


AGRI-FOOD AND FISHERIES

The market for Canadian agri-food and fisheries products, equipment and support services is just beginning to be explored by Canadian companies. American and European brands dominate supermarket shelves and the patterns of consumption are moving increasingly towards the North American model, albeit with distinct preferences. Canadian products are generally not visible except for the McCain's line of goods that is found throughout the area. The Embassy receives a steady flow of enquiries about potential Canadian suppliers of processed food and agricultural products. Care must be taken in approaching the market since there is a range of semi-processed and brand products for which competitors have distinct advantages. However, there would seem to be potential for specialty food, seafood and beverage products for which Gulf consumers may be willing to pay a premium.

For primary agriculture and fisheries there are distinct markets developing in the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Abu Dhabi specifically is committed to increasing self-sufficiency in various crops and livestock in the longer term and to that end has allocated approximately \$60 million over the next five years. Opportunities should exist for Canadian dry-land farming expertise, crop management systems, seeds, genetic materials, forage, agricultural support services and consultants. In Oman the opportunities relate to development of that Emirate's marine resources.

OVERVIEW

Iran's agriculture and food sectors offer increasingly attractive opportunities for Canadian exporters willing to enter a competitive but growing market. Iran's population has experienced the largest growth of all countries in the region, reaching an estimated 60 million people in 1992, and is expected to continue growing at around 2-3% annually perhaps reaching 82 million in 2001.

The Iranian Government recognizes the increasing demand for food and basic staples to feed its population and has placed a high priority on expanded food production within the country, while continuing to import some food products from abroad. This trend will continue in the foreseeable future, and will result in excellent opportunities for Canadian suppliers of food items such as rice, beef and poultry (both halal slaughtered), flour, wheat and some prepared foods. As well, as the Iranian Government continues its drive to produce more food, Canadian companies can take advantage of opportunities to sell agricultural equipment and related services necessary to modernize and expand Iran's food production capacity.

Responsibility for Iran's agriculture sector is divided between two ministries whose roles continue to evolve. The Ministry of Jihad-e-Sazandegeh, in general, is responsible for dairy cattle imports and expansion of Iran's dairy cattle industry and rangelands, while the Ministry of Agriculture takes the lead in food production. Opportunities for Canadian companies can be divided into five main areas as follows: