

- assess the potential for increased investment and technology exchanges between Canada, the U.K., France, Germany and the Nordic countries;
- provide information on foreign markets and project opportunities, with particular focus on the needs of exporting SMEs (IC, DFAIT);
- promote the participation of Canadian suppliers in energy-sector projects financed by international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, etc. by:
 - identifying projects in priority markets for which Canadian suppliers and technology are well suited (DFAIT/missions, IC);
 - providing project information and tenders on a timely basis to Canadian firms and industry associations (DFAIT/missions, IC);
- promote the Program for Export Market Development (PEMD) as a source of funding for smaller firms to support increased foreign marketing efforts (DFAIT); and
- focus on value-added trade activities with SMEs (IC, DFAIT)

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PLASTICS

The plastics sector encompasses machinery and mould manufacturers, compounders, and processors that make plastic products. The synthetic resins industry is discussed because of its integral relationship with the rest of the sector, but the strategy is not proactive regarding resins.

Main Challenges

Machinery and Moulds

Export growth in these subsectors has increased over the past three years, fuelled by specialized Canadian expertise, combined with expanding worldwide demand for plastics-processing machinery and moulds. Challenges for this subsector include:

- continuing investment in advanced manufacturing technologies in order to remain at the leading edge of companies worldwide;
- building up market share in countries where they already have a solid presence; and
- making more substantial inroads into developing markets in South America and Asia-Pacific.

Plastic Products

Export growth has also been very strong in this subsector over the past three years. This trend is expected to continue as Canadian companies improve their competitive position, especially with respect to U.S. firms, by investing more heavily in leading technologies and developing the skilled work force that can effectively use these technologies. The challenges for this subsector include:

- expanding market share in U.S. markets; and
- encouraging companies with a technology advantage to be more aggressive in global markets.

Strategic Direction

The focus of the National Sector Team (NST) is on trade promotion activities to improve the export performance of Canadian plastics companies. A further benefit of increased international competitiveness is that a greater share of domestic markets will be supplied by Canadian manufacturers, rather than through imports.

Governments have a key role in providing information, advice and financial support for exporters, drawing upon the resources of our missions abroad and on the supporting network within Canada. There is a need to make the plastics industry more aware of the services and resources that exist. Equally important, there is a need to make the domestic and foreign trade support networks in governments more aware of the capabilities and potential of the plastics industry.

The types of information that industry wants, and toward which governments can contribute, include:

- foreign-market intelligence;
- information on agents and representatives in foreign markets;
- facilitating the use of financial assistance programs (e.g. Program for Export Market Development [PEMD], Technology Partnerships Canada, regional development agencies, provincial governments);
- projects and equipment packages available for tender in foreign countries;
- domestic supply capability directories;
- training sessions on beginning to export, or on becoming a more effective exporter; and
- organization of national stands to help smaller companies gain international exposure.