

ASUTIL announces opening date for Dufry Brazil border store and details of its November border conference

The South American Association of Duty Free Stores (ASUTIL) sees the August 22 scheduled opening of Dufry Group's new land duty free store in Uruguaianaas giving a big boost to the development of the land duty free business in Brazil.

In a wide-ranging news conference today (August 15), ASUTIL Secretary-General José Luis Donagaray also provided details about the organization's November conference in Porto Alegre, Brazil that will focus on the new Brazil land duty free business.

Donagaray said Dufry's quick involvement with the Brazil land duty free business is something to celebrate because they are "a big player. (This means) there is an opportunity for everyone in the border to have very good business."

That's one of the things ASUTIL hopes to highlight in its November 5-6 border conference in Porto Alegre, Brazil, that it is sponsoring jointly with the Uruguayan Chamber of Entrepreneurs of Free Shops. "We will try to have operators, new operators, potential operators and suppliers to understand how this business will develop and answer questions and take away doubt," he said.

Because the land duty free business in Brazil is so new, Donagaray says that non-members of ASUTIL will be able to attend the conference, whether on the operator or supply side.

In a departure from usual practices, ASUTIL will be inviting participants to indicate what they would like to see addressed prior to the conference. "We are going to be open to questions on all subjects. We will make a special presentation to address all the questions, the law, the products to sell, new regulations, the stores that are going to be opening," he said.

He also said in addition to conference talks by regional economic analysts like Carlos Malconian, a presentation by Brazilian tax and customs authorities and networking opportunities, separate time will be set aside to give new operators individualized 5-10 minute windows to "talk about the stores they are going to have and where they will be opening."

Expectations are that as many as 200 people will attend the conference.

Of course, those who attend will be eager to get details about Dufry's new venture.

Dufry has already had a soft opening but is working out technical kinks for its hard opening next week, Donagaray said. However, he held back on sharing details of what's forthcoming in deference to Dufry, so the company could make its own official announcement.

But he did say Dufry's participation in the important market of Uruguaiana, which is close to the Uruguayan and Argentine border, is good news for everyone who wants to jump onboard. "Brazil is not limiting the licenses in each city. You can have one store, three stores or 20 stores," he said.

Two smaller businesses were the first to break the border barrier in late July in Barra do Quarai and Yaguarao, also bordering Uruguay. Both stores are selling Brazilian and imported products.

Legislation allowing Brazil to operate its own land duty free stores was on the books for a long time, but only got the green light in March.

Until now, Uruguay has dominated the land duty free business on its side of the border with Brazil, although Argentina also has a presence on its national turf.

The conference will give those who attend an opportunity to understand all the potential intricacies of the land border business in Brazil, which shares a border with every country in South America, except Chile. The new law allows border stores to operate 32 different Brazilian border cities.

Donagaray also pointed out there are numerous business opportunities, even involving future transport of merchandise. "If you send merchandise from Rio, it can be a long way to travel to the border," he said, noting that goods can be shipped from Uruguay or Argentina, which may be closer to some border locations. "The idea is to help this business develop in the best possible way."