

The markets of the Middle East and Africa are sometimes overlooked by Canadian businesses seeking new export markets. Factors that may be responsible for this include a lack of familiarity with local cultures and languages, or distance. Although access to these countries is undeniably more difficult than to other more familiar markets, such as those of Western Europe and the United States, an effective penetration strategy and a sustained effort can provide some very profitable business opportunities.

The Africa and Middle East Trade Development Division of External Affairs and International Trade Canada has prepared this document to provide some basic information to Canadian exporters who are interested in these markets. It is designed to introduce the markets of the Middle East and Northern Africa, and provides a bird's-eye view of the business opportunities afforded by these regions. It may be useful to acquire a general idea about a market in particular, but here we cover only the initial stages to help interested readers get started. The first section provides a general overview of the countries that comprise the region and the second part details by sector, the priority areas of opportunity for Canadians. The information contained in this section is a collection of reports compiled by the Trade Commissioners posted in the region and the information may be outlined only in part in some cases. Some information will be subject to change but some characteristics specific to the region will tend to remain: These markets require sustained activity, which in turn calls for frequent visits, long-term commitment, personal representation in many cases, familiarity with the culture, and regular use of Canadian embassy and consular services.

Canadian businessmen are advised to contact the Trade Commissioners currently assigned to these countries or officers in Canada to obtain further information on these markets. With this in mind, a list of contacts for trade information is given at the end of this document. It might also be useful to consult the Federal Government's International Trade Business Plan, which contains the regional and sectoral strategies of the federal departments active on the international scene. This publication is available from the regional international trade centres.

We hope that this document will be of use to Canadians wishing to become involved in trade in the Middle East and North Africa.