

Syria on Rebound; Canadian Trade Improves

One of the few Middle East countries that is well-endowed with water resources, Syria also lays claim to vast agricultural lands and a highly creative population of 14 million people.

Until recently, the country's significant economic potential had been impeded by chronic shortages of foreign exchange and western credits and the inefficiencies of a centrally-planned economy that resulted from intense economic and political links with the former East Bloc.

This is changing. Large oil discoveries and inflows of Arab aid (estimated at over US\$2 billion) have combined to present a decidedly optimistic outlook.

The country is rebounding rapidly, emerging as a very interesting market for Canadian exporters.

Canada's performance in this market continues to improve. Goods exports were expected to exceed Cdn\$10 million by the end of 1991 (more than double the 1989 figure), and service exports were anticipated to reach Cdn\$50 million.

A number of Canadian services companies, concentrated mostly in the oil industry, have received large contracts and several Canadian firms have opened offices in Damascus.

Opportunities Identified

The Canadian Embassy in Amman has identified the booming oil and gas sector as having significant potential for Canadian exports. Added to Canada's strong presence in exploration operations, new production companies are now in advanced stages of field development. There are huge requirements for turnkey oil and gas treatment and production facilities, oil-well servicing and other materials. (A consortium led by Royal

Dutch Shell, for example, is investing an estimated US\$500 million annually.)

Another sector of Canadian interest is agriculture, which accounts for over one-half of private economic activity.

Development of this sector, also hampered by shortages of cash to import western technology and persistent droughts, led to extraordinary food imports, notably grain in the late 1980s.

The government will use increased revenues to implement badly needed modernization, presenting considerable potential for Canadian suppliers in machinery, fertilizers, livestock and genetic material.

Syria's increased prosperity also has unleashed billions of dollars in major project activity in areas as diverse as water and sewage facilities (in four cities); an enormous telecommunications expansion; and turnkey steel, textile and power plants. Discussions have even been revived on ambitious plans for a Damascus metro.

Restrictions on the long-subdued private sector are also being eased, with import prohibitions being lifted and exchange rates being unified. Laws to encourage investment in agriculture, industry and tourism have been issued and the private sector is responding with vigour. As a result, there are hundreds of smaller projects in virtually all sectors, creating large increases in demand for western goods related to industry and construction, especially production and industrial machinery, forestry products and industrial raw materials.

In addition to this array of opportunities, the Embassy reports solid potential in the mining sector, consisting mainly in the phosphate, cement and marble industries as

well as in transportation, pulp and paper, communications, and non-luxury consumer goods.

For further information on trade opportunities in Syria, contact Africa and Middle East Trade Development Division (GBT), External Affairs and International Trade Canada, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa K1A 0G2. Tel.: (613) 993-7040. Fax: (613) 990-7431.

Information may also be obtained directly from the Canadian Embassy, P.O. Box 815403, Amman, Jordan. Fax: (011-962-6) 689-227. Telex: (Destination code 0493) 23080 (23080 CANAD JO).

Entrants Sought for Forestry, Pulp and Paper Publications

External Affairs and International Trade Canada soon will publish two inventories, one for the forestry industry, and one for the pulp and paper industry.

Canadian companies wishing to be included in either inventory must meet the following criteria:

- They must want to export and be able to meet all requests from abroad.
- All products and services advertised must be designed and manufactured in Canada or, in the case of services, designed and sold from Canada.

To register, companies must send their promotional material (accompanied by a letter on corporate letterhead paper), indicating the Canadian products and services they would like advertised, to: Joseph Cogné, Latin America and Caribbean Trade Division (LGT), External Affairs and International Trade Canada, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa K1A 0G2.