

VIII MARKET ACCESS

Import Regulations

Colombia is implementing "Apertura Economica," a liberalization policy to open up and modernize the economy, facilitate imports of goods and services, and increase competitiveness through freer markets. Import tariffs which were substantial, have been significantly reduced and most prior import licensing requirements have been eliminated.

Creation of the Colombian Import-Export Bank (Bancoldex) and of a new Ministry of Foreign Trade have supported "apertura" and improved trade.

In December 1991, the Presidents of the Andean Common Market countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela) decided to boost regional trade by adopting common external tariff schedules of 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%. At the same time **import duties** were eliminated for products traded within the Andean Region countries. Colombia and Venezuela took the lead and started to implement the agreement in February 1992.

Most imports into, and sales in, Colombia are subject to a 16% sales tax (value-added tax).

All imports require a registration with DIAN - Departamento de Impuestos y Aduanas (Department of Taxation and Customs) - for payment of custom duties and taxes as well as for statistical information purposes.

Local standards, certifications and registrations

Local standards and specifications are, in general, the same used internationally by developed nations i.e. ISO, UL, IEC, IEEE, CSA, GIS or similar.

For certain commodities and, in order to expedite customs clearance at the port of entry, the government established an "in factory prior to shipment" inspection system certified by well-known inspection companies. It is advisable to verify if this prior certification is needed, as it has been established only for certain items of the customs classification code.

Packaging and labelling:

Packaging and labelling are regulated by ISO 9000 requirements, which include information on shipper, consignee, size, weight, transport and port of entry.