

- compare your product with what is already available - take note of positive points and determine how you can change, adapt and improve any negative aspects of your product;
- attend, as a visitor, a trade show for your line of merchandise in the geographic area that is both most convenient for you and most suitable for your product in order to see what sales approach and promotional materials are the most effective and to find out who the best agents and the most important buyers are;
- draw up a U.S. marketing plan;
- resolve all questions concerning market access (customs duty, brokerage, transportation costs, etc.);
- set U.S. dollar prices for your product line and establish an invoicing procedure that takes into account customs duty and any other tariffs or border crossing charges in order to free the customer of any problems in receiving of the merchandise;
- work out all financial factors, the sales terms, pro forma income statements and capital requirements;
- establish a credit rating in the United States;
- discuss your marketing plan with the Canadian Trade Commissioner serving your chosen market area to seek guidance and recommendations about distributors, dealers, potential clients and advertising strategy; and
- establish a presence in the United States - through an 800 telephone number, a distributor, or a sales office.

## The Marketing Strategy

A carefully prepared marketing plan is the map that leads to increased sales, higher profits and more effective use of available personnel and resources. The U.S. food products market is tough to crack and demands competitive staying power. The better prepared you are, the more likely you are to gain a foothold in that market.

Information gathering is the first step in developing a market strategy:

- List your expectations of the U.S. market in terms of customers, suppliers, employees, creditors and other relevant factors;
- Analyse your company's performance, the present economic situation, general business and food market forecasts;
- Evaluate your company's capabilities and weaknesses. Be realistic in your assessment of management skills, marketing methods, quality of product, access to supplies, and competitiveness;
- Assess the data gathered during your visit to the selected market area (see The Preparation). Know what the market will buy;
- Set your sales goals, the U.S. prices (to include profit plus all costs to the point of delivery) for your merchandise, and target the type of distributor and dealer appropriate for your product;