

Three free trade markets to place on your radar

Canadian business women are discovering the value of doing business with some of Canada's newest free trade partners, including Colombia, Peru and Jordan. Each of these markets is in expansion mode, with a growing middle class and a huge appetite for products and services to fuel ongoing development.

Colombia

With a market of 46 million, Colombia offers opportunities in agriculture, construction, financial services, information and communication technologies (ICT), legal services, mining, oil and gas, power generation, transportation and waste management. The Canada-Colombia FTA eliminates tariffs of up to 20% on Canadian exports and makes our products and services more competitive in the market.

Sonia Molodecky, an Associate with Borden Ladner Gervais LLP in Toronto, has been working closely with Colombian partners and Canadian companies to help them maximize opportunities under the FTA. "Canadians are very well-received in Colombia and there is a real entrepreneurial spirit and a drive for innovative solutions. That means plenty of opportunities for Canadian business women."

Peru

Peru has experienced brisk economic growth over the past decade. Canada's FTA with this market of 30 million eliminates up to 99% of tariffs on agricultural goods and all tariffs on most machinery and equipment. Canadian companies also get increased access to the ICT market and are now able to bid on government procurement projects. There are opportunities in agri-food, banking, education, health technology, insurance, mining, oil and gas, power, transportation and water treatment.

Over the past five years, Aboriginal business woman Francine Whiteduck has spent time in Peru sourcing products and offering training to help indigenous, rural and remote women set pricing and identify new markets. "We've been quite successful," she explains. "The biggest lesson I learned was how much time is spent sorting through service providers to find the right partners. Otherwise, you find yourself on a costly learning curve. I've made it a point to talk to the Trade Commissioner Service. They gave me a good picture of how things work."

Jordan

The Canada-Jordan FTA is Canada's first with an Arab country. It eliminates tariffs (some run as high as 30%) on more than 99% of Canada's current exports to the country. Industries with strong prospects include agriculture and agri-food, building and forestry, and manufactured goods. As Steve Guertin, Trade Commissioner, Middle East Bureau, points out, "Market access into Jordan also opens up opportunities in neighbouring Middle Eastern countries. Whether you do business directly with Jordan, or use the experience as a platform for regional expansion, the FTA is a tangible tool to focus your international expansion plans."

As for the business environment's suitability for business women? Calgary's Alena Poremsky, who leads international sales for Evans Consoles, says that Jordan is a friendly, welcoming place for business women. "I remember my first presentation for a huge \$2 million project. There were about 50 people in the room and I was the only woman. I was selling to the military. I never felt outnumbered. In fact, it was an advantage and I closed the deal. It was a huge win for my company."

“ Sound advice

"Be confident in your partners. The wrong choice will lead to delays and problems. If you're going into a new market, find partners through organizations that have done their due diligence and can advise you. Trade commissioners know the market and are connected to help you. The TCS helped us establish our office in Houston, Texas."

Christina Forth-Matthews,
President and CEO

AOG International
Edmonton, AB



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