

DOING BUSINESS IN TAIWAN

GENERAL

With a per capita Gross National Product of almost US\$10,566 in 1993, Taiwan has the second highest standard of living in Asia after Japan. Growth in GNP slipped from 7.2 percent in 1991 to 5.9 percent in 1993, the lowest since 1982. With two way trade registered at US\$162 billion, Taiwan remained the 13th largest trading nation in 1993.

Taiwan is among the top two nations in the world in foreign exchange reserves. Taiwan is at a crossroads. Its economy and industrial structure are under-going rapid transformation from an agricultural and labour-intensive import-substituting economy to a technology-intensive industrial structure. The nation is liberalizing its barriers to imports and is actively seeking foreign investment and technology as well as overseas investment opportunities. Canada is an attractive market for investment for Taiwanese investors.

PERSONAL CONTACT

As in most Asian markets, personal contact is essential for creating trust and understanding, as well as making end-users aware of what new procedures and technologies are available. Taiwanese businessmen appreciate the personal attention and effort, and face-to-face discussions create an amiable business atmosphere.

A Canadian business-person operating in Taiwan is a custodian of the reputations of all Canadians in the market, including the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Taipei. Canadian seafood exporters must plan commercial itineraries before they arrive. In Taiwan it is difficult to make appointments on short notice. Without prior planning, the time and money spent on a trip to Taiwan will be wasted. If it is necessary to cancel an appointment, please fax the information to all parties concerned, with apologies, as early as possible.

Canadian seafood exporters should try to hold more product demonstrations, seminars and exhibitions, as well as make concerted efforts to increase distribution of technical data and descriptive brochures. Whenever possible, samples should be used to give potential customers a clear understanding of the product for sale. Audiovisual and other promotional material is important.

Understanding the commercial culture of Taiwan may be a key to your marketing success. To that end, it is important to learn the hierarchy within an organization with which one is dealing, as well as to appreciate the importance of that hierarchy. Remember to recognize or address your remarks to the senior person present at the meeting. Take care not to embarrass the junior people by overstating their importance. Presentation of a souvenir to thank Taiwanese hosts at a banquet or other function is a fairly common and inoffensive practice. Exchange of business cards is important in Taiwan. Cards with English on one side and Chinese on the other create a better mutual understanding and can be printed locally in a short time.

AGENTS AND DISTRIBUTORS

Selection of an agent in Taiwan is an extremely important step for foreign exporters. Many factors