St. Johns County: Local Manufacturers Grow Through Exporting

Florida's St. Johns County is home to an eclectic blend of small businesses and major employers who manufacture a diverse range of products, from military aircraft and aluminum fencing to acoustic wood panels and power supply systems.

Many of these companies are involved in international trade and export their products worldwide. Among the county's leading exporters are Northrop Grumman, Rulon International, iDeal Aluminum, David Dobbs Enterprises, Solar Stik, and German-based 2G Energy.

More than 230 companies in St. Johns County either import or export. The region's international trade is supported by the Northeast Florida Export Plan and Global Cities Initiative, which promotes the benefits of exporting.

"St. Johns County supported these efforts, and has been working to encourage more local companies to explore export opportunities," says Melissa Glasgow, director of economic development for St. Johns County.

Through a partnership between the county and the University of North Florida, local companies are able to work with a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) certified business analyst housed in the county's Permit Center to receive free business consulting. SBDC also provides "new-to-export" assistance, in partnership with Enterprise Florida and the U.S. Commercial Service, to assist in developing customized export marketing plans for businesses interested in developing international growth strategies.

"It's a great work location. It's really what we were looking for."

— *Jesse Reyes, Advertising and Marketing Manager, Rulon International.*

Optimum Springs Manufacturing, for example, expressed interest in expanding its market share through exporting and worked with the SBDC to complete an export marketing plan in 2015. Marco Fortini, the company's vice president, says that 55 percent of the company's business is now export-related, and he credits the county's SBDC office for being a critical component in helping his business grow internationally.



The SBDC office in St. Johns County also has assisted local growers, such as Blue Sky Farms, in developing export marketing plans to position their agricultural products for international markets.



Several local manufacturers, including Northrop Grumman, Solar Stik, and Carlisle Interconnect Technologies, are defense contractors. Their products are exported worldwide. Northrop Grumman, in particular, has established a new Aircraft Integration Center of Excellence at its existing facility in St. Augustine. The Florida location is one of five centers of excellence nationwide. Northrop Grumman produces its E-2D Hawkeye surveillance aircraft at this location.

Another local firm, Rulon International, makes wood ceilings and acoustical wood walls. International diversification has helped the company maintain steady growth. Jesse Reyes, the company's advertising and marketing manager, says that exporting is an important part of Rulon's business.

Rulon now has 120 employees in St. Johns County. The company relocated from Brunswick, Georgia, in 2003. "It's a great work location. It's really what we were looking for," says Reyes.

"St. Johns County is enormously popular," says Glasgow. "It is one of the Top 20 fastest growing counties in the USA. Many business executives are attracted to the top-ranked exemplary statewide school system, featuring award-winning career academies that provide a skilled workforce. Others take advantage of access to multi-modal transportation networks, a growing regional airport, and a Foreign Trade Zone designation linked to nearby JAXPORT."

St. Johns County works to provide local companies with export assistance and other resources in a cost-effective, low-tax business environment. Moreover, world-class beaches, golfing, fishing, and other recreational opportunities help business owners and their employees achieve an enviable work-life balance.

More information about operating a business in St. Johns County is available from Melissa Glasgow, Director of Economic Development, 904-209-0552 or via email: mglasgow@sjcfl.us



Why are business executives choosing *St. Johns County*?



- Top 20 fastest growing county in the United States.
- Home to the nation's oldest city, St. Augustine.
- Florida's top-ranked school system.
- Award-winning career academies providing skilled workforce.
- Access to multi-modal transportation networks.
- Located in Foreign Trade Zone #64 with close proximity to JAXPORT.
- Partnership providing export assistance resources.
- Cost-effective location with a pro-business climate.
- World-class beaches and recreational amenities.
- Long-standing history as one of Florida's first counties.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY
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