



NEWS RELEASE

INTRODUCING FINANCE CONNECT: CONNECTING SMEs WITH THE BEST FINANCING OPPORTUNITY

Montréal, QC—June 12, 2017: The Finance Alliance for Sustainable Trade (FAST) is delighted to officially launch Finance Connect in Montreal, a service created to connect larger small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with the best financing opportunities.

The launch event, which occurred on Wednesday the 31st of May at the Desjardins Lab, was attended by numerous representatives relating to financial institutions, trade organizations, sustainable development, government representatives, international organizations, and other strategic partners. Notable attendees included Mrs. Patricia Rengifo, Trade Specialist at the Ecuadorian Consulate, Mr. Bachir Mouhyi, President at CAP Développement Durable, Mr. Iwan Walraven, Strategic Advisor at Développement International Desjardins, and Mr. Jason Potts, founder and former President of FAST, who gave an inspiring closing speech and recognized the growth of FAST and its services.

Finance Connect is a unique service that focuses on addressing the needs of larger sustainable Agricultural and Forestry SMEs in developing countries that have financing needs of more than USD 800,000. These are usually enterprises that have larger projects, or projects that require both short and long-term finance. It is a tailor-made service that supports the enterprises throughout the process of obtaining finance, including linking SMEs to financial services providers (FSPs) that can meet their needs in an accurate, efficient, and effective manner. Ultimately, this service will enable FAST and its partners to create a tangible benefit on the ground by helping SMEs restructure their finances, reach their potential growth, employ more people, and have a more sustainable business model that will benefit them and their communities in the long term.

The event started with a short speech from Hubert Bolduc, President and CEO of

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Montréal International, who stated that “In 2008, Montréal International helped FAST set up in Montréal, and we were pleased to help again in FAST’s expansion”. He added that as “a leader in the global sustainable financial services industry, FAST is contributing to position Montréal as a pioneer of sustainable development and finance, and we are proud to be part of its growth and success”.

His speech was followed by a short presentation from Noemi Perez, President and CEO of FAST, who mentioned that “getting financing means access to working capital, inputs, and labour but also long-term finance for infrastructure and larger projects [...] which can genuinely make a difference in developing and growing businesses, and therefore improve the livelihoods of producers on the ground”.

Addressing the event, Mauricio Rosemary, FAST Business Development Director, added that “the International Finance Corporation (IFC) [...] reports over 40 million formal small and medium enterprises globally, that have a gap of \$1.5 trillion in credit financing.¹ Our services in Finance Connect are designed to collaborate towards the closing of this gap.”

FAST extends its deepest gratitude to Montréal International for their continued support, and to Desjardins Lab, for hosting the evening event.

About FAST (www.fastinternational.org)

The Finance Alliance for Sustainable Trade (FAST) is an international non-profit organization. By partnering with FSPs and other stakeholders, FAST uses tools and services to facilitate access to finance for agriculture and forestry SMEs in emerging economies mainly in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. FAST’s training, analytics, and matchmaking services provide impact investing solutions and capacity-building for their stakeholders.

About Montréal International (www.montrealinternational.com)

Established in 1996, Montréal International is a non-profit organization funded by the private sector, the governments of Canada and Québec, the *Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal* and the City of Montréal. Its mission is to attract foreign investment, international organizations and skilled talent to Greater Montréal.

About Desjardins Lab (www.desjardins.com)

The Desjardins Lab was opened in December 2015, and offers rapid prototyping and IT exploration services. It aims to develop a culture of innovation by gathering like-minded

¹ Source: ‘Closing the Credit Gap for Formal and Informal MSMEs’ – IFC Advisory Services and ‘Access to Credit Among MSMEs’ - IFC

individuals who wish to contribute to innovation, thereby creating added value for Desjardins members, clients and communities.

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