



Growing the Food Sector

New Incentives and Strategies

At the 2025 Americas Food & Beverage Show, our expert panel examined the key programs, financial incentives, and strategic resources driving growth in the food and beverage manufacturing sector. Panelists included **José Esquerdo, Partner** at CRI Advisors LLC; **Fernando Mendoza, Manufacturing Growth Strategist** at the South Florida Manufacturers Association (SFMA); **Luis Noriega, CICP and Lender Account Manager** at EXIM Bank; and **Alexis Pascual, Commercial Lending Group Head** at First American Bank.

The discussion focused on how manufacturers can leverage federal programs, innovative financing, and strategic partnerships to scale operations and remain competitive. With Florida's food and beverage sector on the rise, these tools offer timely support for expansion and innovation.

Key programs highlighted included EXIM Bank's Make More in America initiative, which offers flexible loan options for domestic manufacturing investments, and updated SBA loan programs aimed at improving capital access for small and mid-sized firms.

Additional resources—such as Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRBs) and new tax incentives under the Opportunity to Build Back America Act (OBBA)—help reduce capital costs and support growth. The federal R&D tax credit (Section 41) was also emphasized as a valuable incentive for companies investing in product development, packaging innovation, and sustainable practices.

Key Insights

Florida's Food & Beverage Sector Is a Strategic Economic Driver

Florida's food and beverage manufacturers play a vital role in national supply chains, converting raw inputs into finished products that support both domestic and export markets. Targeted support for this sector drives innovation, job creation, and economic resilience—reinforcing Florida's position as a manufacturing hub.

Industry Associations Accelerate Growth and Innovation

Organizations like FloridaMakes and the South Florida Manufacturers Association (SFMA) play a critical role in advancing Florida's food and beverage manufacturing sector. FloridaMakes delivers tailored solutions and workforce training, while SFMA offers advocacy, industry insights, and valuable networking opportunities. Together, they help manufacturers access essential resources, bridge funding and talent gaps, and scale operations—enhancing competitiveness both locally and globally.

EXIM's Make More in America Initiative Expands Capital Access

EXIM Bank's domestic finance program delivers flexible loans and guarantees for U.S.-based manufacturing expansions. By easing content requirements and linking eligibility to export potential, the initiative directly supports supply chain resiliency and global competitiveness.

SBA Financing Enhances Liquidity and Growth for SMEs

Expanded SBA programs—including the 504 Loan and 7(a) Working Capital Pilot—offer small and mid-sized manufacturers improved access to capital for equipment, operations, and growth. The upcoming MARC program further boosts liquidity with revolving credit options tailored to export and inventory needs.

Tax-Exempt Industrial Revenue Bonds Lower Borrowing Costs for Major Investments

Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRBs) provide low-interest financing for large-scale capital projects. With the support of local governments and bank partners like First American Bank, IRBs offer a streamlined path for companies investing in facility upgrades and expansion.

OBBA Tax Incentives Accelerate Modernization

The Opportunity to Build Back America Act introduces significant tax benefits—such as 100% bonus depreciation and immediate expensing of capital investments—helping manufacturers modernize faster and more cost-effectively. Targeted provisions for the food and beverage industry amplify the impact.

R&D Tax Credits Fuel Innovation and Sustainability

Federal R&D tax credits (Section 41) and immediate expensing under Section 174A reward manufacturers for developing new products, sustainable packaging, and efficient processes. These incentives make it easier to invest in innovation while staying competitive in a fast-changing market.

Conclusion

Florida's food and beverage sector stands at the forefront of U.S. manufacturing growth. A powerful combination of financing tools, tax incentives, and industry partnerships gives manufacturers unprecedented access to resources that support expansion, innovation, and workforce development.

Those who move now to leverage these opportunities will not only strengthen their own operations but also contribute to the broader resurgence of American manufacturing.

For further information and details on programs and how to apply, please contact us:

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