

Smaller Canadian exporters supplying a limited range of products may find it advantageous to work through export agents who know the market well. Some export agents visit Nigeria frequently and deal directly with Nigerian wholesalers, effectively eliminating the need for a local agent.

Medium and small-size Nigerian wholesalers and distributors handling building materials, raw materials, foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals and other products often prefer to deal with a single supplier. Preferred suppliers are diversified, international manufacturers capable of offering a broad range of merchandise, provided, of course, that price and delivery terms are competitive.

The companies handling the greatest volume of non-food imports are generally foreign-owned trading companies, long established in Nigeria. The retail trade, however, except for a few larger outlets, is locally controlled. Most businesses in the distributive trade are required to be 100 per cent Nigerian-owned. The exceptions are companies handling machinery and technical equipment, large supermarkets and department stores which have 60 per cent Nigerian participation.

Finding a good importer/distributor in Nigeria is often a difficult task. While there is never a shortage of volunteers, the challenge is in finding someone with the experience to handle the administrative complexities of importing, the resources to finance the transaction, the influence to obtain the necessary entry approvals, the technical capacity to provide on-site service and the management skill to bring everything together.

Before entering trade for the first time in Nigeria, Canadian firms should check with the Canadian High Commission in Lagos to obtain credit references and bank reports on the individual or company involved. The High Commission has lists of *bona fide* firms and can frequently provide information on their size and capabilities. Where a company is not known, a request for reference can be directed to its bank. North American style credit bureau services are not well developed in Nigeria and detailed credit reports are difficult to obtain. A local agent of Dun and Bradstreet, Taibeth Associates, is located in Lagos. The quality of investigation, however, is not