

and a fair number also speak French. Dutch firms and businesspersons are hard bargainers, and potential exporters should prepare accordingly. The Dutch buyer wants quality but wants it at a low price. Canadian exporters must be ready to discuss detailed sales and price matters during the very first call on a Dutch firm or agent.

It is highly recommended that businesspersons considering a visit to Holland advise the Commercial Division of the Canadian Embassy of their intentions and provide product brochures. The Commercial Division can then survey the market potential and organize an appropriate program for the visit. Sufficient advance notice will do a lot to ensure that a business trip is a success.

Dutch firms which buy in large quantities prefer, understandably, to deal directly with the manufacturer. Canadian exporters who do not anticipate large volume sales will have to deal through an importer, distributor or agent. If an exporter's product is quite specialized or high-priced, an agent is best to promote the product. Once an agent is selected, it is important to establish a close working relationship and provide up-to-date information regularly. This will pay real dividends in the long run.

The rules governing contracts between a Dutch agent and his/her principal have been codified. While they are not as draconian as rules in other countries, it would be wise for a Canadian company to contact a Dutch legal firm before signing an agreement. An EC directive regarding commercial agents was adopted December 18, 1986. It requires member states to bring their national law into compliance with the directive no later than 1990.

Dutch buyers resist any attempt to have them accept large initial buying quotas. Agents also do not like sales quotas. Payments are often made in cash upon receipt, but terms of 60 and 90 days are also common practice on large orders.

It is recommended that a potential exporter provide product brochures and price quotations c.i.f. Rotterdam or Amsterdam, preferably in Dutch guilders. All product descriptions and specifications should be metric. They need not be translated into Dutch, although it is always a good idea.

Once a business contact has been established, it is important to quickly follow it up. The Dutch firm or commercial agent will also expect prompt replies to correspondence and orders.