

FOREWORD

The global marketplace is evolving in a direction that will be quite different from past experience. Various factors affecting global trade have been in effect for some time, but the picture has changed. In the past, many industries have been relatively insulated from the world market. As recent years have unfolded, there has been an increased movement towards international business. The advent of an "Information Society" has hastened the pace of international transactions. In addition, many of the cultural and language barriers that had previously inhibited trade are being overcome by firms that realize the importance of international trade to their viability. Generally, the international trading regime is becoming more transparent. The global and technological barriers are becoming more transparent. The global marketplace of the future will be one comprised of firms who fully realize the benefits to be gained from international trade.

In order to compete in the global marketplace, Canadian firms must have access to a wide variety of information. Without the necessary information, Canadian firms will be at a disadvantage with respect to their competitive worldwide. The Department of External Affairs and International Trade is proud to introduce this publication, which is intended to provide information needed by the Canadian business community to allow them to effectively and successfully challenge world competitors. The publication will be distributed in such a way as to allow for easy access to all the statistics contained within. Combined with an annual update of the statistics contained within, this publication should provide the necessary information to allow the Canadian business community to grow and prosper in the future. Only through a comprehensive understanding of the operation of international trade can the Canadian business community be very successful and for the benefit of the Canadian people.