



# Guide for Women Exporters to Access the Canadian and International Markets

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# 0 Introduction

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## Summary

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TFO Canada offers a series of product-specific [Market Information Papers \(MIPs\)](#) to exporters in [OECD DAC list](#) countries. They are also distributed through export promotion organizations and Canadian embassies in the client countries as well as through client country embassies accredited to Canada.

The MIPs are intended to provide the exporter with background information on the Canadian market for a product; advice on how to go about finding a Canadian buyer; and suggestions on what to do once a buyer is found. The papers offer exporters enough information to pursue the Canadian market on their own and to seek further details from suggested sources through websites, electronic mail, fax, mail, or telephone. These MIPs are intended for the experienced exporter who is serious about trying to enter the Canadian market. Caution is advised for those with little or no first export experience; a history of exporting to a market closer to home is recommended. Show the potential buyer that you have done your homework and are serious about a long-term relationship. Research, planning, and commitment are essential in establishing a good reputation in trade with this country.

This Market Information Paper (MIP) is developed for women exporters. We encourage you to use this MIP in parallel with TFO Canada's [Guide to Exporting](#). As well, TFO Canada provides market information on a variety of consumer sectors that are of interest to exporters from TFO Canada client countries. These are all available free to members at: [Market Information Papers - TFO Canada](#)

As of June 16, 2023, Canada's population reached 40 million. This is a historic milestone for Canada.<sup>1</sup> Nearly [80%](#) of Canadians live within 160 kilometres of the border with the United States, mainly in large urban centres throughout the central and western parts of the country.

At the end of December 2022 [six cities](#) had over a million residents: Toronto (6.7 million), Montréal (4.4 million), Vancouver (2.8 million), Calgary (1.6 million), Ottawa-Gatineau (1.4 million), and Edmonton (1.5 million). Other large cities with over 500K residents include, Quebec 849K, Kitchener 622K, London 574K, and Victoria 423K.

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<sup>1</sup> "Canada's population reaches 40 million" Statistics Canada, accessed June 23, 2023, [Canada's population reaches 40 million \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

## Terms Used

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Below, you will find definitions for the terms used in this document. We have tried to provide clear and concise explanations of terms used throughout the document.

**Branding:** Branding is creating a unique identity for a product or company that makes a lasting impression on consumers.

**Buyer:** A buyer is someone or an establishment who purchases goods or services from a seller/exporter. Buyers decide what to buy, negotiate prices, and make the actual purchase. (See Chapter 3 for details on Canadian buyers).

**Diversity:** Variations and different characteristics in a group of people.

**Diverse culture:** Multiple backgrounds, religions, ethnicity, lifestyles in a society

**E-commerce:** E-commerce (electronic commerce) is the process of buying, selling, or exchanging products and services electronically—usually via the Internet or a mobile device.

**Economy:** The wealth and resources of a country or region, especially in terms of the production and consumption of goods and services.

**Free Trade Agreement:** A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is an agreement between countries that helps trade by reducing barriers and restrictions on movement of goods and services. It aims to make it easier to access markets, encourage economic cooperation, and establish rules for trade.

**Gender equality:** Addressing inequalities that limit individuals' access to opportunities for better health, education, and economic prospects in society.

**Incoterms:** Incoterms are internationally recognized trade terms, guidelines and standards established by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) for commercial transactions.

**Supply chain:** A supply chain is the process of getting products or services from the source to the customer. It involves different steps, like getting materials, making the products, and delivering them to buyers.

**Sustainability:** Incorporating environmentally and socially responsible practices throughout all aspects of a business, including its operations and value chains.

## Overview and Scope of the Report

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This MIP presents key questions and recommendations to help women exporters access the Canadian and international markets. Although references are made to export sectors, products and services in which women participate, it is not a sector specific MIP. This MIP can be used in unison with [TFO Canada's Guide to Exporting](#) and [Market Information Papers](#) that provide sector specific data.

In Chapter One, we discuss the benefits and challenges of entering international markets and key questions that women should ask themselves about their motivation, readiness, and enthusiasm for exporting. The critical steps to exporting are presented and clear directions on how to access TFO Canada's Export Readiness resources.

In Chapter Two, women exporters are introduced to the Canadian market with updates on Canada's economy, culture, language, and time zones. We also present opportunities for women exporters from the perspective of how the Canadian government facilitates the entry of products and services by women in developing countries to enter the Canadian market. Current buyer and customer trends in sectors dominated by women exporters to Canada are also presented.

In Chapter 3, we discuss the business culture and the Canadian buyer expectations. With women exporters as our target audience, we present information on understanding culture and diversity in Canadian and international markets as well as tips and strategies on building relationships within this context. This chapter also presents expectations from the perspective of environmental and socially responsible expectation and strategies on how women exporters can respond to and implement best practices that position them to succeed as exporters.

Chapter 4, extends the discussion Chapter 3 and presents strategies for successful product positioning, building buyer profiles and building rapport with potential buyers. This section also presents techniques on connecting emotionally with customers through storytelling. Quotes, strategies, and examples of stories from women business owners who are thriving international markets are presented. These stories add richness and practicality for women to relate to.

Chapter 5 provides valuable insights on mastering effective and confident communication. We offer examples of crafting an elevator pitch and share tips and best practices for using email as a communication tool. Additionally, we introduce best practices for utilizing social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

In Chapter 6, we focus on preparing for export promotion activities such as trade shows, buyer missions, and exporter missions. We provide strategies for thorough preparation before, during, and after these events. Notably, we include practical tips from the perspective of women business owners who juggle multiple roles as heads of households, mothers, business owners, and export promoters.

In Chapters,7 preparations of documentation for export are discussed. Tips and strategies for a pricing strategy and negotiating price are presented respectively. Critical information on transportation, logistics and export documentation processes such as incoterms are simplified.

Chapter 8 discusses networking strategies and connecting with peers as a game-changer for women entrepreneurs venturing into international markets. The focus is how women can make lasting business relations at international events, online and by actively participating in in-country trade support initiatives.

Chapter 9 summarizes easily accessible and free resources to help women boost their exporting businesses.



# Going Global

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## Going Global? Welcome To Exporting!

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If you've been considering exporting, it's great that you're taking the time to explore whether it's the right step for your business.

There are several reasons why exporting can be beneficial. While increasing sales and tapping into global demand is an advantage, there are additional benefits to consider.

In the following section, we will dive into the benefits of exporting and discuss essential checkpoints to consider when making this significant business decision.

### **BENEFITS**

1. **Access to a Larger Customer Base:** Exporting allows you to specialize in areas where your business is most competitive and reach a wider customer base. By expanding into international markets, you can find new opportunities and increase your market share.
2. **Risk Reduction:** Exporting helps moderate the risks associated with economic downturns. By expanding your customer base across multiple markets, you spread the risk and become less dependent on a single market's performance. This provides stability for your business.
3. **Enhanced Competitiveness:** Engaging in exporting exposes your business to new ideas, processes, and competition. This exposure can drive innovation, improve your business's efficiency in both domestic and foreign markets. Learning from international markets can bring fresh perspectives and enable you to stay ahead in your industry.
4. **Foreign Exchange Earnings:** By selling your products or services in international markets, you can generate revenue in different currencies, which can help offset currency fluctuations and contribute to your bottom line.

### **BENEFITS OF EXPORTING TO CANADA**

1. Canada offers access to a large and stable market with a population of over 39 million people. This sizable consumer base provides a diverse range of potential customers, creating opportunities to sell a wide variety of products and services.
2. The closeness to the United States which is Canada's largest trading partner also provides additional advantages for many businesses that choose to export to Canada as a steppingstone to enter the larger U.S. market. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has now been replaced by the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), further facilitates trade between the three countries.
3. Canada has an extensive network of trade agreements which reduces trade barriers and provides preferential access to Canadian markets.

### **CHALLENGES**

Getting your products and services ready for export takes time, increased costs and adapting to new business cultures. However, it's important to consider the advantages of accessing new markets and growing your business compared to the challenges involved.

**Time Consuming:** As a business owner researching and understanding the new market requires

significant investment of your time. This means you'll have to manage your time effectively and balance your existing local commitments with the time and effort required to learn about the new market.

**Increased Costs:** When exporting, you may encounter additional expenses that you need to consider. These costs can include creating a website to enhance your online presence, travel expenses, communication costs like internet and meeting the specific requirements of the new market, such as packaging, labeling, translation, and obtaining certifications like Organic and Fair-Trade certification, logistics and shipping. These expenses are important investments to ensure a successful entry into the new market.

**Adapting to a New Business Culture:** Exporting involves the need to adapt and learn about new cultures, behaviors, and buyer expectations. This process can be challenging, especially for small and medium-sized businesses that may already have limited resources. The task of understanding and respecting different cultural norms and being culturally sensitive can feel overwhelming. However, it is crucial to invest time and effort in acquiring this new knowledge to ensure successful business interactions and relationships in the target market. By considering these benefits, you can assess whether exporting aligns with your business goals and capabilities.

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## Determining your Motivation for Exporting

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As a business owner, it's important to start by understanding your reasons for wanting to export. By asking yourself why you want to export your products or services and what you hope to achieve by doing so. By identifying your motivation, you can set clear goals and make informed decisions throughout the exporting process.

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## Defining your Export Expectations

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When defining your export expectations, consider the following three questions:

1. What specific goals do I want to achieve by entering a new market?
2. How will I measure the success of my export activities?
3. What is the desired timeline for achieving these expectations?

These questions will help you clarify your objectives, establish criteria for evaluating progress, and set a timeframe for achieving your export expectations.

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## Assessing Export Readiness

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Assessing your export readiness starts with the simple questions – What is an export ready business? Am I ready? What do I need to assess to determine if I am ready to enter a new market? Here are some answers to these questions.

What is an export ready business? An export-ready business is one that can offer its products or services globally at a competitive price. To determine if your company is export-ready, assess its capacity, human resources, management, financial readiness, and competitiveness. If it falls short, find ways to make the necessary improvements.

**To determine Human Resource Requirements, ask yourself these questions:**

1. Can my business handle the increased demand that comes with exporting?
2. Is my management or am I fully committed to exporting?
3. Do I have efficient methods in place to promptly respond to customer inquiries?



**To determine Financial Readiness, ask these questions:**

1. Am I able to secure the necessary financing to pursue export opportunities?
2. What are the potential financial risks involved in exporting, and how can I minimize them?

**To assess Competitiveness, consider the following questions:**

1. Is my product or service suitable for the target market?
2. What measures can I take to ensure my product stands out in the Canadian market?
3. How can I implement effective strategies to enter the market competitively?

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## Evaluating your Export Potential

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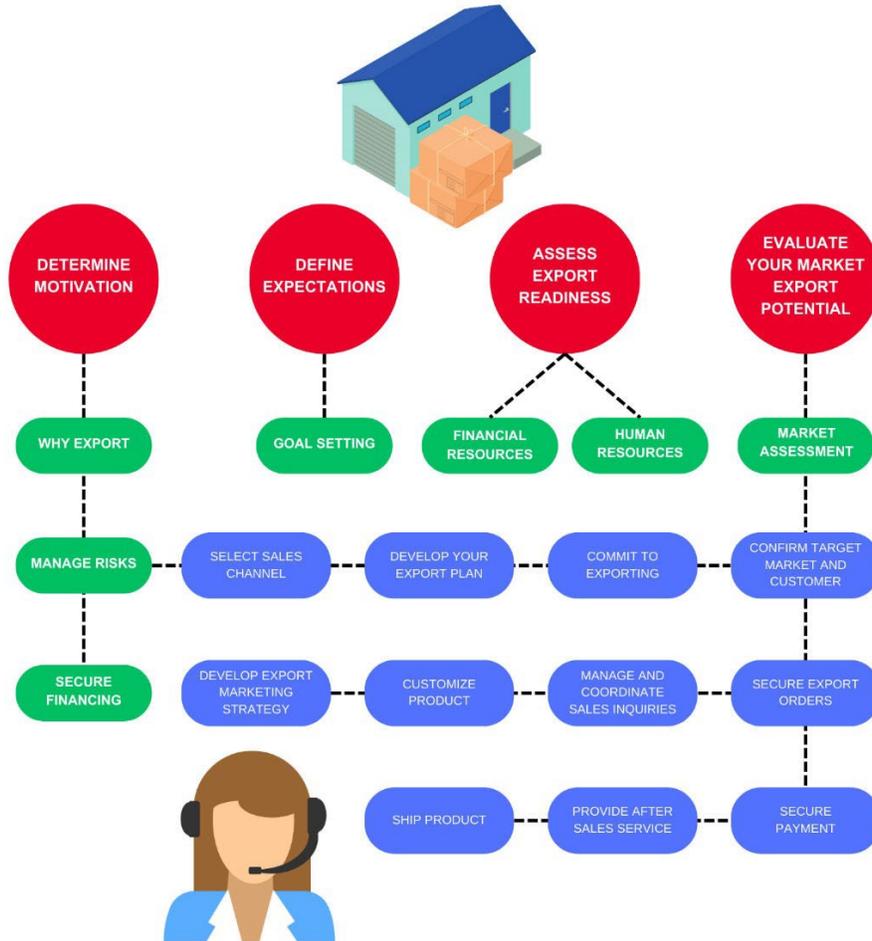
**When evaluating your export potential, consider the following statements and questions:**

1. Market Assessment:
  - Can your product or service find a viable market beyond your local market?
  - Is Canada the right market for your business?
2. Market Research:
  - How do you conduct market research effectively?
  - What key questions should you ask during market research?
  - What are the likely customer profiles for your products and services?
  - Who are the potential buyers of your products and services, and where can you find them?
  - Are there significant demographics that actively use your products and services?
3. Customer Profile:
  - Who are the existing customers using your products and services?
  - What information can you gather about their needs, preferences, and behaviors?

By addressing the questions above, you can gain a better understanding of the potential market for your products or services and make informed decisions about entering new markets, including Canada.

## Steps to Exporting

There are several important stages and questions to consider when deciding if exporting is right for your business. The following infographic outlines the main steps and key factors to evaluate before entering new markets.



# 2 The Canadian Market

Canada, the second-largest country globally, offers promising trade opportunities for women entrepreneurs. With its vast landmass and population exceeding 39 million, Canada provides a stable political climate and a proven history of economic growth. The country has established strong trade connections through Free Trade Agreements, ensuring favorable conditions for conducting business. Notably, Canada prioritizes gender considerations in its economic and [trade policies](#), reflecting its commitment to gender equality and women's rights. By trading with Canada, women entrepreneurs can access a supportive market that values inclusivity and offers opportunities for growth and success.

## Canada at a Glance

### *The Economy, Currency, Language, Time Zone*

#### Population

**40.000 M**



Canada's population is rapidly growing, reaching an estimated 39,566,248 in January 2023. As of June 16, 2023, the population reached a record high of 40,000,000.<sup>2</sup> This marks the first time in history that the population has increased by over a million people in one year. International migration accounts for 95.5% of this growth. For women exporters, this represents a promising market with diverse opportunities.

Nearly 80% of Canadians live within 160 kilometres of the border with the United States, mainly in large urban centres throughout the central and western parts of the country. In 2021, six cities had over a million inhabitants: Toronto (6.2 million), Montréal (4.29 million), Vancouver (2.6 million), Calgary (1.41 million), Ottawa-Gatineau and Edmonton (both 1.3 million). Together, these six cities account for more than 46% of the country's population.

#### Currency

### **Canadian Dollar**



The currency used for trade in Canada is the Canadian dollar (CAD).

It's important to note the current exchange rates when conducting international trade with Canadian partners or clients, as fluctuations in currency values can impact pricing and financial transactions.

#### Business Language

### **English and French**



Canada recognizes two official languages: English and French. English is the most widely spoken language in the country, used by the majority of Canadians, particularly in provinces such as Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta. French is predominantly spoken in the province of Quebec and parts of New Brunswick, as well as in various francophone communities across the country.

<sup>2</sup> "Canada's population reaches 40 million" Statistics Canada, accessed June 23, 2023, [Canada's population reaches 40 million \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2023001/article/00001-eng.htm)

### Time Zones

**Toronto – EST**  
**Ottawa – EST**  
**Vancouver – PST**



Canada spans across six time zones, providing a diverse landscape for business interactions. From east to west, the time zones in Canada are Atlantic Standard Time (AST), Eastern Standard Time (EST), Central Standard Time (CST), Mountain Standard Time (MST), Pacific Standard Time (PST), and finally, the Yukon Standard Time (YST). It's important for exporters engaging with Canadian counterparts to consider these time differences when scheduling meetings or coordinating activities. Being aware of the time zones will help ensure effective communication and seamless collaboration across different regions of Canada.

### **Overview of the Canadian Market**

Canada has one of the largest economies in the world and at the end of 2022 was ranked the world's eight largest economy by nominal GDP.<sup>3</sup> In 2022, the value of Canada's annual merchandise exports increased 22.5% to \$779.2 billion, while the value of annual imports rose 19.9% to \$757.4 billion.<sup>4</sup> Imports of consumer goods, like everyday items, went up by 14.6% to \$156.3 billion, contributing to the overall increase. Clothing, footwear, and accessories had the largest increase in imports.

Imports from countries other than the United States rose by 19.8% to \$286 billion. China played a significant role in this increase, along with Mexico, Germany, South Korea, India, and Italy. The largest increases in imports were seen in clothing, pharmaceuticals, vehicles, and basic chemicals.

Exports to the United States, Canada's main trading partner, reached a record high of \$595 billion, mostly due to higher energy exports. Nearly 90% of Canadian energy exports went to the United States.

The [value of imports in Canada \(by province\)](#) is distributed across its [ten provinces and three regional territories](#). Each plays a role in importing goods from other countries.

[Ontario](#) is the most populous province in Canada and has a strong economy. It typically accounts for a significant portion of the country's imports due to its diverse industries and large population centers like Toronto. Imports into Ontario are substantial and cover various sectors.

[Quebec](#), the second populous is another important province in terms of imports. It has a significant manufacturing sector and receives imports related to industries such as aerospace, pharmaceuticals, and transportation equipment. The Port of Montreal serves as an important gateway for goods entering the province.

[British Columbia](#), located on the West Coast, has a strategic geographic position for international trade. Its ports, including the Port of Vancouver, handle a substantial number of imports. The province imports goods like machinery, vehicles, natural resources, and consumer products.

[Alberta](#) is known for its energy resources, such as oil and gas. While it mainly contributes to Canada's exports in this sector, it also imports goods and equipment related to energy production, machinery, and other industries.

Other provinces and territories, such as Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Atlantic provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick), and the northern territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut) also import various goods, though their contributions to the overall import value may be relatively smaller compared to the provinces mentioned above.

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<sup>3</sup> "Economy of Canada," Wikipedia, accessed June 13, 2023 [Economy of Canada - Wikipedia](#)

<sup>4</sup> "Canadian international merchandise trade: Annual review 2022," accessed June 14, 2023, Statistics Canada. [Canadian international merchandise trade: Annual review 2022.](#)

It's important to note that the specific value of imports can vary from year to year and depends on factors such as economic conditions, industry demands, and global trade dynamics.

### ***Demographic, Culture, Languages***

Canadian demographics, culture, and languages reflect a rich and diverse society. Canada is known for its multiculturalism and welcoming approach to immigrants from all over the world. The Canadian population consists of various ethnicities and backgrounds, creating a vibrant and inclusive environment.

In terms of culture, Canada embraces both its Indigenous heritage and the contributions of diverse cultural communities. This cultural mosaic is evident in the arts, cuisine, festivals, and traditions celebrated throughout the country. Canadians value diversity, tolerance, and respect for different cultures.

As for languages, Canada recognizes English and French as its official languages. English is widely spoken across the country, particularly in provinces like Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta. French is predominantly spoken in Quebec and parts of New Brunswick, as well as in francophone communities across Canada. Bilingualism is encouraged and valued in many aspects of Canadian society.

Understanding and respecting the multicultural nature of Canadian society can greatly benefit women exporters seeking to do business in Canada. Adapting marketing strategies, considering cultural nuances, and leveraging language capabilities can help forge strong relationships and connect with a broad range of Canadian consumers.

### ***Gender Equality***

In Canada, there are several initiatives dedicated to supporting and promoting the active participation of women in international trade. These initiatives include federal policies that simplify the process for women globally who want to sell their products and services in Canada.

One notable initiative led by the Government of Canada is the integration of gender considerations into Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) through trade policy decisions<sup>5</sup>. This ongoing effort aims to ensure that gender considerations are embedded in the trade agreements, empowering women workers, businesswomen, and entrepreneurs to fully leverage trade and investment opportunities.

In addition, there are numerous other initiatives that create opportunities for women-led businesses in Canada. These initiatives focus on providing access to funding for innovative ventures, expanding their international client base, and actively participating in government procurement of goods and services. An example of such an initiative is the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy (WES), launched by the Government of Canada in 2018. WES takes a comprehensive approach, offering women-owned businesses increased access to financing, talent, networks, and expertise to start up, scale up, and enter new markets.

In the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables sector, the collaboration between the Canadian Produce Marketing Association and Grocery Business Magazine has resulted in the establishment of the Outstanding Women in Produce Program. This annual program recognizes Canadian women for their outstanding contributions to promoting and expanding the produce industry. It not only supports women seeking career advancement in the sector but also attracts young women to consider it as a viable career option.

Private sector and non-governmental organizations also facilitate networking opportunities and connections with potential trading partners for women in international trade. Additional information can be found in Chapters 6 below.

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<sup>5</sup> “Trade and gender in free trade agreements: The Canadian approach,” accessed June 9, 2023. Government of Canada. [Trade and gender in free trade agreements: The Canadian approach \(international.gc.ca\)](https://international.gc.ca).

Overall, these initiatives collectively create new opportunities for exporters looking to engage with the Canadian market, while empowering and supporting women's active participation in international trade.

### ***Trends and Opportunities***

**Sustainable and Innovative foods:** Canadian consumers highly value the environmental aspects of food production when it comes to sustainability.<sup>i</sup> Food sustainability refers to practices that minimize harm to the environment during the production, distribution, and consumption of food. The goal is to ensure that food is available and of high quality for the long term.

While individual needs such as health, price, and convenience are important factors influencing food choices for Canadian consumers, they also consider the broader implications of their decisions. They consider how their food choices impact the environment and the well-being of future generations. This includes concerns about climate change, the preservation of natural resources, and the ability to maintain a healthy and sustainable food supply over the long term.

For women entrepreneurs looking to export to Canada, aligning products or services with these principles of food sustainability is crucial. This may involve incorporating environmentally friendly practices into production, sourcing sustainable ingredients, minimizing waste, and promoting transparent and ethical supply chains. By addressing these concerns and meeting the expectations of Canadian consumers, women entrepreneurs can position themselves as leaders in the realm of sustainable food and forge successful business relationships in Canada.

**Food Prices:** Food prices in Canada have been increasing at a faster pace than the general rate of inflation since late 2021<sup>6</sup>. In September 2022, the annual price rise for food in stores reached its highest level in over four decades. Various factors, such as disruptions in the supply chain, shortages of labor, shifts in consumer behavior, and adverse weather conditions, have played a role in driving these price increases. As food holds a significant weight in measuring the overall cost of living, its escalating prices have a direct impact on consumers, with many experiencing the greatest impact from food inflation.

The increase in food prices has influenced consumers' purchasing habits. A [survey](#) conducted in February 2022 revealed that 62% of Canadians planned to eat out less in order to offset the higher food costs. Additionally, 46% opted to switch to cheaper brands to save money, while 19% reported no changes to their food habits. These results demonstrate how consumers are adapting their choices in response to the price increases in the food market.

**Processed Foods: Home Cooking and Baking:** With more time spent at home, consumers turned to home cooking and baking. This led to increased sales of cooking ingredients, baking supplies, and kitchen appliances. Consumers are likely to continue exploring their culinary skills and seeking convenient, high-quality ingredients.

**Health and Wellness:** The pandemic increased awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, leading to a greater demand for processed foods that align with health and wellness goals. Consumers are opting for functional foods, organic products, and those with clean labels, emphasizing natural ingredients and nutritional benefits.

**Local and Ethical Sourcing:** There has been a growing preference for locally sourced and ethically produced foods. Consumers are supporting local farmers and businesses, and they value transparency in the supply chain, wanting to know the origin and production practices behind the processed foods they purchase.

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<sup>6</sup> Lassoued, Rim, Janet Music, Sylvain Charlebois, and Stuart J. Smyth. 2023. "Canadian Consumers' Perceptions of Sustainability of Food Innovations" *Sustainability* 15, no. 8: 6431. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15086431>

**Retailer Focus Strengthening Supply Chains:** The disruptions in supply chains during COVID 19 pandemic has pushed retailers to focus on strengthening of their supply chains. <sup>7</sup> A recent [report](#) claims that retailers rely on supply chains now more than ever to ensure a positive customer experience.

Customers are prioritizing product availability over brand or retailer loyalty. To meet this evolving trend, retailers are focusing on two key priorities: ensuring sufficient stock and improving the pace and reliability at which goods move along their supply chains. As such retailers are diversifying their supply networks and, in some cases, reducing their dependence on overseas vendors. For small and medium sized women exporters to Canada, this trend can have several implications and opportunities. Firstly, it creates a competitive environment. Secondly, this trend creates opportunities for increased demand for products from a wider group of international exporters like yourself and the prospect for your business to expand and reach new customers in the Canadian market.

For more information on the latest Consumer Trends by specific consumer sectors that are of interest to you, please access [TFO Canada's Market Information Papers](#). Registration is required by clicking the link at [TFO Canada Registration](#).

### ***Looking Ahead After the Covid-19 Pandemic***

During the period of 2020-2022, the COVID-19 pandemic had devastating effects, causing disruptions in production, supply chain logistics, and product delivery. However, amidst these challenges, new business opportunities emerged and certain sectors experienced growth.

One significant shift was the rise of e-commerce and online sales. With lockdowns and restrictions on physical retail, consumers turned to online platforms for their purchasing needs. This trend opened new avenues for businesses to reach customers and expand their market reach. E-commerce sales have seen a significant increase, and this trend is expected to continue even beyond the pandemic.

In particular, the home décor and natural cosmetic sectors experienced expansion. With people spending more time at home, there was a surge in home improvement and decoration projects. Consumers sought to create functional and comfortable living spaces, leading to increased demand for furniture, home office setups, and décor items. This trend is projected to continue as consumers prioritize their living environments and work from home is common in Canada.

Similarly, the demand for skin care and wellness products saw a rise. Consumers focused on self-care and mental well-being, leading to increased demand for products that promote pampering and relaxation. Cosmetics sales in Canada remained stable during the pandemic, and it is expected to continue growing over the next few years.<sup>8</sup> Natural cosmetics are expected to see steady growth, with estimated annual growth of 2.6% from 2023 to 2027.<sup>9</sup>

For women exporters, these trends present opportunities in the home décor and natural cosmetic sectors. The home décor industry in Canada is estimated to generate more than CAD \$10 billion annually, with projected growth in industry revenue. Women exporters in this sector can tap into the increasing demand for home improvement and decoration products.

A recent study<sup>10</sup> on the artisan industry highlights the growing demand for artisan-made products.<sup>11</sup> Buyers in North America are increasingly using online channels, such as online trade shows, for sourcing

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<sup>7</sup> “2022 Canadian retail outlook,” Deloitte, accessed June 13, 2023. [2022 Canadian retail outlook - Focus on customers, brand, and agility vital to retail success \(deloitte.com\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> “Cosmetics industry in Canada – Statistics and Facts,” Statista, accessed June 13, 2023, [Cosmetics industry in Canada - statistics & facts | Statista](#).

<sup>9</sup> “Natural Cosmetics – Canada,” Statista, accessed June 13, 2023. [Natural Cosmetics - Canada | Statista Market Forecast](#).

<sup>10</sup> Participants from this study were from Canada, US, Mexico, Mali, Syria, South Africa, Kenya, Zambia, Australia, India, Spain, and the UK.

<sup>11</sup> “2021 Handmade Buyer Research Report,” Aid to Artisans, accessed June 9, 2023. [Handmade Buyers Survey - Aid to Artisans \(creativelearning.org\)](#)

products. Factors such as product quality, authenticity, alignment of values, and ethical sourcing are becoming crucial considerations for buyers when working with artisans.

In summary, while the COVID-19 pandemic had devastating effects on various aspects of the global economy, it also created new business opportunities for entrepreneurs. The rise of e-commerce, the expansion of the home décor and natural cosmetic sectors, and the growing demand for artisan-made products offer prospects for women exporters to capitalize on these trends and reach a broader customer base in Canada.

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## Opportunities for Exporters – Selected Sectors

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### ***Fresh Fruits and Vegetables***

The Canadian market presents opportunities for women exporters in several vegetable categories:

**Asparagus:** Canada imports asparagus year-round, with Mexico and Peru being the dominant suppliers. Women exporters can target this market by offering high-quality asparagus and capturing a portion of the concentrated market.

**Cassava:** Exporters of cassava can work with importers to create marketing plans that promote awareness of the product, its nutritional value, and preparation methods. Costa Rica is the largest supplier of cassava to Canada, followed by India and the United States.

**Garlic:** Although garlic production has increased in Ontario, there is still a significant demand deficit, leading to continued imports. China is the major supplier of garlic to Canada, followed by the United States and Spain.

**Peas (Sugar Snap and Snow Peas):** Sugar snap and snow peas are exotic variations of peas in the Canadian market. Women exporters should focus on providing fresh, high-quality peas with proper pre-cooling and cold chain maintenance. The United States, Guatemala, and Mexico are the main suppliers of peas to Canada.

**Pepper:** Sweet and hot peppers are in demand year-round in Canada. Various hot pepper varieties are be imported to Canada from Latin America and the Caribbean islands. Mexico is the largest supplier of peppers to Canada, followed by the United States and Honduras.

**Sweet Potatoes:** Sweet potatoes have gained popularity in Canada as a healthy alternative to regular potatoes. The market primarily seeks orange-fleshed, moist, and sweet varieties. The United States is the largest supplier of sweet potatoes to Canada, followed by China and Honduras.

Women exporters can tap into these opportunities by ensuring product quality, understanding market preferences, establishing relationships with importers, and exploring effective marketing strategies to promote their products' unique features.



### ***Processed Foods (Dried Fruits, Nuts and Spices)***

The Canadian food market presents promising opportunities for the export of dried fruits, nuts, and spices due to emerging consumer trends. Healthier eating habits have led to increased demand for prepared single-serving portions, while the reformulation of salad dressings and mayonnaise with organic products and new flavors creates niche markets for spices and herbs. Additionally, the popularity of fast food and

full-service restaurants has created a demand for sauces and condiments, and Canadian consumers also enjoy indulging in sweet snacks. Overall, the outlook for exporting these products to Canada is optimistic.

**Dried Fruits:** Dried fruits, such as raisins, dates, prunes, figs, apricots, and peaches, have a long history and are popular in various cuisines. They are categorized as part of the Vegetables and Fruit food group and can be a good source of antioxidants and iron. Women exporters can tap into the market for dried fruits by offering a variety of high-quality products, including traditional options and dried exotic fruits like mango and pineapple.

**Pulses:** Pulses are dried edible seeds of certain plants belonging to the legume family, including dry beans, dry peas, chickpeas, lentils, and more. They are high in protein and come in various forms, such as whole, split, ground into flour, or separated into fractions. Pulses have gained recognition for their nutritional value and environmental sustainability. Women exporters can explore the market for pulses by supplying different varieties and forms of pulses to meet the growing demand for plant-based protein sources.

**Rice:** Rice is a staple food consumed by diverse communities in Canada, including those from Asia, Africa, the Pacific, and the Caribbean. With the shift in demographic composition and the increasing appetite for ethnic foods, rice consumption is on the rise. Canada produces "wild rice" and imports various rice varieties for different culinary uses. Women exporters can target this market by offering specific rice varieties suitable for different dishes, such as long-grain for packaged mixes, medium-grain for breakfast cereals and desserts, and short-grain for sushi and other Asian cuisines.

**Spices, Herbs, and Spice Extractives:** The food industry in Canada relies on spices, herbs, and spice extractives for seasoning, condiments, and flavoring. These products are used by manufacturers of sauces, condiments, snacks, and baked goods. Women exporters can participate in this market by providing high-quality spices and herbs, both in bulk for wholesalers and retailers and in specialized blends to meet the demand for ethnic flavors. Building relationships with downstream wholesalers, food manufacturers, and retail markets can help expand the reach of these products.

For women exporters, focusing on product quality, offering a diverse range of options, and understanding the specific needs and preferences of target markets will be key to success. Developing relationships with buyers, understanding market regulations and certifications, and exploring opportunities to add value through processing or packaging can also enhance the export potential of these products.

## **Home Décor**

The following home decor trends in Canada present opportunities for women exporters:<sup>12</sup>

1. **Healthier Lifestyles:** The focus on healthy living has created a market for giftware and housewares that promote wellness, such as spa-inspired items, meditation/yoga accessories, and kitchen tools for healthy cooking.
2. **Ethical Sourcing and Sustainability:** Canadians are increasingly seeking products with ethical practices and sustainable origins. Women exporters can tap into this demand by offering environmentally friendly and locally sourced home decor products.
3. **Smaller Sizes and Living Spaces:** With the rise of smaller households and condominium living, there is a need for home decor and accessories tailored to compact spaces. Exporters can provide versatile and space-saving items that cater to the needs of urban dwellers.
4. **Bridal Market:** The bridal market remains a significant opportunity for housewares and giftware. Women exporters can target this market by offering a range of affordable and desirable items for wedding registries.

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<sup>12</sup> "Home Décor," TFO Canada, accessed June 20, 2023, [Home Decor - TFO Canada](#). 3

5. **Natural and Eco-Friendly Materials:** The use of natural and eco-friendly materials in home decor is a popular trend. Exporters can showcase products made from reclaimed or upcycled materials, as well as items that prioritize sustainability and environmental consciousness.
6. **Work from Home:** The shift to remote work and the increased frequency of working from home have had a significant impact on the Canadian home decor market in several ways.<sup>13</sup> The increased prevalence of working from home has led to a surge in demand for ergonomic and functional [home office](#) furniture and accessories in Canada. Canadians are seeking comfortable chairs, adjustable desks, storage solutions, and lighting that enhance productivity. The home office has become a space that people want to personalize, with a growing interest in stylish decor such as desk organizers, wall art, and decorative elements. Canadians are also investing in comfortable and cozy items like soft furnishings, cushions, throws, and rugs to create a warm and inviting atmosphere in their homes. Additionally, there is a growing demand for home organization and storage solutions, such as shelving units, storage baskets, and decorative containers, to maintain an organized living and working environment.

Overall, these trends offer women exporters a chance to provide innovative and socially conscious home decor products to the Canadian market.

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<sup>13</sup> “The Home Décor Retail Industry in Canada,” Retail Insider, accessed June 15, 2023, [The Home Decor Retail Industry in Canada \(retail-insider.com\)](https://retail-insider.com/the-home-decor-retail-industry-in-canada/)

# 3

# Business Culture and Canadian Buyer Expectations

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## The Canadian Buyer – SMEs

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Engaging Canadian buyers is crucial for exporting products to Canada. To generate interest, provide comprehensive information and build strong buyer-supplier relationships.

### *Who is the Canadian Buyer*

Canadian buyers of products exported to Canada can be categorized into various groups based on their industry, purchasing behavior, and market segment. Some common categories are:

1. **Importers/Agents:** Importers specialize in sourcing and importing products from foreign countries. They handle various aspects of the import process, including customs clearance, logistics, and distribution to local buyers or retailers. Importers possess extensive knowledge of the trade network and account for a large portion of imports from TFO client countries.<sup>14</sup>
2. **Brokers:** Brokers play an important role in the export process by acting as intermediaries between exporters and buyers. They help facilitate the transactions and help in connecting exporters with potential Canadian buyers. Brokers are knowledgeable about the market, industry trends, and the needs of buyers, which allows them to identify suitable matches for exporters.
3. **Business-to-Business (B2B) Buyers:** These buyers purchase goods and services for their own businesses or organizations. They can include companies from different industries such as hospitality, agriculture, technology, and more.
4. **E-commerce Platforms:** With the rise of online shopping, Canadian buyers also include individuals or businesses operating e-commerce platforms, where they sell products directly to consumers.
5. **Retailers:** These are companies that sell products directly to consumers through physical stores, e-commerce platforms, or a combination of both. They can include large retail chains, department stores, specialty stores, and online marketplaces.
6. **Chain Stores and Supermarkets:** Supermarkets offer a diverse selection of products, including a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and processed foods. Chain stores situated in areas with significant ethnic populations tend to have a broader range of options available. However, these stores are hesitant to directly purchase from foreign exporters due to concerns about inconsistent quality grading, sizing, and irregular deliveries.<sup>15</sup>
7. **Specialty Stores:** These include, Gourmet Food Stores, Health Food Stores, Wine and Liquor Stores, Pet Stores, Fashion Boutiques, Home Décor Stores and Craft and Hobby Stores. The

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<sup>14</sup> “Fresh Fruits and Vegetables,” TFO Canada, accessed June 13, 2023, [Fresh Fruits and Vegetables - TFO Canada](#).

<sup>15</sup> “Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, The Buyer,” TFO Canada, accessed June 13, 2023, [Fresh Fruits and Vegetables - TFO Canada](#).

buyers for Speciality stores range from Purchase Managers, Owner/Entrepreneur, Merchandisers, Wholesale buyers and independent representatives who often have established relationships with store buyers and can help pitch and sell products to them. Speciality Stores are a great source for small and medium sized exporters to Canada and as a woman exporter, you are encouraged to seek more specific information about buyers in the [TFO Canada's Market Information Papers](#) for free downloads.

8. **Distributors/Wholesalers:** Wholesalers and distributors purchase products in bulk from exporters and distribute them to retailers or other agents within the supply chain. They often have extensive networks and may operate in specific industries or regions.
9. **Manufacturers:** Canadian manufacturers may import raw materials, components, or equipment from other countries to support their production processes. They can be potential buyers of specific products needed for manufacturing operations.
10. **Government and Institutional Buyers:** Government agencies, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and other public entities require a wide range of products for their operations. They often have specific procurement procedures and requirements.

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## Relationship Building

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Building and maintaining healthy buyer-supplier relationships is crucial and advantageous for exporters. By prioritizing relationship building through networking, research, quality, communication, flexibility, customer service, collaboration, and support, small women exporters can cultivate strong and sustainable connections with Canadian buyers, thereby driving their success in the Canadian market. This importance extends across all sectors, as evidenced by a recent report analyzing buyer-seller relationships in the artisan and home decor sector, which is particularly popular among women exporters in TFO-supported countries. The report states that buyers and artisan businesses value relationships, the artisan producers, and the communities they impact.<sup>16</sup>

..... “Buyers and artisan businesses in the sector, in most cases, do not see trade as a transaction but a relationship to each other, to the handmade products, and to the artisan producers and the communities they impact.”

2021 Handmade Buyer Research Report. [Handmade Buyers Survey - Aid to Artisans \(creativelearning.org\)](#), June 2023

### **Strategies for Building Strong Relationships**

Here are some of the key points that will help you to show the potential customer that you are serious about establishing a long-term relationship.

**Research and Understanding:** Conduct thorough research to understand the Canadian market, including consumer preferences, cultural nuances, and market trends. Understanding and respecting cultural differences plays a big role in ensuring target customers are comfortable.<sup>17</sup>

**Establish Clear Communication Channels with Buyers:** The best way to develop strong relationships with buyers is to speak to them, and do not hesitate to ask questions when you are uncertain. Promptly respond to inquiries, provide timely updates, and address any concerns or questions they may have. Clear and transparent communication builds trust and fosters long-term relationships.

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<sup>16</sup> “2021 Handmade Buyer Research Report,” Aid to Artisans, accessed June 9, 2023. [Handmade Buyers Survey - Aid to Artisans \(creativelearning.org\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> International Trade Centre. “She Trades Beyond Your Borders: Export Guide for Women Entrepreneurs.” n.d.

**Build Trust:** Focus on delivering high-quality products and maintaining consistency in terms of product standards, packaging, and delivery timelines. Demonstrating a commitment to quality and reliability will enhance your reputation and foster trust with Canadian buyers.

**Be Flexible and Adaptable:** Be open to accommodating specific requirements or preferences of Canadian buyers. Flexibility in terms of product customization, packaging, or delivery options can help meet their needs and strengthen the buyer-supplier relationship.

**Collaborate and Support:** Seek opportunities for collaboration and partnership with Canadian organizations, industry associations, or business support networks. Building alliances and leveraging local networks can provide valuable insights, resources, and support you as a small and medium sized woman exporter.

**Be an Active Networker:** Actively participate in networking events, trade shows, and industry conferences where you can connect with potential Canadian buyers, industry professionals, and fellow exporters. Building relationships and establishing connections within the industry can open doors to new opportunities.

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## Cultural Diversity and Inclusion

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Canada is recognized as one of the most culturally diverse countries globally. Consequently, stakeholders expect to witness this diversity represented within the country's major companies.

In Canada, diversity and inclusion means respecting and valuing the unique characteristics and perspectives of individuals from different backgrounds. It involves creating an inclusive society where everyone is treated fairly and has equal opportunities, regardless of their differences in identity, culture, ability, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or language.<sup>18</sup>

According to a recent [report](#) that considered environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors, the Canadian stakeholders which includes buyers and consumers have a strong expectation for diversity and inclusion from companies they engage with. The number of companies outlining LGBTQ2+ inclusion policies increased from 18% in 2021 to 28% in 2022.

While gender and LGBTQ2+ inclusion remain important, stakeholders also expect companies to disclose their efforts in supporting Indigenous peoples, individuals with disabilities, and visible minorities. Meeting these expectations presents an opportunity for businesses to attract and retain Canadian buyers who prioritize diversity and inclusivity in their purchasing decisions. Additionally, buyers are interested in understanding how companies' inclusion and diversity policies influence their supply chain decisions, as this further demonstrates a commitment to equitable practices.

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## Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility

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### *Understanding Sustainability*

Sustainability encompasses environmentally and socially responsible practices across business operations and value chains. It holds significant importance in today's world due to the potential disruptions caused by climate change, resource depletion, and increasing food and energy demands. Governments, including the Government of Canada, have implemented regulations concerning packaging, labeling, and manufacturing claims to minimize such disruptions in the Canadian market.

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<sup>18</sup> “Guide to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology: an essential tool!” Government of Canada, accessed June 9, 2023, [The Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology: an essential tool! - Canada.ca](#),

## Sustainable Business Practices

Sustainability is also a key concern for many consumers. Recent that assessed consumer's attitudes towards sustainability describe the Canadian consumer as the conscious consumer. The study elaborates that 92% of Canadian consumers studies are more likely to think favorably of a company earning profits if they also have a positive impact on the world<sup>19</sup>. 44% of Canadian consumers make purchasing decisions based on ecological and socially responsible criteria.<sup>20</sup>

This presents an opportunity (and responsibility) for women business owners like you to develop a sustainability strategy, showcase and communicate the social, environmental, and economic practices implemented in your business. By emphasizing your commitment to sustainability, you can align with consumer values and establish a competitive advantage in the marketplace.



## Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) involves a business voluntarily engaging in economic, social, and environmentally sustainable practices. In today's business landscape, buyers are actively assessing the entire production process, from procurement to processing and waste disposal. To appeal to buyers, exporters should showcase their commitment to CSR by sharing their published CSR statements. Additionally, it is beneficial for exporters to prioritize working with vendors who share a similar level of compliance and commitment to sustainable practices.

When considering the establishment of your own corporate social responsibility program, it is essential to first identify the unique value your brand or company brings to the table. Aligning CSR programs strategically with your business model is crucial for their effectiveness and success.

Before showcasing your corporate social responsibility (CSR) statements or program, it is important to gage the added value your brand or company brings to the table. Alignment of CSR initiatives with your business model is key to ensuring their relevance and impact.

## Six Steps for Implementing a CSR Program

The following six steps below are recommended when implementing your CSR program:<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> "Consumers are more likely to buy from a brand with a strong purpose," Zeno Group, accessed June 11, 2023, [2020 Zeno Strength of Purpose Study](#).

<sup>20</sup> "Inside the mind of the conscious consumer," Retail Council of Canada, accessed June 13, 2023 [Inside the mind of the conscious consumer](#).

<sup>21</sup> "Corporate Social Responsibility Guide," TFO Canada, accessed June 15, 2023, [Corporate Social Responsibility Guide - TFO Canada](#).



### Telling Your Story

Now that you have the recommended steps in place for establishing your CSR strategy, you can tell your story (Step 5) in the following ways:

1. **Provide Certifications or Labels:** Obtain relevant certifications or labels that demonstrate your commitment to sustainability, such as organic certifications, fair trade certifications, or eco-friendly labels. Display these prominently on your product packaging or marketing materials. Below are examples of certification logos. Please consult with your local certifying agencies for more details. Learn more about labelling, packaging and certification of products by sector in TFO Canada's [Market Information Papers](#).



2. **Share**

**Sustainability Stories:** Share stories and case studies that showcase how your business prioritizes sustainability. Highlight examples of environmental stewardship, community

engagement, or social responsibility initiatives. Use storytelling to create an emotional connection with potential buyers.

3. **Transparent Supply Chain Information:** Provide transparency about your supply chain, including sourcing practices, ethical standards, and production processes. This helps potential buyers understand the sustainability of your entire value chain and builds trust in your business.
4. **Collaborate with Sustainability-Focused Organizations:** Partner with recognized sustainability-focused organizations or initiatives that align with your values. This collaboration can help enhance your credibility and demonstrate your commitment to sustainability.
5. **Engage in Sustainable Packaging:** Utilize sustainable packaging materials and practices, such as using recycled or biodegradable materials. Clearly communicate the eco-friendly nature of your packaging to potential buyers.
6. **Educate Potential Buyers:** Offer educational resources or materials that educate potential buyers about the importance of sustainability and how your products contribute to a more sustainable lifestyle. This can help them make informed decisions and appreciate the value of your sustainable offerings.



# 4

## Strategies for Successful Negotiation - Successfully Positioning Yourself with a Canadian Buyer

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### Researching the Buyer Needs

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Market research is essential for understanding your target market's preferences, buying behavior, and competition. Highlighting your product's unique value proposition and how it fills a gap sets it apart from competitors. As a woman exporter, researching and describing your target customers is crucial to tailor your marketing strategies. By gathering information about their needs, preferences, and behaviors through questioning and other research methods, you can create customer/buyer profiles and ensure a targeted approach when reaching potential customers/buyers in Canada. To learn more please refer to TFO Canada's website for more information on [Conducting Market Research](#) and [Market Research Methods](#).

### ***Successful Product Positioning***

What is successful product positioning?

Successful product positioning means strategically distinguishing your product, showing its unique benefits, and creating a positive perception among your target buyers/customers. By showcasing the value and advantages of your product, you can attract and connect with your intended buyers/customers setting yourself apart from competitors. A good way to start to position your product is to understand who your customer/buyer is.

### **Begin by asking the following questions:**

1. Who are the primary buyers of your product or similar products?
2. What purpose does your product serve, and what benefits do customers gain from purchasing it?
3. How does your product compare to similar products or services in terms of value and benefits?
4. Are comparable products or services primarily purchased through online platforms or retail stores?
5. What is the potential buyer's specific product interests or categories? Which types of products are they most interested in?
6. What are the importer's distribution channels? Do they primarily sell through online platforms, brick-and-mortar stores, or a combination of both?

By gathering information to answer these questions, you can effectively position your product to highlight its unique benefits, appeal to the target market, and stand out from competitors in the most relevant distribution channels.

## ***Buyer Profile - Describing Your Buyers***

After you understand best to position your product, the next logical step is to prepare a buyer profile. The more you know about your buyers/customers, the better will be your marketing efforts.

**When crafting a buyer profile as a woman exporter to Canada, consider the following points and incorporate them into your analysis:**

1. **Type of Buyer:** Determine the specific type of buyer you are targeting. This could be a retail store, distributor, wholesaler, or an individual consumer.
2. **Location of Buyer:** Identify the geographic location of your target buyer within Canada. This could be a specific province, city, or region.
3. **Annual Revenue:** Research and understand the approximate annual revenue of your target buyer. This will help you gauge their financial capacity and determine if they are a suitable fit for your products.
4. **Buyer Behavior:** Study the buying behavior of your target buyer. Look into their purchasing patterns, preferences, and decision-making processes. This will enable you to tailor your marketing strategies to meet their specific needs.
5. **Product Categories the Buyer is Interested In:** Identify the product categories or industries that your target buyer is most interested in. This will help you align your offerings with their preferences and increase the chances of capturing their attention.
6. **Product Gaps that Interest the Buyer:** Determine the specific product gaps or areas where your target buyer may have unmet needs or opportunities for improvement. Tailor your product offerings to address these gaps and position yourself as a valuable solution provider.
7. **How to Reach the Potential Buyer:** Identify the most effective channels to reach your potential buyer. This could include trade shows, industry events, online platforms, social media, or direct outreach. Craft your marketing and communication strategies to effectively engage and communicate with the target buyer through these channels.

By considering these points and including them into your buyer profile, you can develop a more targeted and effective approach when marketing your products to potential buyers in Canada.

Information about potential buyers can be found by using the following resources:

- **Canadian Importer's Database:** [In this database you can look up Canadian importers by product, city, and the country from which the product is imported.](#)
- **Trade Groups and Associations:** Trade groups and associations can provide information on buyers for specific products or groups of products. Most associations have a directory of businesses involved in import/export.
- **Business Magazines:** Are useful to track consumer trends and potential buyers.
- **Your Website:** Use tools such as "Contact Us" webforms to see how your customer interacts with you.
- **Your Own Sales Data:** Use the history of your sales to determine who your preferred buyers are.

Specific information on Canadian buyers by sector are detailed in [TFO Canada's Market Information Papers \(MIPs\)](#).

## ***Value Proposition – Communicating the Unique Value of your Product.***

## What is your unique value proposition?

Your unique proposition of your product tells your target customer in a distinct way the benefits your service or product will deliver. Your unique proposition is usually crafted in a statement or a few statements that positions your product or service by describing to the customers you aim to serve, the needs you fulfill and why you are the best choice. Developing a unique value proposition involves the following considerations.

### 1. Defining what need your product meets.

- **Customer Benefits:** Clearly communicate the specific benefits that your product provides to customers. How does it solve their problems or fulfill their needs? Focus on the value it brings to their lives or businesses.
- **Emotional Appeal:** Consider the emotional aspect of your value proposition. Understand the emotional needs and desires of your target audience and align your messaging to evoke positive emotions such as joy, confidence, or peace of mind. Connect with their emotions to strengthen the appeal of your value proposition.

### 2. Evaluating your product's uniqueness

- **Unique Selling Points:** Identify and articulate the unique features, benefits, or qualities of your product that set it apart from competitors. What makes it special or different? Highlight these points in your value proposition.
- **Target Audience Relevance:** Tailor your value proposition to resonate with your specific target audience. Understand their pain points, desires, and aspirations. Communicate how your product addresses their unique needs and why it's the best choice for them.
- **Clear and Concise Messaging:** Keep your value proposition simple, clear, and easy to understand. Use language that your target audience can relate to and avoid jargon or complex terminology. Clearly communicate the value your product delivers in a concise manner.

### 3. Being transparent about your products benefits and its drawbacks

- Provide evidence or proof that supports your value proposition. This can include customer testimonials, case studies, data, or awards. Showcasing real-world examples of how your product has benefited customers builds credibility and trust.

## Build your value proposition.

Now that you have defined, evaluated, and addressed the benefits and drawbacks of your product. Use the suggested outline to craft your value proposition.

<b>About your product</b>	<i>"Our product/service is for (target customers)"</i>
<b>Unique benefits that your product brings</b>	<i>"Who are unhappy with (state the situation or alternative product)"</i>
<b>Unique benefits that your product brings</b>	<i>"Our product is a (new product)"</i>
<b>What does your product provide</b>	<i>"That provides (state the solution solution)"</i>
<b>How it stands out from your competition</b>	<i>"Unlike (current alternatives)"</i>

Here is a likely example of a value proposition for Shea Butter using the outline provided.

*"Our shea butter skincare product is for individuals who want to nourish and hydrate their skin naturally. Unlike other moisturizers, our shea butter is sourced from the highest quality shea nuts, ensuring a rich and creamy texture that deeply moisturizes and rejuvenates the skin, leaving it soft, supple, and radiant."*

Here is another example of how this home décor business presents their unique proposition.

*"Woven Worldwide is a socially conscious home décor brand specializing in high-quality, eco-credentialed, handcrafted Bolga baskets for homes and interior spaces.*

*Each Bolga basket is meticulously crafted from elephant grass, a robust, renewable, tropical-scented grass that grows in bamboo-like clusters and does not require pesticides or fertilizers to grow."*<sup>22</sup>

*Handcrafted Bolga Baskets in Toronto, Canada – [Woven Worldwide](#)*

By crafting a compelling value proposition, you can effectively communicate the unique value of your product to your target audience and differentiate yourself in the market as a woman exporter.

## ***Building Rapport with the Buyer***

### **What is rapport?**

Rapport is establishing a personal or professional connection with someone. Building rapport with a buyer is crucial for business success in today's digital age. Building rapport goes beyond just buying and selling. It's about building trust, being a good listener, exercising trust and transparency, asking questions, being professional and fostering a long-term relationship.

**Being a Good Listener:** Pay attention to your customer's needs, concerns, and preferences. Practice active listening by giving them your full attention by asking clarifying questions.

**Exercising Trust and Transparency:** Be honest, reliable, and transparent in your interactions. Build trust by delivering on your promises, providing accurate information, and addressing any issues or concerns promptly.

**Being Professional:** Treat each customer as an individual. Take the time to understand their unique needs and tailor your interactions and solutions accordingly.

**Build Long-Term Relationships:** Promote long-term relationships by taking care of ongoing communication and engagement. Keep in touch with your customers by providing regular follow-ups and newsletters to maintain connections.

**Language and Communication:** Language and communication can sometimes become obstacles for exporters when dealing with buyers who speak different languages. In such situations, consider hiring a translator or utilizing services provided by trade associations to overcome these challenges.

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<sup>22</sup> "About Us," Woven Worldwide, accessed June 16, 2023, [Handcrafted Bolga Baskets in Toronto, Canada – Woven Worldwide](#).

By considering these points and implementing these strategies, women exporters can establish meaningful connections, build trust, and cultivate lasting relationships with buyers.

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## Business Image and Online Presence

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In today's digital world, your business image and online presence are vital for success.

It begins with building a strong brand, crafting a unique identity, and highlighting your value proposition. Engaging with your audience through social media is key to nurturing relationships and fostering brand loyalty. A user-friendly website not only enhances credibility but also ensures a seamless browsing experience. For your customers. Additionally, sharing your brand story creates an emotional connection with customers. By focusing on branding, social media relations, a user-friendly website, and storytelling, you can establish a compelling online presence that sets your brand apart and captivates your target audience.

### ***Branding: Maintaining a Consistent Identity that Reflects your Business Values and Mission***

Branding is maintaining a consistent identity that reflects your business values and mission.

A strong brand is crucial for making a lasting impression on customers. In today's competitive market, a great branding strategy helps ensure your business becomes the go-to source for their needs.

#### **To build a strong brand, start by answering these questions:**

1. **What makes my product or service unique?** Identify what sets your business apart from competitors in your target market. In doing so, think about what differentiates your product or service from others providing the same products or services to your target market.
2. **How can I be consistent?** Maintain a consistent brand image across all advertising and marketing efforts. Consult with professionals to help you craft clear and consistent messaging in your advertising tools, including your website.
3. **How can I identify my niche market?** By creating a niche for your business, you can concentrate your marketing efforts more effectively, saving time and money. It also allows you to understand your competitors' strengths and weaknesses and uncover opportunities for your business. Identify unfulfilled needs and areas where you can excel to find a specific focus for your business.
4. **Do I know and understand the unique qualities I want to bring to buyers?** By clearly understanding your product or service, you can successfully convey to potential buyers and customers what you bring to the table. Being authentic and transparent are crucial qualities that will support your efforts.
5. **How can I establish a strong presence on social media?** Utilize social media to connect with customers, provide valuable content, and stay engaged with your audience.
6. **What kind of reputation do I want for my business?** Aim for a positive reputation by being transparent, delivering on promises, and valuing your customers.



Addressing these questions can create a memorable and successful brand that resonates with your target audience.

## **Social Media in Business Relationships**

Social media allows you to connect with customers more closely than ever before. Facebook LinkedIn and Instagram are popular forms of media. (See Chapter for more discussion on communicating with social media). Below is a quote from a Canadian buyer who sources jewellery and tableware for suppliers across Africa.

*“I use Instagram as one tool for my research when looking for a new product. Instagram has opened more doors for exploring Africa and the offerings of the artisans. Instagram is part of the initial research and starts the conversation for consideration of moving forward. Over the course of the years in working with artisans and purchasing products for resale, I need to review the items through the lens of a customer. I do like to view the physical product, since sometimes the nuances are not there. For example, the clasp size on a necklace. If this is difficult to navigate, the customer will quickly pass as they have experienced the difficulty of this before and will not be interested.”*

Colette Leier, Business Owner, [Savuti.com](http://Savuti.com)

## **The Value of a User-Friendly Website**

A website is your modern-day brochure. According to a [recent study](#), customers of small businesses believe that a website is an important piece of a business’s online presence. While opinions may differ on the importance of websites in different regions of North America, having a website is generally regarded as valuable by all generations, including Gen Z, Gen Y, Gen X, and Boomers.<sup>23</sup>

Potential customers tend to head straight to your website to check you out. Therefore, it is a good idea to think about how can you make this process easiest for them and successful for you? Here are some tips:

1. Choose a web address (URL) that is short, memorable, and relevant to your product or service.
2. Ensure your website immediately conveys your brand identity with your name, logo, and a brief description at the top.
3. Ensure that navigation on your site is clear and user-friendly, with clearly labeled links and buttons.
4. Take advantage of the marketing potential of your website by offering visitors the option to create accounts and receive special offers. This allows you to collect valuable customer information, such as email addresses.
5. Be aware of legal requirements if you plan to sell directly through your website. These may include taxes collection for local customers and potential fees associated with credit card and online payment services.
6. Don’t forget a ‘call to action’ button. This is what you want visitors to the site to do. Some examples are: “Get a Quotation,” “Contact Us,” or “Click Here for More Info.”<sup>24</sup>

There are many tools available that will make the building of websites easy. Popular website builders such as Wix (for e-commerce stores), Weebly and Squarespace allows anyone with basic IT skills to piece together good looking and well functioning websites.<sup>25</sup> Suggestions for other website builders can be found [here](#).

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<sup>23</sup> “Websites, Branded Email Remain Key to SMB Internet Services,” Verisign Blog, accessed June 16, 2023, [Websites\\_BrandEmail\\_Key\\_SMB\\_Internet\\_Services.pdf \(verisign.com\)](#).

<sup>24</sup> International Trade Centre. “She Trades Beyond Your Borders: Export Guide for Women Entrepreneurs.” n.d.

<sup>25</sup> International Trade Centre. “She Trades Beyond Your Borders: Export Guide for Women Entrepreneurs.” n.d.

## ***Telling your Story***

Stories can provide a unique advantage for women exporters by connecting with customers emotionally. One example is the world-renowned Walt Disney Company which has successfully used storytelling to differentiate itself in the market. Research<sup>26</sup> shows that stories are more effective in communicating and engaging customers compared to lists of products. Stories have historically impacted the lives of people and is the key to engaging your customers.<sup>27</sup>

### **What to include in your story?**

When telling the story of your business online, there are several key elements you should include:

1. Begin with a compelling introductory statement that grabs the reader's attention and speaks to your unique [value proposition](#) or what sets you apart from your competitors.
2. Share your journey: Tell the story of how your business came into existence, including the challenges, inspirations, and milestones along the way. Describe the motivations and passion that drive you and your team.
3. Highlight your mission and values: Clearly articulate the purpose and values that guide your business.
4. Showcase customer success stories: Feature testimonials, case studies, or success stories from satisfied customers who have benefited from your products or services. This adds credibility and demonstrates the positive impact of products and services.
5. Introduce the key individuals behind your business, their expertise, and their roles. Highlight their qualifications and experience to build trust and credibility.
6. Incorporate visuals and multimedia: Use images, videos, and other visual elements to enhance your storytelling.
7. Call to action: Encourage your customers to take the next step by including a clear call to action. Whether it's signing up for a newsletter, making a purchase, or contacting your business, guide them towards the desired action.

Remember, storytelling is about creating an emotional connection with your audience, so tell your story in a way that connects with them and leaves a lasting impression.

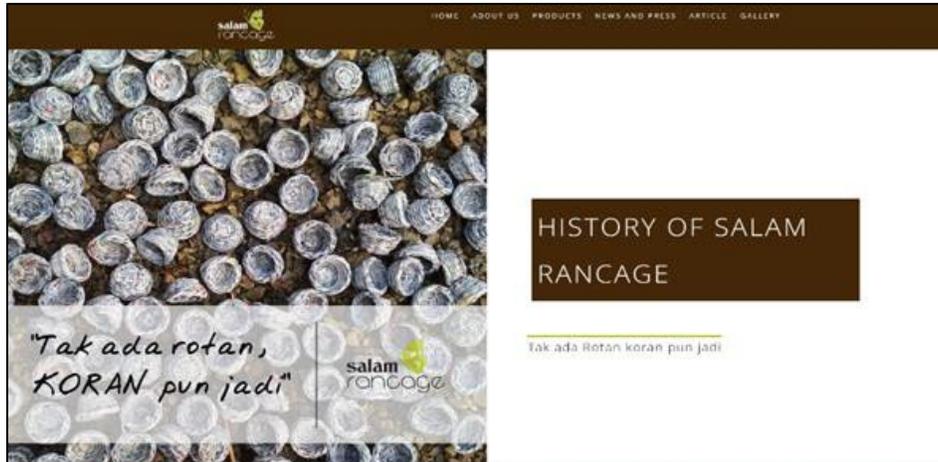
### **Examples of stories told by women led businesses who have successfully entered the North American market:**

Click the links below to see how some women led exporting businesses tell their stories.

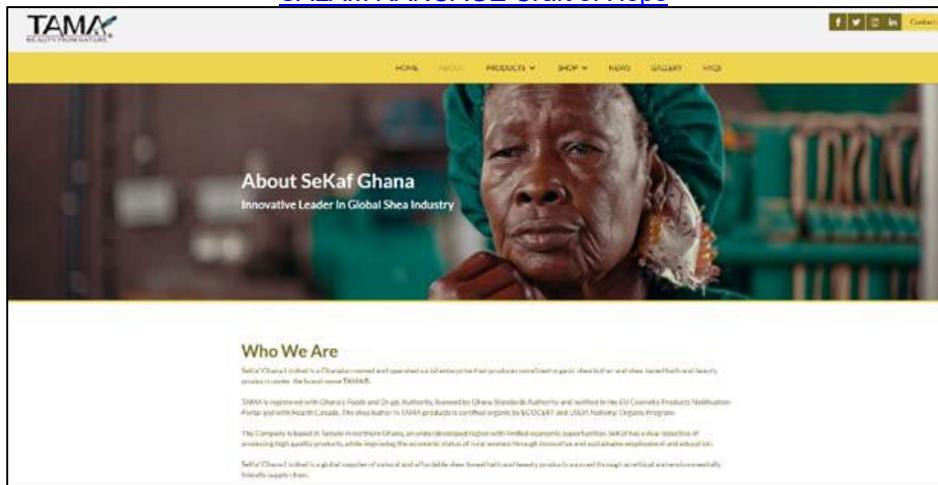
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<sup>26</sup> Herskovitz, Stephen, and Malcolm Crystal. "The essential brand persona: storytelling and branding." *Journal of business strategy* (2010).

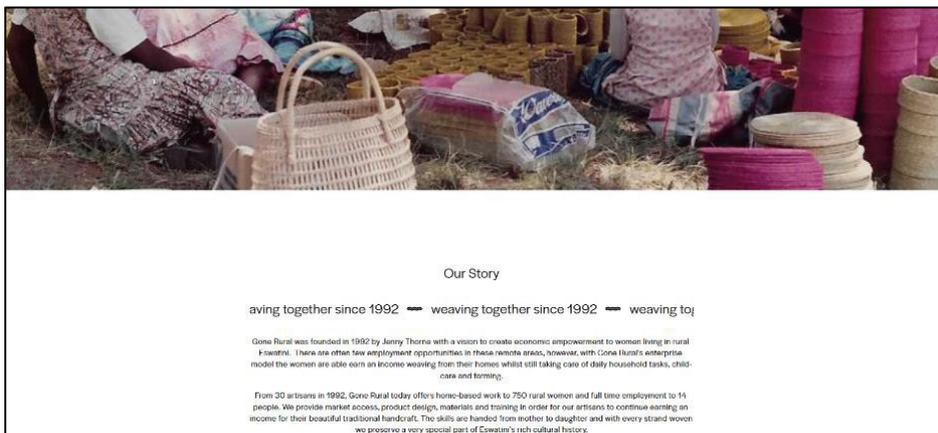
<sup>27</sup> "The power of storytelling, the key to consumer engagement," Globe and Mail, accessed June 16, 2023, [The power of storytelling, the key to consumer engagement | Media & Tech Network | The Guardian](#).



[SALAM RANCAGE Craft of Hope](#)



[Try Page \(tamacosmetics.com\)](http://tamacosmetics.com)



[Our Story — Gone Rural](#)

# 5 Learning to Communicate Effectively with Confidence

## Communication Strategies and Tools

Confident and effective communication plays a pivotal role in achieving business success. Whether you're connecting with customers through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, or engaging in emails and telephone conversations, the ability to convey your message clearly and to the point is of utmost importance.

Crafting a compelling value proposition allows you to differentiate yourself from competitors by highlighting the unique benefits your product or service offers. Additionally, a well-crafted elevator pitch ensures that you make a lasting impression in brief meetings with buyers. By mastering these communication techniques, you can confidently engage your audience, effectively present your value proposition, and establish meaningful connections that will boost your business.

### *Reaching your Customers, Your Value Proposition, and Elevator Pitch*

Imagine you have just one minute to attract a prospective customer and showcase the value of your products or services. Crafting a convincing elevator pitch is crucial for success, whether you're targeting Canadian or international buyers.

Here are a few points to help you create a compelling elevator pitch:

1. **Introduce yourself and your business:** "Hi, I'm [Your Name], and I represent [Business Name]."
2. **Clearly state what you do:** "We specialize in providing [describe your products or services briefly]."
3. **Highlight the customer's benefit:** "Our solutions are designed to help you [describe the specific value proposition]."
4. **Provide examples of the value you offer:** "For instance, our [product or service] can [mention a specific benefit or result]. This leads to [highlight another benefit]."
5. **Engage the customer with a question:** "Would you like to hear more about how our [product or service] can benefit your business?"
6. **Propose next steps:** "We can arrange a meeting at your convenience to discuss this further, or if you prefer, we can connect online for a presentation. Which option works best for you?"



### Example of an Elevator Speech

*Hi, my name is **(Name)** and I am excited to introduce you to our new brand of **(Name of Country)** Chili sauce to the market.*

*At **(Name of Business)** we've crafted this sauce using a traditional recipe passed down through generations, blending a variety of authentic **(Name of Country)** chili peppers to create a smooth balance of flavors.*

***(Name of Product)** is not only about heat, but its about you also having a new culinary experience. Our sauce adds a new taste to tacos, grilled meat, fish, and vegetables. We have won the hearts of international chefs and many food enthusiasts in **(Name of Country)** and would like to share this experience with you.*

**OR**

*Let's schedule a meeting to discuss further. **OR**  
Would you like to learn more about my sauce?*

Remember, the key to your elevator speech is to communicate your unique selling points, focusing on the customer's needs and the value they'll receive from your offerings. Practise your elevator speech with your family and peers to gain confidence and leave a lasting impression.

### Using social media – Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn

Social media has evolved into a powerful sales and marketing tool, far beyond its initial purpose of sharing personal photos and sending greetings. In today's digital landscape, social media holds immense value both personally and professionally, and in some cases, depending on the market and product you are offering, social media might be used in place of a website.<sup>28</sup> Recent reports highlight Canada as one of the leading countries in social media usage, with a high percentage of its population actively engaging on these platforms.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, seven out of ten Americans are regular social media users, indicating that a vast majority of your potential and existing customers are already present online.<sup>30</sup> This significant number of individuals includes Canadian buyers who collaborate with suppliers of various sizes, making it crucial for you to tap into this expansive digital audience.

To make the most of social media, it's important to develop a smart social media strategy.

Establish a successful social media presence, start by choosing the most suitable platform for your product and target audience. Popular options include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. It's important to focus on one or two platforms that you can effectively manage. Regardless of the platform you choose, incorporating videos and photos into your posts can increase engagement. Additionally, maintain professionalism by using correct spelling and grammar, as text lingo is not advisable.

### Dos And Don'ts of Using Social Media for Your Business:<sup>31</sup>

#### Dos:

<sup>28</sup> International Trade Centre. "She Trades Beyond Your Borders: Export Guide for Women Entrepreneurs." n.d

<sup>29</sup> "Social media usage in Canada – Statistics and Facts," Statista, accessed June 18, 2023, [Social media usage in Canada - Statistics & Facts | Statista](#).

<sup>30</sup> "How social media impacts consumer buying," Forbes, accessed June 18, 2023. [How Social Media Impacts Consumer Buying \(forbes.com\)](#).

<sup>31</sup> "25 Do's and Don'ts of Social Media for Business," Indeed, accessed June 18, 2023, [25 Do's and Don'ts of Social Media for Business | Indeed.com](#).

- **Complete Your Profile:** Optimize your profile by utilizing available templates and ensuring completion of all sections, including your value proposition, contact information, and website address. Outdated profiles harm credibility more than not having one at all.
- **Post Regularly:** When it comes to posting on social media, consistency is key. Prepare a posting schedule that allows you to plan your content in advance. By posting regularly, you increase the likelihood of your content appearing on the pages of your followers.
- **Consistency** in branding is vital for small businesses using social media. When selecting social media channels, it's recommended to focus on two platforms, for example, Facebook and Instagram. Maintaining a consistent brand image across these channels is crucial for establishing a recognizable and professional presence. To achieve this, use visual elements such as colors, fonts, and logos consistently across your social media profiles. This uniformity helps reinforce your brand's identity. Ensure that your posts align with your brand message and values, creating an organized and consistent experience for your audience.
- **Remember to keep personal and company accounts separate**, as using personal accounts for business purposes is unprofessional.
- **Be Authentic** and write engaging posts to keep your followers interested.

### Don'ts

- (Don't) use inconsistent branding.
- **Ignore Negative Comments:** Negative comments or feedback can be challenging to handle, but it's important not to ignore them. Ignoring negative comments can create a negative impression and damage your brand's reputation. Instead, address such comments promptly and professionally. Respond with empathy, seek to understand the concern, and provide a thoughtful and constructive response. This demonstrates your commitment to customer satisfaction and can even turn a dissatisfied customer into a loyal one.
- **Discuss Competitors:** While it's natural to be aware of your competition, it's best to avoid discussing or criticizing them directly on social media. Engaging in negative or confrontational conversations about competitors can reflect poorly on your brand and may even escalate tensions within the industry. Instead, focus on highlighting the unique value and strengths of your own business, positioning yourself as a confident leader in your industry.
- **Use Personal Social Media Account for Business:** It is very important that you keep your personal and company accounts separate. Many micro-businesses are owned and run by one person, who often use their personal social media account for business as well. This is not considered professional.<sup>32</sup>

By avoiding these "don'ts," as a business owner you can maintain a consistent brand image, effectively handle feedback, maintain professionalism, and position yourself positively within the market.

## HOW TO CREATE A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

**Set Your Goals:** Determine the main reasons for your social media presence and what you plan to achieve. Ask yourself, are you aiming to boost your competition, attract new customers or provide customer service.

**Determine Your Target Audience:** identify your target audience: Understand your audience and their preferred social media platforms. Focus your initial efforts on the platforms they are most receptive to, and experiment as you go.

**Content Strategy and Key Messages:** Create appealing content. Think about the type of content that will resonate with your target audience. Aim for a balance of entertaining and educational material, while avoiding excessive self-promotion. Develop key messages based on your market research, focus groups, or professional advice.

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<sup>34</sup> International Trade Centre. "She Trades Beyond Your Borders: Export Guide for Women Entrepreneurs." n.d

**Engagement Your Audience:** Show the human side of your brand and provide benefits such as information, advice, or entertainment. Periodically include direct calls to action, asking people to make a purchase, take advantage of a special offer, or sign up for your newsletter.

**Social Media Action Plan:** Determine who on your team will be responsible for making posts and how often. If you are the only member of your business, plan your schedule. Be aware that managing social media posts take time and can move you away from other key responsibilities. Be realistic.

**Publishing Schedule:** Manage your schedule. Regular updates, keep your audience engaged.

**Follow-up:** Revisit and update your social media strategy regularly.

These steps have been adapted from BDC's "[How to create a social media strategy for your business](#)"<sup>33</sup>

## ***Emails***

Of all of the online tools available to you, the email can prove to be most cost effective and time effective. Emails are useful for corresponding with a customer or potential customers. Use emails for sending out newsletters, mass mailing special offers or promotions, or even congratulatory notes to customers. When using emails, be mindful of oversaturating your customers' inboxes.

Using a professional email is crucial for conducting business in export markets. It enhances credibility and supports brand awareness. Setting up a business email is simple, either by purchasing a domain or using services like Google's G Suite. While there may be a cost involved, not using a professional email can result in significant business losses. In fast-paced markets, customers expect quick responses, and the average response time has become shorter due to smartphones. Studies show that 50% of emails receive a response within 2 hours. Consider whether the fast and professional response will come from you or your competitor. To manage response times effectively, prepare draft responses to frequently asked questions that can be quickly customized and sent. Having a "Frequently Asked Questions" page on your website can also reduce the number of customer emails. Maintain a friendly, polite, and professional tone, erring on the side of formality. Be cautious with humor, as it may not always translate well in writing. Avoid using jargon, text talk, and emoticons, and ensure there are no spelling mistakes. If you're targeting a market with a different language, hire staff members with the necessary language skills. When relevant, attach product descriptions, photos, or video clips to provide comprehensive and easy-to-understand information. Schedule follow-ups with potential customers who have shown interest in your product and consider implementing a customer relationship management (CRM) system to better track prospects in your business.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "How to create a social media strategy for your business," BDC, accessed June 18, 2023. [How to create a social media strategy | BDC.ca](#).

<sup>34</sup> International Trade Centre. "She Trades Beyond Your Borders: Export Guide for Women Entrepreneurs." n.d

# 6 Preparation for Export Promotion Activities to Canada

## Preparing for Export Promotion

### Trade Shows

#### What is a Trade Show?

A trade show is an event where businesses showcase their products or services to potential customers, partners, and industry professionals. It provides an opportunity for companies to promote their brand, network with others in the industry, and generate leads for potential sales or partnerships.

Typically, Canadian importers and retail buyers make annual visits to foreign markets and suppliers, often aligning these trips with major international trade shows. It is recommended to consult your agent, buyer, or the commercial counsellor at the Embassy to thoroughly evaluate the advantages and expenses associated with participating in trade shows.

*“Whether you’re an experienced exporter or just starting out, trade shows can be an important part of your business strategy. Making face-to-face connections with potential customers, suppliers or partners can help you expand into new markets, increase your sales, and raise your company profile.”*

Export Development Canada. June 2023

TFO Canada maintains a full list of trade shows on their [Events Calendar](#). In addition, details of trade shows by industry can be found in the extensive list of [Market Information Papers](#) on the TFO Canada website.

#### Types of Trade Shows

Trade shows vary based on the focus or the industry or sector, target audience, and purpose. Here are some common types:

**Sector-Specific Trade Shows:** These trade shows cater to specific industries such as technology, healthcare, fashion, automotive, food and beverage, construction, or agriculture. They provide a platform for companies within a particular sector to showcase their products and services to industry professionals and potential buyers.

The [Toronto Gift + Home Market](#) and the [Alberta Gift + Home Market](#) hosted by the Canadian Gift and Tableware Association. Each year, these exclusive trade events draw over 24,000 buyers from all over Canada. They showcase a wide range of products, including giftware, home décor, housewares, tableware, decorative accessories, home textiles, stationary, jewelry, and fashion accessories. The buyers who attend these shows typically consist of design showrooms and small boutiques operating in urban areas and rural regions throughout Canada.

[Toronto MODE Accessories Show](#)<sup>35</sup> Canada's only trade show devoted to women's fashion accessories, casual apparel, and fashion items. Mode Accessories is held semi-annually, in January and August.

[SIAL](#) Canada is the largest food innovation trade show in North America<sup>36</sup> and caters to the retail, food service and food processing industries. According to SIAL Canada,

*"The show is the only event of its kind in Canada, bringing together more than 1,000 national and international exhibitors from 50 countries and welcoming more than 20,000 professional visitors from Canada, the United States and 60 other countries."*<sup>37</sup>

Trade Shows for New Product Launches: Some trade shows focus on introducing new products or innovations to the market. These shows offer a platform to generate buzz, attract media attention, and gain exposure for the latest offerings.

**Trade Shows for New Product Launches:** Some trade shows focus on introducing new products or innovations. These shows offer a platform to generate buzz, attract media attention, and gain exposure to the latest offerings.

These shows are typically called "Innovate Expos" and, while not exclusively focused on product launches, bring together business leaders, policymakers, and innovators from various industries. Women exporters in STEM and Tech may find such shows valuable and a way to connect and network. [Tech Expo Toronto](#) is one such trade show.

**Virtual or Online Trade Shows:** With technological advancements and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual or online trade shows have gained popularity. These shows occur online, allowing exhibitors and attendees to connect virtually through interactive platforms, video conferencing, and digital showcases. [The Handmade Futures Summit](#) and Trade Show is an annual information-filled exhibition and learning event by Trade + Impact. This trade association supports women's craft and natural cosmetic sectors, focusing on women-led social enterprises in Africa and the Middle East. The virtual format allows women from all over the world to participate and meet buyers in North America.

**Consumer Trade Shows:** Consumer trade shows are open to the general public and are focused on showcasing products and services that appeal to consumers. These shows are often centered around interests such as home and garden, travel and tourism, lifestyle, electronics, or hobbies.

## PREPARING FOR TRADE SHOWS

For a woman exporter, thorough preparation is crucial for achieving success at a trade show.

Identify which trade show you want to attend. TFO Canada maintains a full list of trade shows on their [Events Calendar](#). In addition, details of trade shows by industry can be found in the extensive list of [Market Information Papers](#) on the TFO Canada website.

Research the Trade Show: Gather information about the trade show you plan to attend. Look into its theme, target audience, and the types of exhibitors that will be present. Understand the event's objectives and determine if it aligns with your business goals.

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<sup>35</sup> "Apparel and Textiles," TFO Canada, accessed June 20, 2023, [Apparel and Textiles - TFO Canada](#).

<sup>36</sup> "The largest food innovation trade show in North America," SIAL, accessed June 20, 2023, [About SIAL Canada | SIAL Canada](#)

<sup>37</sup> "The largest food innovation trade show in North America," SIAL, accessed June 20, 2023, [About SIAL Canada | SIAL Canada](#)

## BEFORE THE SHOW

1. **Set Clear Objectives:** When participating in a trade show, it's important to define your goals, whether it's to boost brand visibility, generate leads, secure distribution partners, or explore new markets. Clear objectives will guide your efforts and allow you to gauge your achievements. *It's worth noting that attending a trade show without a booth is acceptable and can serve as a valuable opportunity to gather marketing insights and firsthand experience, helping you prepare for future trade show engagements.*
2. **Plan:** After choosing the right trade show, create a plan to meet your objectives. Include a timeline for tasks like creating a budget and seeking financial support from your local trade associations. Put a team together and start to design and order promotional material. Give yourself enough time and start preparing early. If you are planning to attend a trade show out of country, seek assistance from your local export support associations to gather as much information on cross-border regulations and requirements for your product.
3. **Prepare Marketing Material:** Create professional marketing materials that highlights your company profile. This material can be brochures, product catalogs, business cards, and flyers. These should highlight your products, services, and contact information. Consider translating them into multiple languages if needed.
4. **Design an Attractive Booth:** Your booth is the face of your company at the trade show, so invest time and effort into making it visually appealing. Use banners, signage, and displays that effectively communicate your brand identity and product offerings. Ensure your booth stands out amidst the competition. Enquire about renting a booth as it may difficult and costly to transport across borders.
5. **Train Your Staff:** Engaging with visitors is key, so train your staff how to engage with visitors, answer questions and handle sales enquiries effectively. Train your team on product features, benefits, and unique selling points.
6. **Arrange Appointments in Advance:** Reach out to potential, buyers, or partners before the trade show and schedule appointments to discuss business opportunities. This ensures that you maximize your time and make valuable connections during the event.



## DURING THE SHOW

At the trade show, your main goals should be making sales and building connections with buyers and potential buyers. To achieve this, you and your team should actively engage with visitors, offer product demonstrations, and gather market information about your competitors. This is a critical time for your business, so it's important to have a clear understanding of each team member's responsibilities at the booth. Consider implementing a rotating schedule but ensure that someone is always available at the front of your booth to greet and interact with visitors.

## AFTER THE SHOW

1. **Follow-Up and Follow Through:** After the trade show, be diligent in following up with leads, contacts, and potential customers. Send personalized emails, make phone calls, or schedule meetings to nurture the relationships you established during the event.
2. **Evaluate Your Performance:** Once the trade show is over, assess your performance against the objectives you set. Measure the success of your participation in terms of leads generated, sales closed, new partnerships formed, or brand exposure achieved. Identify areas for improvement and incorporate lessons learned into future trade show preparations.



## Buyer Missions

### What is a Buyer Mission?

Buyer missions, also known as trade missions or buyer delegations, are organized trips where buyers from one country visit another country to explore business opportunities and connect with local suppliers. These missions are facilitated by government organizations, trade associations, or chambers of commerce to promote international trade.

Buyer missions aim to help buyers find potential suppliers or manufacturers in foreign markets. They involve face-to-face meetings, negotiations, and the establishment of business relationships. These missions provide benefits for both buyers and sellers. Buyers can discover new products, assess quality, negotiate prices, and build relationships. Sellers can showcase their offerings, expand their market reach, secure sales agreements, and establish partnerships.

### Connecting with Buyer Missions

**Canadian Embassy:** The Canadian Embassy in your country may have advance notification of Canadian buyer visits and can help arrange business meetings. Contact information for embassies abroad is available from the [Canadian Trade Commissioner Service](#).<sup>38</sup>

TFO Canada organizes many buyer missions in collaboration with local trade associations and government export promotion councils.

For a full list of upcoming buyer missions, you may also consult the TFO Canada [Events Calendar](#).

## PREPARING FOR BUYER MISSIONS

### Do the following when preparing for Buyer Missions

1. **Identify Buyers:** Work with your local trade association, government agency or trade offices to invite qualified buyers. Screen and select based on their interest.
2. **Showcase Your Offerings:** Create an attractive display at a trade show or exhibition that effectively represents and communicates the value of your product.
3. **Customize Engagement with Buyers:** Tailor approach to each buyer, highlighting unique features that align with their needs. Provide demonstrations or samples if necessary.
4. **Schedule meetings:** Arrange one-on-one meetings or networking sessions to discuss opportunities, build relationships, and understand buyer requirements.
5. **Follow-up:** Collect contact information and send personalized messages expressing interest in further collaboration. Share additional information or documents as needed.
6. **Be hospitable:** Welcome buyers warmly, offer comfort, and hospitality to enhance relationships.



<sup>38</sup> "Importer Connect," TFO Canada, accessed June 20, 2023 [Importer Connect - TFO Canada](#)

## Exporter Missions

### What are Exporter Missions?

An Exporter Mission is an excellent way of promoting and selling your products in the target market. While the main objective of an exporter mission is to establish contacts which lead eventually to firm commercial cooperation with buyers, another important objective is to learn more accurately about the market, and how to approach it, by experiencing it firsthand.

Exporters should approach a mission with a view to the long term and focus on market research, developing your market plan and establishing working relations with Importers and buyers. Visiting the market enables you to learn about the current situation and conditions for your product – the competition, trends, the retail picture, etc. – so that you can better evaluate how to market your product, where your product fits in and whether there is need to rework, adapt, market differently, or otherwise rework your product and marketing approach.<sup>39</sup>

### Who organizes Exporter Missions?

Exporter missions are often coordinated by Associations, Trade Promotion Organizations, or the trade offices of local Embassies or High Commissions in the target market. They are typically organized alongside trade events in the respective country. Registering your company and objectives with these entities will keep you informed about relevant activities related to your product sector. Some missions may involve cost sharing, so it's crucial to accurately identify and plan for these expenses in advance.

Private companies in both domestic and target markets also organize trade missions. You can find such companies through online searches or by contacting your country's trade missions abroad. Contacting these companies will help you understand the costs associated with organizing an exporter mission. Consider forming a group of companies from your country to share the costs, ensuring they offer complementary products without direct competition in the same market segments.

### Do the following when preparing for Exporter Missions:

Get familiar with Travel Plans and Regulations. Ensure your passport is valid and inquire about visa requirements. Check the Mission organizers' information and take necessary steps to meet the requirements.



1. **Know the Custom Requirements:** Have adequate samples representing your full line. For Canada, check [www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca](http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca) for sampling requirements. Other countries' customs requirements can be found on respective Customs Bureau websites.
2. **Refine Your Pitch:** Create a compelling and concise elevator pitch tailored to the needs of target buyers.
3. **Arrange Appointments:** Contact potential buyers in advance to schedule meetings or secure spots in matchmaking sessions or B2B meetings.
4. **Train Your Team:** Provide thorough training on products, selling points, and buyer preferences if traveling with a team.

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<sup>39</sup> “Exporter Missions,” TFO Canada, accessed June 20, 2023, TFO Canada. [Exporter Missions - TFO Canada](#).

5. **Follow-Up Plan:** Develop a strategy to stay in touch with potential buyers after the mission. Collect contact information and send personalized follow-up messages.
6. **Practice Cultural Awareness:** Learn about local customs and etiquette. Respectfully follow them during meetings and networking events.
7. **Stay Updated:** Keep track of mission updates, schedule changes, and additional networking opportunities. Stay informed through official communications and adjust your preparation accordingly.

## SMART REMINDERS

### FOR WOMEN EXPORTERS WHEN TRAVELLING ABROAD

#### Family Matters

Prepare your children for your absence; Tell your children the details of where you are going and why; Tell your children what day you are back.

Set a time each day to video call or telephone. When informing caregivers about your absence, provide dates, duration, contact information, itinerary (if applicable), emergency contacts, special instructions, reassurance, gratitude, and encourage open communication. Tailor the communication to your situation and use platforms like WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger for free calls.



#### Travel Documents



Make copies of important travel documents, passport, visa letters, airline tickets, insurance vaccine certifications. Check the number of copies required by customs and immigration before you travel before you travel

Keep s copy of each securely at home and the rest in your personal luggage (Use transparent plastic folders). Pack business cards and relevant documents in your carry-on.

#### Money Matters

Make sure you know the exchange rate of the country you are travelling to. Exchange money at the airport before boarding. While credit cards are widely used, it may always be possible to use them in some transit destinations). You may need cash.



#### What to Take on the Plane

Liquids are restricted to travel size (100ml). Do not bring large bottles of cream, liquids in your carry-ons. Do not exceed the carry-on bag size requirements. These are strict rules, if not adhered to can result in undue delays during your travel. Pack a change of clothing, important items such as medication, travel size cosmetics are needed just in case your suitcase does not arrive with you. It happens. Drink lots of water to stay hydrated during flights. Keep travel sized lotion for your skin.

#### What To Wear



When travelling, wear comfortable clothes and shoes such as sneakers as airports are large and you will be doing a lot of walking.

**At Trade Fairs:** Business attire: Choose professional clothing like tailored suits, blazers, dress pants, or skirts. Comfortable shoes: Trade fairs involve lots of walking, so wear comfortable shoes. Accessories: Select complementary accessories that don't overpower your outfit. If you're in the accessories sector, showcase how your products complement business attire.

**Note:** Smart Reminders, contributed by Julie Nixon, [Fair and Square, Eswatini.](#)

# 7 Preparing Export Documentation: Pricing, Incoterms and Logistics – Preparing for Exporting

## Pricing

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### ***Developing a Pricing Strategy***

What is pricing?

As a business owner, pricing is the strategy you use to decide how much to sell your products or services for. It is an important part of marketing, along with the product, advertising, and distribution (often called the four Ps of Marketing: **Price, Product, Promotion, and Placement**). The price you set is influenced by the costs of production, advertising, and distribution of your product.

When setting your price, consider your market objectives, such as entering a new market, seeking long-term growth, or finding an outlet for surplus production. Also, research the competition.

For exports, strategic pricing is crucial for achieving financial success. It can be complex, so it deserves careful attention when entering a new market. Consider not only domestic costs like production and product adaptation but also additional expenses like transportation, customs duties, insurance, labeling, packaging, and freight forwarders' fees. Assess the risks associated with international markets, such as competition and market demand. By thoroughly analyzing your costs and the conditions in your target market, you can determine a realistic export price that ensures a suitable profit margin.<sup>40</sup>

Common methods of export pricing

#### **Full-Cost Pricing (Cost Based Pricing)**

In this pricing strategy, a business begins by calculating the cost of producing a product. Then, they apply a markup to each unit, taking into consideration factors such as your desired profit, your sales goals, and the customer expectations. For instance, if the cost of producing your product (domestic costs) is one dollar and the company aims for a 10-percent profit margin, the selling price is determined to be \$1.10.

**Disadvantage.** This strategy does not consider your competition in the marketplace.

#### **Domestic Costs Plus Markup**

With the "Domestic Costs Plus Markup" approach, you begin with your local price and remove any expenses that are not relevant to exporting. Then, you add costs specifically associated with exporting, such as transportation, export labels, and export packaging.

**Disadvantage.** This method is simple to use but does not consider the competitive dynamics of the market.

#### **Flexible Pricing**

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<sup>40</sup> "Four Ps of Marketing Plan: Price," TFO Canada, accessed June 20, 2023, [Four Ps of the Marketing Plan: Price - TFO Canada](#).

Adjusting prices for different types of customers, for example offering discounts for larger volume orders<sup>41</sup>.

### Skim Pricing (Market Skimming)

Market Skimming involves setting a high price for a product to maximize profits from high-end consumers when there is limited competition.

This strategy works well when your product is new to the market and there is little competition.

### Penetration Pricing

Penetration Pricing is a strategy where you set a low price to attract a larger customer base, deter competitors, and swiftly gain market share. However, it is important to note that pricing below cost may invite challenges, such as anti-dumping complaints from domestic manufacturers. Additionally, raising prices in the current market can be challenging.

### Static Pricing

Charging the same price (perhaps modified by freight cost differences) to all to all customers regardless of volume.<sup>42</sup>

Choosing a pricing strategy

Choosing a pricing strategy that works for you can take time. While the Full Cost Pricing strategy is a preferred strategy by many SMEs because of its simplicity, remember there are other options. Connecting with like minded women entrepreneurs like yourself online or at in-country trade associations present a useful resource to learning about choosing a suitable pricing strategy. Know your ideal customer and what they can afford and are willing to pay.

Avoid making pricing mistakes.

1. Have a clear strategy and stick to it.
2. Accurately calculate costs.
3. Emphasize value, not just low price.
4. Regularly evaluate and adjust your strategy.
5. Consider market entry factors and regulations. Obtaining certifications (e.g., organic) may increase production costs, so account for these costs and the time required.

### Calculating your price

Determine your costs, select a pricing strategy, and set a competitive price for your product to achieve a desired profit margin. You can use this [Export Pricing Worksheet](#) as a helpful tool in this process.

<b>1</b>	<b>Product Costs per unit</b>	
	Labour	
	Factory Overhead	
	Administration	
	Export Administration Costs	
	Advertising, promotional material	
	<b>Total Product Cost</b>	

<sup>41</sup> “Four Ps of Marketing Plan: Price,” TFO Canada, accessed June 20, 2023, [Four Ps of the Marketing Plan: Price - TFO Canada](#).

<sup>42</sup> “Four Ps of Marketing Plan: Price,” TFO Canada, accessed June 20, 2023, [Four Ps of the Marketing Plan: Price - TFO Canada](#).

<b>2</b>	<b>Export Cost</b>	
	Crating	
	Special Labelling and Packaging Charges	
	Marking Charges	
	Loading and Strapping Charges	
	Forwarding	
	Documentation	
	Product Insurance	
	<b>Sub-Total, Export Cost</b>	
	Add targeted profit	
	<b>Basic Selling Price</b>	
	Add Agents commission (if applicable)	
	Add Bank Interest on Term Sale	
	<b>Ex-Works Sales Price</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Export Shipping Costs (your country currency)</b>	
a	Inland Freight	
b	Wharfage charge	
	<b>Total (f.o.b port)</b>	
	Add	
	airfreight	
	marine freight	
	insurance	
	Total c.i.f. port of entry (your currency)	
<b>4</b>	<b>Convert to USD and/or target market currency</b>	
	<b>show exchange rate used</b>	

Stay abreast with news about your competition.

Consult [TFO Trade News](#) for regular updates on the Canadian market, your competition, and tips on pricing.

## Negotiating Price

Negotiating price is a crucial skill for women exporters, particularly in today's male-dominated marketplace. Despite progress in gender equality, women still face gender and other forms of discrimination that can make the negotiation of prices a challenging and sometimes daunting experience.

To effectively negotiate your price as an exporter, thorough preparation is essential. It is important to strike a balance between accommodating the buyer's needs and maintaining your position to ensure that the eventual sale of your products is profitable and does not result in losses.

In any successful negotiation, both the buyer and the seller must be willing to make concessions. It is crucial to enter the negotiation with a mindset of flexibility and be prepared to give and take. This approach allows for a collaborative atmosphere and increases the chances of reaching a mutually beneficial agreement.

However, in the worst-case scenario where the buyer pushes the perceived and calculated value of your product to a price that is lower than your cost of production, promotion, and getting the product to the buyer, you must be prepared to say no. It is essential to have a clear understanding of the value of your product, its associated costs, the prevailing market prices, and a good grasp of the overall market conditions.

Listening to your buyer is another vital aspect of successful negotiation. By attentively listening to their needs, concerns, and perspectives, you can identify areas of common interest and explore creative solutions that meet both parties' requirements.

Effective communication and active listening skills play a significant role in building rapport and fostering a positive negotiation environment.

It is important to maintain composure throughout the negotiation process. Emotions can run high, but it is crucial to remain calm, professional, and focused on the task at hand. Keeping a cool head allows you to think clearly and make rational decisions that benefit your business interests.

# TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION OF PRICES



## 1 CONFIDENCE

Believe in the value of your product and your abilities as a negotiator.



## 2 PREPARATION

Thoroughly research the market, competitors, and costs associated with your product.



## 3 KNOW YOUR WORTH

Understand the unique selling points of your product and its value proposition.



## 4 COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

Make your points clearly, and actively listen, ask relevant questions.



## 5 MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS

Stay calm and positive during discussions



## 6 BE FLEXIBLE

Be open to compromise and explore alternative solutions that benefit both yourself and the buyer.

## **Commonly Used Incoterms**

What are incoterms?

Incoterms are internationally recognized trade terms, guidelines and standards established by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) for commercial transactions.<sup>43</sup>

These terms are widely utilized in both international and domestic sales contracts, serving to prevent misunderstandings by providing clarity regarding the tasks, expenses, and risks associated with the import, export, and transportation of goods. Incoterms define the specific responsibilities of buyers and sellers, including aspects such as loading, delivery, insurance, documentation, tariff payments, and various other related factors.

Why should women exporters be concerned about incoterms?

- ✓ Clear communication. Incoterms ensure clear communication in trade contracts by establishing a standardized language. Using the same terms ensures mutual understanding, minimizing misunderstandings and disputes.
- ✓ Incoterms help to minimize the risks involved in exporting by determining who is responsible for which costs.
- ✓ Incoterms aid in ensuring legal compliance. Adhering to the appropriate Incoterm helps businesses fulfill documentation, licensing, and regulatory obligations in different countries.
- ✓ Incoterms assist in logistics and supply chain planning by defining delivery terms and when the buyer's responsibility begins for goods.
- ✓ By understanding the relevant Incoterm, businesses can make informed decisions regarding shipping methods, packaging needs, and delivery schedules. This level of planning enhances supply chain efficiency, reduces costs, and enhances customer satisfaction.

There are currently 11 sets of incoterms.<sup>44</sup>

### **Incoterms for sea and inland waterway transport**

1. EXW (Ex Works): The seller makes the goods available at their premises, and the buyer is responsible for all transportation and customs clearance.
2. FCA (Free Carrier): The seller delivers the goods to a carrier, or another person nominated by the buyer at a specified location. The buyer assumes responsibility from that point onward.
3. CPT (Carriage Paid To): The seller arranges and pays for transportation to the named destination, but the risk transfers to the buyer upon delivery to the carrier.
4. CIP (Carriage and Insurance Paid To): Similar to CPT, but the seller also includes insurance against the buyer's risk of loss or damage during transportation.
5. DAT (Delivered at Terminal): The seller delivers the goods, unloaded, at a specific terminal (such as a port or warehouse), and is responsible for the import clearance.
6. DAP (Delivered at Place): The seller is responsible for delivering the goods to a named place, excluding import clearance. DDP (Delivered Duty Paid): The seller is responsible for delivering the goods to the buyer, including import clearance and payment of any applicable duties and taxes.
7. DDP. (Delivered Duty Paid): Seller delivers by placing goods at buyer's disposal, cleared for import with duties paid and ready for unloading at named place.

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<sup>43</sup> "International commercial terms," BDC, accessed June 20, 2023. [What are International Commercial Terms? \(Incoterms\) | BDC.ca.](#)

<sup>44</sup> "Incoterms 2020," International Chamber of Commerce, accessed June 20, 2023, [Incoterms® 2020 - ICC - International Chamber of Commerce \(iccwbo.org\).](#)

## Incoterms for sea and inland waterway transport.

8. FAS (Free Alongside Ship): The seller places the goods alongside the vessel at the port of shipment. The buyer is responsible for loading, transportation, and any subsequent costs.
9. FOB (Free on Board): The seller is responsible for delivering the goods on board the vessel at the port of shipment. The buyer assumes responsibility once the goods are on board.
10. CFR (Cost and Freight): The seller arranges and pays for the transportation to the port of destination. The buyer is responsible for the risk and costs from that point onward.
11. CIF (Cost, Insurance, and Freight): Similar to CFR, but the seller also includes insurance against the buyer's risk of loss or damage during transportation.

It is important to note that Incoterms can vary over time, so it's recommended to consult the latest version of the ICC's Incoterms rules to ensure accuracy and compliance with current practices.

### Commonly used Incoterms

Below are some commonly used Incoterms and exporting scenarios.

**The Case:** Suppose you are an avocado exporter based in South Africa, and you have agreed to sell a shipment of avocados to a buyer in Canada, here are the scenarios for the most commonly used Incoterms.

1. FOB: Seller's responsibility ends when avocados are loaded onto the vessel in South Africa.
2. DDP: Seller is responsible for delivering avocados to the buyer's location in Canada, including all costs.
3. EXW: Seller's responsibility ends when avocados are made available at the agreed location in South Africa.
4. CIF: Seller is responsible for delivering avocados to the buyer's port of destination in Canada, including transportation and insurance.
5. FAS: Seller's responsibility ends when avocados are delivered alongside the vessel in South Africa, with the buyer assuming further transportation costs to the destination port in Canada.

## USING THE FOB INCOTERM AN EXAMPLE

Suppose you are an avocado exporter based in South Africa, and you have agreed to sell a shipment of avocados to a buyer in Canada using the F.O.B Incoterm. Here is how the process may unfold.

### Preparing the Shipment:

You ensure that the avocados are harvested, sorted, and properly packaged for export, complying with all relevant quality and regulatory standards.

### Loading at the Port of Origin:

Once the avocados are ready, you deliver them to the agreed port of origin in South Africa, such as Durban or Cape Town. At the port, the avocados are loaded onto the designated vessel. From this point, the buyer takes ownership and responsibility for the goods.

### Loading at the Port of Origin:

Once the avocados are ready, you deliver them to the agreed port of origin in South Africa, such as Durban or Cape Town. At the port, the avocados are loaded onto the designated vessel. From this point, the buyer takes ownership and responsibility for the goods.

### Transportation and Insurance:

The buyer arranges and covers the costs of transporting the avocados from the port of origin in South Africa to the destination port in Canada. They also secure insurance coverage to protect the goods during transit.

### Customs Clearance & Delivery at Port

The buyer handles all customs clearance procedures, including documentation, import duties, taxes, and compliance with Canadian regulations and requirements.

Once the vessel arrives at the destination port in Canada, such as Vancouver or Toronto, the buyer takes care of unloading the avocados and arranging for their distribution within Canada.

## ***Transportation and Logistics***

### Making Transportation Plans

**Transportation** refers to the physical movement of goods or people from one location to another. It involves the movement of goods or individuals by various modes of transportation such as road, rail, air, sea, or a combination of these modes. Transportation is essential for the efficient and timely delivery of goods and plays a critical role in supply chain management.

When planning for transportation in export, here are key considerations to keep in mind:

1. **Packaging and Documentation:** Ensure proper packaging and compliance with safety regulations. Prepare necessary export documents such as invoices, packing lists, certificates of origin, and permits.
2. **Mode of Transportation:** Choose the appropriate transportation mode based on your product type. For example, sea transportation may be suitable for artisan products and processed foods. Consider specific guidelines for transportation, packaging, and handling requirements. In the case of fresh fruits for example, the International Fresh Fruit Association has issued a document on [Fresh Fruit Transportation Best Practices](#).
3. **Transportation Costs:** Calculate costs associated with each mode and shipping route. Include freight charges, fuel costs, handling fees, customs fees, and any additional surcharges or taxes.
4. **Container Utilization:** Determine if you have enough products to fill a shipping container. Sharing containers with other exporters can reduce costs, particularly for apparel and artisan goods. For example, women in the apparel and artisan trade from some TFO supported countries have shared containers for collectively reduce shipping costs. This is a business decision and works well when shipping and handling responsibilities are well worked out amongst exporters.
5. **Insurance Coverage:** Evaluate the need for insurance to protect against loss, damage, or theft during transportation. Consider the value of goods, transportation mode, and associated risks.
6. **Customs Compliance:** Understand and comply with customs requirements in both origin and destination countries. Be familiar with customs documentation, import/export restrictions, trade agreements, tariffs, and any necessary certifications or procedures.

**Please refer to [TFO Canada's Market Information Papers](#) for specific advice on transportation based on product types.**

### **Export Logistics**

**Export logistics** involves the efficient movement of goods and information from the source to the point of consumption. It is crucial to study, understand, and address all aspects of logistics as part of your foreign market strategy before pursuing new clients. Non-tariff barriers to trade, such as documentation, certification, customs clearance, packaging, and storage, can affect the product's journey to the market. Developing a tailored logistics plan helps navigate these barriers and gain a competitive advantage. Once you receive an order, you must deliver the product according to specifications, in good condition, and on time. Seeking support from logistics service providers like freight forwarders and customs brokers can be invaluable in ensuring success by handling complexities and allowing you to focus on production and other business aspects.<sup>45</sup>

Considerations after you receive an order.

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<sup>45</sup> "Moving Your Products: Distribution and Export Logistics," TFO Canada, accessed June 24, 2023, [Moving Your Products: Distribution and Export Logistics - TFO Canada](#).

- Will you need export permits?
- What sort of export declaration must you make?
- How will you ship the product (road, rail, air, sea)?
- Who will cover insurance?
- Do you have to warehouse it somewhere?
- What are your planned terms of trade (INCO terms)?

### **Logistics Plan using FOB Incoterm – An Example**

In a logistics plan for shipping avocados FOB (Free on Board) from South Africa, the responsibilities are typically divided between the buyer and the seller.

#### **Seller's Responsibilities:**

1. **Harvesting and Sorting:** The seller is responsible for harvesting and sorting the avocados according to quality standards.
2. **Packaging:** The seller must properly pack the avocados in suitable containers to ensure their freshness and prevent damage during transportation.
3. **Transportation to Port:** The seller is responsible for arranging and covering the costs of transporting the avocados from the farm to the designated port of departure in South Africa.
4. **Port Handling:** The seller is responsible for ensuring the smooth loading of avocados onto the vessel at the designated port in South Africa.
5. **Export Documentation:** The seller is responsible for preparing and providing all necessary export documentation, such as commercial invoices, packing lists, and certificates of origin.
6. **Customs Clearance in South Africa:** The seller must complete all required customs procedures and documentation in South Africa for the export of the avocados.
7. **Payment of Local Charges:** The seller is responsible for paying any local charges associated with the avocados until they are loaded onto the vessel.

#### **Buyer's Responsibilities:**

1. **Shipping Arrangements:** The buyer is responsible for booking and paying for the shipping services, including engaging a shipping company or freight forwarder to handle the transportation process.
2. **Insurance Coverage:** The buyer is responsible for obtaining insurance coverage for the avocados during transit to protect against loss or damage.
3. **Customs Clearance in Canada:** The buyer is responsible for arranging and covering the costs of customs clearance in Canada, including hiring customs brokers and agents if necessary.
4. **Payment of Import Duties and Taxes:** The buyer is responsible for paying any applicable import duties and taxes in Canada.
5. **Unloading and Distribution:** The buyer is responsible for coordinating the unloading of the avocados at the destination port in Canada and their subsequent distribution to the intended destinations.
6. **Quality Control:** Upon arrival, the buyer is responsible for conducting any necessary inspections or quality control measures to ensure the avocados meet the required standards.

# 8 How to Connect with your Peers: The Importance of Collaboration

## Connecting with Peers

Connecting with your peers through collaboration is a game-changer for women entrepreneurs venturing into international markets. It goes beyond sharing knowledge and experiences; it creates a supportive network that provides valuable resources and exciting opportunities. Collaborating with like-minded women, industry leaders, and experts empowers you, builds confidence, and fosters accountability, keeping you motivated to achieve new heights.

While collaborating with peers from different countries and cultural backgrounds can seem daunting, remember that your success in the local market is proof of your ability to grow a successful business. Approach global markets with the same confidence.

In this section, we emphasize the importance of collaboration and offer tips on how to connect with your peers. You can explore trade associations, online business networks, and trade expos as avenues for building meaningful connections and accessing support for your export plans.

.....collaborating with peers from different countries and cultural backgrounds can seem daunting, remember that your success in the local market is proof of your ability to grow a successful business.  
**Approach global markets with the same confidence.**

## WHERE TO CONNECT AND NETWORK

There are many ways to connect with peers, in the grouping below.

		
<b>International Events</b>	<b>In-Country</b>	<b>Online</b>

### *Establishing Peer Networks at International Events – Trade Fairs*

**Trade Fairs:** Trade fairs often attract suppliers and buyers from around the world. Engaging with international exhibitors and attendees opens doors to global networking opportunities. Building connections with individuals from different countries can help you gain an understanding of international

markets, cultural nuances, and business practices. Two opportunities for networking at international events such as trade fairs are industry specific networks and women owned business exhibitor areas.

1. **Industry-specific networks:** Trade fairs bring together professionals from specific industries. Engage with exhibitors, attendees, and buyers within your industry to connect with like-minded individuals who understand industry-specific challenges and trends. These networks offer valuable insights and updates. For example, at SIAL Canada, the Central Export Hub hosts discussion sessions, and seminars with industry experts. Visit [the Central Export Hub](#) online to explore expert profiles presented at the SIAL Canada trade fair.
2. **Women-Owned Business Exhibitor Areas:** Trade fairs sometimes have designated areas or showcases specifically highlighting women-owned businesses. These spaces offer an opportunity for women business owners to connect with each other, explore potential collaborations, and showcase their products or services to a targeted audience.

### ***Joining Trade Associations and In-Country Chambers of Commerce***

Joining trade associations and chambers of commerce in-country can provide access to a network of industry professionals, resources, knowledge, and advocacy, ultimately supporting the growth and success of your business.

Networking is an obvious benefit of joining trade associations where you can find long-time support from members. In many TFO support countries, there are Chambers of Commerce for small businesses as well as women's groups and associations that are established specially for women in trade.

Trade Associations and In-Country Chambers of Commerce are also good sources for knowledge building such as understanding custom requirements for exporting to other countries, for certification and training such as Organic Certification, HACCP training and other industry-specific training.

Membership can provide exposure to promote your business through directories, events, and referrals, helping you attract new customers and grow your brand.

It is advisable to research and evaluate different associations or chambers to ensure alignment with your business goals and industry focus before becoming a member. You can find these organizations by contacting your local representatives, checking with agricultural officers or local newspapers, and visiting the [events page on TFO Canada's website](#).

### ***Staying Active on Social Media and Online Business Networks***

**Attend online events and webinars:** Participate in virtual industry events, webinars, or conferences. These platforms often provide networking opportunities through virtual chat rooms, breakout sessions, or dedicated networking events. Engage with other attendees, ask questions, and follow up with interesting connections afterward.

**After you have selected your social media platform and have updated your profile.** Your next responsibility is to remain active on social media. You can do so by

**Engaging your target audience with relevant content:** Regularly engage with posts, articles, and discussions related to your industry. Like, comment, and share valuable content that resonates with you or your brand.

**Create and share your own content that is informative, and relevant to your target audience.** This can include industry tips, best practices, case studies, testimonials from users of your products and even information related to your supply chain. Stories about support activities and celebrations that you have engaged in with producers in your supply chain are of interest to potential buyers and end customers. Join groups that are of interest to you and relevant to the product or service you want to sell.

Remember that social media takes time, so plan and be strategic about your engagement.

[Refer to Section 5 in this MIP for more tips on staying active online and social media.](#)

## PLANNING TO CONNECT WITH YOUR PEERS

Planning to connect with your peers works best when you follow the steps below.

**Build a Plan.** Start researching attendees at home. Trade fairs usually have an online list of attendees. Research who are the attendees. It is wise to target both women owners who have already succeeding in establishing international markets and those who are starting up. Ask questions, about their buyers, about the exporting process, what challenges they encountered and what were their successes.



**Begin Planning at Home.** Plan your networking strategy. If you are travelling abroad for a trade fair, make sure you meet with your in-country organizers (local trade association) as they can help you to identify a list of buyers and contacts you will meet.

**Make Lists.** Make a list of the people, businesses, industry seminars you plan to meet and attend. Share this information with your team.

**Schedule your timetable.** Make connections before hand, by email, on your choice of social media e.g., LinkedIn Messenger or Facebook Messenger to share information regarding your attendance at the trade fair. If you have a Booth number, share it.

**Always follow up.** Be diligent by responding to questions online and by email.

## MAKING INTRODUCTIONS AT NETWORKING EVENTS

Effective networking is about building relationships, by asking questions, listening, and engaging with peers. Asking questions demonstrates that you are genuinely interested in getting to know the other person.

Start a conversation by asking questions such as:

- What products are you interested in?
- What do you like most about what you do?
- Who are looking for to connect with today?

Questions  
serve as  
conversation  
starters

- Introduce yourself with your elevator pitch.
- Build relationships.
- Discover potential opportunities.
- Learn about industry trends.
- Demonstrate that you want to learn about the other person.

You will find that such an approach will lead to engaging conversation.

# 9 Other Resources for Women Exporters

Resources for Women Exporters

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## **Government of Canada Online Resources**

[Export help for Canadian business women \(tradecommissioner.gc.ca\)](https://tradecommissioner.gc.ca). Links and information for Canadian business women.

## **TFO Canada Resources**

[Market Information Papers](#) The MIPs are intended to provide the exporter with background information on the Canadian market for a product; advice on how to go about finding a Canadian buyer; and suggestions on what to do once a buyer is found.

[Frequently Asked Questions - TFO Canada](#). A summary of responses to frequently asked questions regarding exporting to Canada.

[Export to Canada Newsletters - TFO Canada](#). Export Canada Newsletters packed with information regarding export support events, new developments regarding export trade, upcoming buyer missions and trade fairs.

[Events](#). An updated calendar of upcoming trade support events. **Be sure to check this calendar.**

[Women Exporters](#). Link to resources for women exporters.

## **International Organizations Online Resources**

[News - West Africa Trade & Investment Hub \(westafricatradehub.com\)](https://westafricatradehub.com). West Africa Trade and Investment Hub

[OWIT-Toronto](#) is a non-profit organization promoting women in international business through networking, education, and global contacts. It was the first Canadian chapter of OWIT, a global network supporting women's participation in international trade.

[Organization of Women in International Trade \(OWIT\)](#). A worldwide network of chapters promoting international trade and commerce.

[Home | Caribbean Export \(carib-export.com\)](https://carib-export.com). A regional trade promotion agency for the Caribbean Region.

[Connect Americas](#): A free business platform created by Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to help you access international markets, strengthen business skills and more.

[International Trade Centre](#) – [Women's Economic Empowerment](#) and [SheTrades](#) virtual learning space provides various courses on global supply chain, labelling and packaging for exports, costing and pricing, communications and negotiations skills and much more!

[WeConnect International](#) – a **global network that connects women-owned businesses to qualified buyers** around the world.

[UPS Women Exporters Program](#) – supports women owned businesses looking to increase their technical skills, enhance their visibility and connect with buyers, investors, suppliers, and business support organizations.

## **International Trade Centre**

[ITC: the latest news on small business trade around the world \(intracen.org\)](https://intracen.org) Activities and trade initiatives around the world including success stories of women exporters.

[GTEX/MENATEX: Global Textiles and Clothing Programme | ITC \(intracen.org\)](#). Supports for women in the textiles and clothing industries.

[SheTrades.com | ITC \(intracen.org\)](#). An Online Platform Designed to Support Women’s Participation in International Trade

[ecomConnect tools for e-commerce businesses | ITC \(intracen.org\)](#). Tools for e-commerce businesses.

[ecomConnect Hubs – Community Engagement Platform for Everyone](#). Online community hub.

[SheTrades - Go and Trade](#). She Trades Virtual Learning Space.

### **World Health Organization – Health and Wellness**

[#HealthyAtHome](#). Tips and Advice on healthy parenting. Mental health, diet and other.

### **Case Studies of Successful Women Led Exporters**

**Paramo Snacks is a Colombian<sup>46</sup>** company empowering rural women through sustainable farming practices. They offer natural, oil-free snacks under the Good Chips brand, working with farming communities in the Colombian paramos. Paramo Snacks supports 100 farming families, integrating them into value chains and allocating 2% of sales to reforest the paramo and protect ecosystems. They received training from TFO Canada and PROCOLOMBIA, participating in the SIAL 2022 Agro-Food Trade Show and winning an award for sustainable development. TFO Canada promotes international market access for SMEs, prioritizing gender equality and sustainable business partnerships in developing countries.



**JEILO Collections<sup>47</sup>** is a Kenyan social enterprise founded by Grace Mbugua in 2016. It includes the Jeilo Leather Company, a profit-making subsidiary. The brand offers culturally inspired, custom-made leather goods, textiles, and accessories sourced locally with a focus on sustainability. Collaborative designs incorporate Afrocentric elements such as recycled bones, glass, and Masai beads. The company strives to be environmentally sustainable by making items to order, upcycling fabrics, and reducing textile waste. Jeilo exports regionally to Uganda and internationally to the United States. Through TFO Canada, Jeilo received training on export strategies and readiness, adapting to market demands during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Coopérative Sanad<sup>48</sup>**, founded in 2013 by Amina Majdi, is an agricultural cooperative in northern Morocco. It brings together 68 rural women specializing in the production and distribution of spices, mixed spices, and grains. The cooperative aims to uplift rural women from poverty by providing skills development and empowerment initiatives. Coopérative Sanad was selected by the SheTrades Morocco program to attend the SIAL Montreal trade show in 2022. TFO Canada provided coaching and market familiarization to prepare them for the event. At the trade show, the cooperative attracted prospective buyers, secured new contacts, and received orders. Coopérative Sanad is dedicated to expanding and improving the lives of women through new product development and global market access. TFO Canada

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<sup>46</sup> “Paramo Snacks: Promotion of Sustainable and Inclusive Rural Communities,” TFO Canada, accessed June .25, 2023, [PARAMO SNACKS: PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE RURAL COMMUNITIES - TFO Canada](#).

<sup>47</sup> “Jeilo Collection: Reducing Textile Waste In The Fashion And Textile Sector,” TFO Canada, accessed June 25, 2023, [Jeilo Collection: Reducing Textile Waste In The Fashion And Textile Sector - TFO Canada](#).

<sup>48</sup> “Cooperative Sanad: A Commitment to The Economic Empowerment of Rural Women,” TFO Canada, accessed June 23, 2023, [COOPERATIVE SANAD: A COMMITMENT TO THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN - TFO Canada](#).

supports such initiatives to promote gender equality and sustainable business partnerships for exporters from developing countries.

For more case studies visit [Success Stories](#) on the TFO Canada website.

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