

MARKET ACCESS

The move that best symbolizes China's commitment to an open-door policy is its attempt to join the world trading body, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). To be accepted, China must conform to the international body's trade rules, including allowing its currency to float freely on international money markets. China has obvious reason to want to join the GATT, as China is now the 12th largest exporter in the world, and when China's trade is combined with that of Hong Kong and Taiwan, whose economies are growing more closely entwined with China's, it moves up to sixth in the world. But unlike Japan, the leading Asian economic power to which it is sometimes compared, China is also a major importer, which needs two-way trade to drive its industrialization more than Japan ever required.

DOCUMENTATION

Invoices, shipping documents (bills of lading), insurance policies (certificates) and other commercial documents issued in China are usually signed by stamped signatures, occasionally by hand (together with a company seal at times). There are no Chambers of Commerce, and authentication of documents by foreign consulates is not acceptable. The China Council for Promotion of International Trade issues certificates of origin and certifies documents if required. Notary services were introduced in China over the last decade and there are now notary offices across the country, working in accordance with the *"Provisional Regulations for Notarisation"*.

Invoices usually incorporate combined certificates of origin, packing, weight and measurement lists, unless the credit specifies separate documents. Sanitary specifications and quality certifications are usually issued together. Standard trade contracts are issued by the foreign trade corporations and are printed in Chinese and English with each language equally valid. Strict adherence to the provision of any contract is expected and it is in the Canadian fish and seafood exporter's interest to ensure that all the particulars of any agreement entered into are included.

CUSTOMS

All customs houses in China are under the direction of the Customs General Administration of the PRC, which reports to the State Council. Since the open-door policies were initiated, local customs offices have proliferated and now number over 150 in 26 provinces. Like most countries, China's tariff rates are divided into two categories: ordinary and Most-Favoured Nation (MFN). Although tariff rates and regulations are formulated nationally, Canadian exporters have reported disparities in the interpretation of these between different regions.

Those Canadian fish and seafood exporters contemplating business in China should seek advice at an early stage on the tariffs applicable to their particular products. China National Foreign Trade Transportation Corporation and the China Ocean shipping Agency arrange customs clearance of all import and export cargoes by land, sea, air and mail. These corporations act as authorised agents for clearing and delivering goods in transit through Chinese ports. These corporations can help to arrange marine and other insurance and are able to make claims on behalf of cargo owners on request.