

The Portuguese market is open but is not easily penetrated. Persistent and aggressive efforts are required if sales success is to be achieved in competition with local and European suppliers. Traditionally, Canada has maintained a significant share of the Portuguese markets for codfish, seed potatoes, hides, iron ore, asbestos, aluminum, copper, lead and zinc. In 1986 and 1987, wheat and feed barley re-entered the Portuguese market and became major components of the Canadian exports mix.

Canada's image as a source of food and raw materials has changed rapidly in the past few years. Today, Portuguese business welcomes, and increasingly seeks, contacts with Canadian suppliers of manufactured goods and new technologies. Naturally, there is considerable competition in these areas from European, Japanese and American firms.

A capable local agent or representative is usually necessary in Portugal. Initial contact can be established via correspondence. Visas are not required. The Commercial Division of the Canadian Embassy can identify suitable local firms as potential representatives and can assist with establishing initial contacts.

Local firms require complete product literature and pricing information (best if on the basis of c.i.f. Lisbon) to evaluate market prospects and their interest in taking on a new product. English or French is widely understood in commercial circles in Portugal although, of course, material in Portuguese is preferable and, for some sectors, essential.

Despite its similarity to Portuguese, Spanish material should not be used in Portugal unless it is specifically requested. Although part of the Iberian peninsula, Portugal is, and considers itself to be, different from the Spanish market and therefore must be dealt with separately.

Although there are a number of major trade shows staged every year in Portugal, most are of an essentially national nature and therefore, in light of the relatively small total size of the domestic market for most products, would not normally warrant direct participation by Canadian firms. Companies with agents in Portugal may wish to investigate relevant exhibitions via their agents.

Business Visits

For a Canadian businessperson travelling to Portugal, the first business meeting should not be expected before 9:30 a.m. (and more often 10:00 a.m.). Lunch is usually from 12:30 p.m.