

America or Europe. Expect to spend more time opening up channels than would be necessary elsewhere.

All countries have regulations regarding the labelling of foodstuffs. In most countries, bottled water is treated as food. The U.S. is a case in point. Care must be taken to ensure that all pertinent regulations are understood and adhered to. Failure to do so can be costly. Shipments can be held up at the border by American authorities at the cost of the exporter. It is normal that getting the product into the U.S. be the responsibility of the Canadian exporter, unless the American buyer is willing to accept this responsibility. Even then, there is no substitute for having the right product with the right label and correct documentation.

Claims on the label are becoming a sensitive issue in the United States. Increasingly, American authorities view labels as the prime source of factual information for consumers. And they do not tolerate exaggerated claims or potentially misleading statements on labels. In short, keep the hype for advertising and off the label. Exporters would be wise to get their labels approved in advance by American authorities. Canadian Consulates can guide exporters to the proper authorities in this process.

It is imperative that all pertinent information be obtained from the American authorities regarding regulatory requirements. This is particularly true for first time exporters. Canadian consulates in the U.S. can help in this process. Consult the consulate in the area where you intend shipping your product, not the one nearest you. Some regulations are state enacted and consular staff in another location may not be aware of difficulties that could arise in a region other than the one where they are located.

11. CONCLUSIONS

The U.S. is by far the best foreign market for Canadian bottled water. Japan presents a real opportunity but it is a very distant second: the volumes are much higher south of the border and the business climate is immensely more familiar. Other markets may offer an academic interest, but none constitutes a real business opportunity of any consequence for the country as a whole. Incidental to other trade, some shipments can be made but any hope of developing strong market presence anywhere else does not appear founded on the facts as they are today.

In the long run, for products that may have a market appeal to certain niches, Europe could be a valid marketing possibility. But this type of effort should only be entertained by exporters who have proven expertise in shipping substantial quantities of product to Europe as well as strong ties in the beverage industry or by water bottlers who have exhausted the potential of the U.S. and Japanese markets.