

B.C. MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

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# **MARKET GUIDE FOR B.C. AGRIFOOD AND SEAFOOD EXPORTERS**

## **SINGAPORE**



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## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to assist B.C. agrifood and seafood exporters targeting the Singapore market by informing them about key topics such as: the Singaporean business environment; key regulatory agencies; finding and assessing buyers; distribution channel options; social and business customs; and the development and maintenance of relationships in Singapore. The following table summarizes the key information in this guide:

<b>Introduction to the Singapore market</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singapore is a prosperous city-state located in tropical Asia. The 5.6 million residents live within an area roughly one-quarter the size of Metro Vancouver and have the third-highest GDP per capita.</li> <li>• Singapore has limited farm land and limited opportunity for fishing, which causes the jurisdiction to be heavily reliant on imported food products from a wide variety of international suppliers.</li> <li>• Canada was the 23<sup>rd</sup> largest supplier of agrifood and seafood to Singapore in 2016. The total dollar value of exports has increased by 25% since 2012, but other suppliers to Singapore have also experienced increases causing Canada's market share to remain constant at 0.7%.</li> </ul>
<b>Market Readiness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market readiness means you have taken the steps to ensure that the product(s) you want to export to Singapore are fully compliant with Singapore's laws and import/export regulations.</li> <li>• The <a href="#">Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA)</a> is the National Authority responsible for facilitating trade of agrifood and seafood and ensuring a resilient supply of safe food from local production and imported items.</li> <li>• The <a href="#">Food Regulations</a> contained in the <i>Sale of Food Act</i> provide details of the laws and regulations governing imported food and are directly relevant to B.C. companies interested in exporting their products to Singapore.</li> <li>• Singapore conducts detailed inspection of imported food products and places a high importance on ensuring the safety of imported food. High risk foods are automatically detained upon arrival for physical inspection and testing.</li> </ul>
<b>Selling to Singapore</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food products in Singapore are generally distributed through local intermediaries who in turn supply them to retailers. As a new exporter to Singapore you will likely choose between engaging an agent and selling to an in-market distributor.</li> <li>• It is possible to export directly if you are able to establish a relationship with a large retailer or other Singaporean company. The grocery retail sector is dominated by Prime Supermarkets, Meidi-Ya Singapore, and Isetan Supermarket.</li> <li>• E-commerce is increasingly an option as internet retailing in Singapore is a rapidly growing sector.</li> <li>• Food exhibition shows, developing online content, visiting the country and utilizing in-market resources can assist companies to develop consumer and importer demand for their products.</li> <li>• Corruption is generally low in Singapore but you must still conduct due diligence prior to signing contracts and establishing formal relationships.</li> </ul>
<b>Building Relationships in Singapore</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third party introductions are helpful ways to gain access and credibility with Singaporean buyers.</li> <li>• Strong personal relationships and networking are instrumental to conducting business in Singapore.</li> <li>• English is the language of business and administration, with other official languages being Mandarin, Malay and Tamil.</li> <li>• The multi-ethnic nature of Singapore requires attention when engaging in social customs and gift giving as each different group has unique requirements, customs and cultural taboos.</li> </ul>
<b>Export Support and Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">B.C. Trade and Investment Representatives</a> and <a href="#">Canadian Trade Commissioners</a> are located in Southeast Asia and Singapore, respectively, to assist you.</li> <li>• Exporters should make themselves aware of cost-sharing programs and promotional support provided by provincial and federal agencies and organizations.</li> </ul>

## SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION TO THE SINGAPORE MARKET

### 2.1 – SINGAPORE'S ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Singapore is a prosperous city-state located in tropical Asia between Malaysia and Indonesia. The 5.6 million residents live within an area roughly one-quarter the size of Metro Vancouver and have the third-highest GDP per capita in the world. Singapore is considered one of the world's most open economies and is a major international finance and shipping centre, with the Port of Singapore being one of the busiest in the world. This is due in part to the fact that re-exports comprise about 50% of total exports, including up to 75% of total food imports being re-exported to other countries in the region. Singapore's long history as a trading nation is supported by favourable laws and regulations and as such has been ranked the easiest jurisdiction in the world for doing business for most of the past decade, slipping to #2 (behind New Zealand) in the latest World Bank report.

### 2.2 – SINGAPORE'S AGRIFOOD AND SEAFOOD SECTOR

The Islands of Singapore have sparse agricultural land and the possibility for fishing within Singaporean territory is limited. As a result, Singapore imports over 90% of the food consumed in the country. A limited number of local farms produce less than 10% of the national demand of vegetables and about 25% of the egg consumption. About 10% of the seafood eaten by Singaporeans is caught locally. The benefit to suppliers is that the country is highly reliant on imported agrifood and seafood products. However, potential exporters should be aware that competition in agrifood and seafood product categories is intense.

The strategy of the Singaporean government is to ensure that imported food comes from a wide variety of supplying nations. This approach is a result of concerns over the high reliance on other countries. Because of this reliance, there could be supply issues due to situations out of their control, such as food contamination/disease or economic issues in supplying nations that could risk an adequate supply. For example, the government supports outbound trade missions for food sourcing and to foster business relationships with suppliers overseas.

### 2.3 – SINGAPORE'S AGRIFOOD AND SEAFOOD IMPORTS

In 2016, Canada was the 23<sup>rd</sup> largest supplier of agrifood and seafood to Singapore, with exports totalling \$120 million, an increase of 25% over the value exported in 2012. However, due to strong growth in exports from other countries, Canada's share of the Singapore agrifood and seafood market remained constant at 0.7%. As shown in the following table, from 2012 to 2016, China increased the value of agrifood and seafood exports to Singapore by 56% and increased their market share by 26% (from comprising 7.0% of all Singapore agrifood and seafood imports in 2012 to 8.9% in 2016). Other winners in the sector included Vietnam (14% increase in market share), Brazil (12%), and the USA (5%).

*Table 1: Value of Agrifood and Seafood Exports to Singapore, Top 10 Supplying Countries 2012-16*

Country	Value of Exports (\$ Billions)			Market Share		
	2012	2016	%-Change	2012	2016	%-Change
Malaysia	2.35	2.60	10%	18.4%	16.4%	-11%
France	1.27	1.62	28%	9.9%	10.3%	3%
China	0.90	1.41	56%	7.0%	8.9%	26%
Indonesia	1.34	1.25	-7%	10.5%	7.9%	-25%
USA	0.81	1.06	30%	6.4%	6.7%	5%

<b>Australia</b>	0.87	0.98	13%	6.8%	6.2%	-9%
<b>UK</b>	0.74	0.84	13%	5.8%	5.3%	-9%
<b>Thailand</b>	0.63	0.76	21%	4.9%	4.8%	-2%
<b>Brazil</b>	0.39	0.55	39%	3.1%	3.5%	12%
<b>Viet Nam</b>	0.34	0.48	41%	2.7%	3.0%	14%
<b>...Canada (23<sup>rd</sup>)</b>	0.09	0.12	25%	0.7%	0.7%	1%

Source: [International Trade Centre Trade Map](#). Accessed December 2017.

The following table describes the class (by 2-digit HS code) of agrifood and seafood products that, for each of the top supplying countries, achieved the highest rate of growth in value of exports to Singapore between 2012 and 2016.

*Table 2: Largest percentage increases in exports,  
by 2-digit HS code for top 10 supplying countries, 2012-16*

Country	Product (by HS Code), Growth Rate in Value of Exports 2012-16
<b>Malaysia</b>	Cereals (405%) Meat and edible meat offal (354%) Edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons (84%)
<b>France</b>	Live animals (454%) Lac; gums, resins and other vegetable saps and extracts (337%) Fish and crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates (303%)
<b>China</b>	Products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included (223%) Vegetable plaiting materials; vegetable products not elsewhere specified (127%) Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes (99%)
<b>Indonesia</b>	Vegetable plaiting materials; vegetable products not elsewhere specified (334%) Preparations of vegetables, fruit, nuts or other parts of plants (318%) Meat and edible meat offal (65%)
<b>USA</b>	Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats (316%) Live trees and other plants; bulbs, roots and the like; cut flowers and foliage (184%) Beverages, spirits and vinegar (113%)
<b>Australia</b>	Lac; gums, resins and other vegetable saps and extracts (1,058%) Products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included (173%) Edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons (94%)
<b>UK</b>	Fish and crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates (963%) Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes (404%) Meat and edible meat offal (241%)
<b>Thailand</b>	Vegetable plaiting materials; vegetable products not elsewhere specified (5,856%) Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes (2,308%) Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats (84%)
<b>Brazil</b>	Preparations of cereals, flour, starch or milk; pastrycooks' products (983%) Lac; gums, resins and other vegetable saps and extracts (475%) Edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons (337%)
<b>Viet Nam</b>	Live animals (1,023%) Live trees and other plants; bulbs, roots and the like; cut flowers and foliage (356%) Miscellaneous edible preparations (212%)
<b>...Canada (23<sup>rd</sup>)</b>	Coffee, tea, maté and spices (2,351%) Lac; gums, resins and other vegetable saps and extracts (1,750%) Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers (1,509)

Source: [International Trade Centre Trade Map](#). Accessed December 2017.

The following table describes BC agrifood and seafood exports to Singapore from 2014-2016.

*Table 3: Top 4 BC Agrifood and Seafood Exports to Singapore, 2014-16*

Commodity	Value of Exports (\$ Millions)			2015-2016 %-Change
	2014	2015	2016	
Food Preparations for Manufacturing & Natural Health Products	3.3	3.2	2.5	-23
Cherries	1.4	2.1	1.9	-9
Crab	0.9	0.9	1.9	120
Pork Products	0.1	0.9	1.4	49
<b>Total Top 4</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>8</b>
Rest of Products	9.4	6.7	6.7	1
<b>Total – All exports to Singapore</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>4</b>

Source: CATSNET. Accessed February 2018.

## 2.4 – CULINARY CULTURE, CONSUMER LIFESTYLES AND CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Just as when expanding into any new market, it is important for you to undertake detailed market research specific to your sector and products. More generally, the following are general trends and features of Singapore consumer patterns that you should be aware of:

- Growing personal disposable income due to better-educated workforce. The rising number of visitor arrivals and foreign workers in the country have contributed to a more diverse and sophisticated consumer base. Growth and diversity in consumer tastes with the greater increase in the number of highly educated and well-travelled Singaporeans.
- Slower growth rates in domestic demand.
- Growing demand for food products for seniors. Smaller household sizes due to falling marriage and birth rates. More working women and single professionals have led to growth in demand for convenience foods and ready-to-cook prepared meals.
- Increasing preference for higher quality products. Proliferation of western family-style restaurants and fast food chains. Large number of resident expatriate populations familiar with western type foods.
- High costs of entry into major supermarket chains as well as high promotional and advertising costs for introducing new products. Meanwhile, products from other supplying countries may be very price competitive due to lower input and transportation costs.
- The government promotes the use of powdered eggs and frozen meat, for example, as a way to use public education to protect against supply disruptions and price increases.

## 2.5 – MARKET INTELLIGENCE

As with any market, prior to expanding sales to Singapore you will need to conduct market research specific to your product line. In addition to answering any specific questions you might have, good market research allows you to:

- Determine if there is a potential market for your product;

- Understand the strategy, strengths and weaknesses of your major competitors;
- Strategize how best to position your product (e.g. price, packaging, value proposition) and leverage the highest potential competitive advantage;
- Minimize the risk of making a poor investment decision.

The following approaches and sources can be used to gather market information:

- **Consult with government agencies and industry and trade associations in your sector.**
  - These could include: [Canadian Trade Commissioners](#), [Agriculture and AgriFood Canada](#), [Small Business B.C.](#), [Global Affairs Canada](#), the [High Commission of Canada in Singapore](#) and chambers of commerce including the [Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Singapore](#).
- **Conduct online research for available material.** Many of the following resources provide market-specific information free of charge, but there may be a fee to access larger quantities of intelligence or information that is particularly valuable or hard to come by.
  - [Canada Business Network](#) is a hub for the Canadian export market that includes links to market and sector information, trade statistics and sources of trade leads and potential partners.
  - [CIA World Factbook](#) is a reference resource with almanac-style information about the countries of the world. It provides summaries of the demographics, geography, communications, government, economy, and military of most of the countries of the world.
  - [Economist Intelligence Unit](#) is the research and analysis division of The Economist Group and world leader in global business intelligence.
  - [Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations \(Statistics Division\)](#) is a source of knowledge and information related to agriculture, forestry and fishery.
  - [Global Trade Tracker \(GTT\)](#) offers original trade statistics from the world's principal trading countries.
  - The [Singapore Department of Statistics](#) produces and makes available Singapore's national statistics.
  - [Santander Trade Portal](#) is a resource that provides access to 40+ worldwide databases, 10,000 pages of information on 185 countries, and more than 150,000 suppliers and importers.
  - [United States Department of Agriculture's Global Agriculture Information Network \(GAIN\)](#) provides information and reports about the agricultural economy, products and issues in foreign countries that are likely to have an impact on trade.
- **Access a global research firm that conducts regular market intelligence in Singapore.** The following are a sample of intelligence companies which are available to exporters, and it is possible you will find a suitable firm that is not listed below. Information from these sources will generally not be provided free of charge, but may be the only way to obtain certain information.
  - [Development Bank Canada](#) provides industry experts to identify the right collection tools and to handle data mining and analysis.
  - [Euromonitor International](#) is a leading provider of global business intelligence and publishes industry, country and global reports.
  - [Global Research & Data Services](#) publishes reports from over 200 industries and 100 countries, providing difficult-to-find market data.
  - [Hoovers Research](#) provides reports across a range of industries including the food & beverage sector. Global reports by Hoovers Research provide regional and country-level market analysis.
  - [Nielsen](#) studies consumer trends and habits in more than 100 countries.

- [Planet Retail](#) is a leading provider of global retail intelligence.
- [Statistics Market Research Consulting](#) reports provide strategic recommendations, market forecasts, and competitive landscaping.
- [VPG Market Research](#) publishes international market research for corporate executives and key decision-makers in the food & beverage industry, among others. VPG has clients in 70 countries and provides market intelligence and strategic insights.

➤ **Visit the market personally:**

- Do not underestimate the value in simply taking a trip to Singapore yourself to gather first-hand insights and intelligence. It can be very powerful not only in terms of talking to potential buyers and distributors but also in terms of identifying competing products. Visiting different supermarkets and retailers can be invaluable as it allows you to get a sense of products and packaging in Singapore and allows you to assess the price range and market approach used by potential competitors.

## SECTION 3: MARKET READINESS

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The first step to achieving sales in Singapore is ensuring that you are market ready. This means that your product is eligible for export to Singapore and you are compliant with all necessary requirements, standards and regulations. Only then can you actually sell your products to buyers in Singapore.

### 3.1 – GOVERNMENT OF SINGAPORE AGENCIES INVOLVED IN OVERSEEING IMPORTS

Compared to many other jurisdictions in Asia, Singapore has a simple import-export regime.

➤ Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA)

- AVA is the National Authority whose laws and regulations govern essentially all food, drink and eligible agricultural products, including both locally produced and imported items.
- Its main functions include facilitating trade of agrifood and seafood products and ensuring a resilient supply of safe food along all steps of the chain, from production or import to retail sale. Specifically, the agency:
  - Regulates the safety of locally produced and imported food
  - Enforces food safety programs for locally produced or imported foods
  - Operates a comprehensive inspection program
  - Monitors emerging health threats
  - Develops food policies
- The agency administers a total of nine statutes, however for importers of agrifood and seafood products the most important legislation is the *Sale of Food Act* and its *Food Regulations*. These [Food Regulations](#) provide the details of the laws and regulations governing imported food.

### 3.2 – REQUIREMENTS, STANDARDS & REGULATIONS

➤ **AVA conducts inspection of imported food products and places a high importance on ensuring the safety of imported food.**

- Most products must undergo inspection including meat and meat products, fresh and processed eggs, seafood, fresh fruit and vegetables, and processed food.
- Imports of uncooked poultry, beef, pork and lamb are visually inspected and often subject to laboratory testing. If samples of import shipments have unacceptable levels of microorganisms the entire shipment will be denied entry to the country. In some cases, this can result in all shipments originating from a given processing plant being denied future entry.
- High-risk products such as oysters, clams, mussels, scallops and cooked crabmeat are automatically detained upon arrival for physical inspection and testing.
- Imported fruit and vegetable samples are taken for laboratory testing for pesticide residues. Shipments that exceed the prescribed maximum residual levels listed in the Food Act are rejected and destroyed by Singaporean authorities.

➤ **Required certificates.**

- All imported meat products must be accompanied by a health certificate issued by a veterinary authority from the exporting country to certify that Singapore's animal health and food safety requirements are met.
- An import permit issued by the AVA, is required for every consignment of fish products. A health certificate must accompany each shellfish import from the country of origin.

➤ **Labelling requirements.**

- The AVA's Food Control Division strictly enforces the labeling laws, so it is important to ensure that your product labeling complies with Singapore's regulations before import is attempted.
- The Singapore Food Regulations require that all pre-packed food products are properly labelled to include: name or description of the product; statement of ingredients and additives; declaration of foods and ingredients known to cause hypersensitivity (e.g. gluten, crustacean, egg, fish, peanuts, soybeans, milk, tree nuts and nuts, sulphites); net content; name and address of the manufacturer, importer, packager or distributor; country of origin; expiry date information.
- Pre-packed food products (e.g. special purpose foods, foods with nutrition or health claims, etc.) are required to meet additional labelling requirements.
- Exporters can consult the [Guide to Food Labelling and Advertisement](#) for the latest information on labelling and advertising.
- Nutrition labeling is required when nutrition claims, vitamins and mineral claims or permitted health claims are made.

➤ **Customs and logistics**

- Depending on the product required documentation for entry can include: bill of lading; invoice; shipping list; customs declaration; insurance policy; purchase and sale contract; inspection certificates, if applicable.
- The Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) is an international goods classification system to categorize imported and exported goods in international trade, determine appropriate duty fees, identify goods and is used for freight documentation, etc. HS compliance is the mandatory classification and declaration of goods when entering or exiting a country. If you are unaware of the correct HS code(s) for your product(s) they can be looked up using [Canada Post's online tool](#).

## SECTION 4: SELLING TO SINGAPORE

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### 4.1 – ROUTES TO MARKET

Determining the most appropriate route for market entry requires thoughtful consideration of the intended scope of investment, the nature of business activities, available in-house resources and product type among other things. While entering the highly-developed Singaporean market entails significantly less risk compared to many other Asian countries, companies should be aware of the advantages and drawbacks of each route to market.

#### 4.1.1 Indirect Exports

- **Food products in Singapore are generally distributed through local intermediaries who in turn supply them to retailers.**
  - While a B.C. supplier might occasionally sell goods directly from its own Singaporean retail outlets or directly to retailers, the relatively small size of the Singaporean market and its role as a regional hub often makes third-party distribution a more viable option, at least initially.
  - Local intermediaries tend to have a deep knowledge of local and regional distribution rules and regulations and can assist with licensing, shipping, distribution and logistical arrangements.
  - While there are cost-savings to be made by engaging a local partner you will need to incur the cost of commissions charged by your intermediary and you will not have the opportunity to build a direct relationship with your end buyers.
  - Singapore firms are aggressive when it comes to representing new products and usually respond enthusiastically to new opportunities.
- **Typically, you will choose between engaging with an agent and selling to a distributor.**
  - An agent will assist you to secure your sales in exchange for a commission. Choose agents who are knowledgeable about the market, with proven sales track records and have experience clearing your type of goods from Singapore through customs.
  - Distributors purchase your products from you and then resell them to their customers. The distributor will handle all sales enquiries, after sales service and price setting. You must determine whether your distributor has the proven sales track record, the commitment of its sales force to selling your product, its product mix and its marketing plan to push your products.

#### 4.1.2 Direct Exports

- **You can also sell your product directly to your customer. Doing so involves supplying your product without the assistance of any intermediaries.**
  - This may come about if a Singaporean company contacts you first. Often companies can begin their export journey in this manner representing a low-risk trial of the market.
  - This approach will require you to spend more time and resources to develop the relationship and trust with the Singaporean buyer. Nevertheless, the potential higher returns and speed of getting into the market may well justify this additional cost of relationship building.
- **If you decide you want to sell direct, knowledge of Singapore's retail food market is crucial.**

- Exporters should consider placing their products in the major supermarket chains as traditional grocery retailers such as wet markets and independent small grocers are losing market share.
  - The sector is dominated by three key players (1) Fair Price Cooperative, (2) Dairy Farm International Holdings and (3) Sheng Siong Supermarket.
  - Other major retailers with fewer supermarkets include: (1) Prime Supermarkets and two Japanese retail stores: (1) Meidi-Ya Singapore (2) Isetan Supermarket.
  - Singapore's distribution channels for consumer-ready foods are dominated by supermarkets and hypermarkets, and the two leading convenience store chains, 7-Eleven and Cheers.
  - All new products undergo a review panel to determine if it will be stocked. If it passes the review an initial slotting fee is charged by supermarkets to have it placed on their shelves.
- **To help you sell directly overseas, you will need to have some form of presence that enables you to attract global buyers to your product or service offering.**
- You can begin by participating in trade shows or you can establish your presence on the internet using e-commerce. Many exporters commonly start by employing both methods which are explored further below.

#### **4.1.3 E-commerce Websites and Companies**

- **Internet retailing in Singapore is growing fast.**
- 26% of Singaporeans shop online at least once a week – the highest in Southeast Asia while the high adoption rate for mobile devices continues to drive mobile e-commerce, with 55% of online shoppers choosing to do their shopping via their mobile device.
  - Approximately 9% of internet retail sales come from online grocers.
- **Online grocery retailing was dominated by major supermarket retailers Cold Storage and Fairprice.**
- However, Redmart, a new competitor which offers consumers the choice of same day grocery delivery within 2-hour timeslots has since changed the game of online grocery retailing.
  - Many of the larger stores offer “online-to-offline” services (purchase online, physical pickup).
  - Other popular e-commerce sites besides Amazon, E-bay, and Apple include Taobao, Qoo10, Lazada, Zalora, Carousell, Redmart, Reebonz, HipVan, and Honestbee.
  - Singapore has well-developed infrastructure supporting e-commerce payment. Most domestic e-commerce sales are paid by credit cards and bank transfers.
- **To begin your e-commerce strategy, you need to set up a website that clearly states your products and services offerings and how buyers can contact you.**
- Your website can also leverage on other websites to further market your products and services, such as through Alibaba, e-Bay, Gmarket and even Amazon.
  - These web portals provide the necessary technical and software support which you can tap into easily and quickly to set up your presence on their platforms.
  - Thereafter, you can leverage the traffic that their sites draw and start selling to the sites' visitors.
- **Be mindful not to undercut your in-market partners if you begin to sell online as a secondary route.**

- Due to reduced costs, you will be able to afford lower prices when selling online. However, your price will be visible for anyone to see. You should consider this and be sure to account for it when designing your pricing strategy.

## **4.2 – DEVELOPING IMPORTER AND CONSUMER DEMAND**

Once you determine which route-to-market is best suited for your product and company, you will need to develop a strategy that includes both B2B (business to business) and B2C (business to consumer) approaches to be successful. Engaging buyers, importers and distributors is important because they will make up your supply chain and routes to market. They will also be extremely valuable sources of the local knowledge and contacts to promote your products and services, and can help you deal with language and cultural barriers. However, like in any market, demand will drive your sales, so it is important for you to consider B2C strategies to create awareness and interest in your product among Singapore consumers.

### **4.2.1 Exhibition Trade Shows**

Trade shows are a popular marketing component for many exporters. Among other benefits, they allow attendees to: conduct market intelligence and research prior to entering a market; introduce and promote the company and convey the value proposition of products; initiate relationships with potential customers or intermediaries; maintain relationships and contacts already made; and, demonstrate long-term commitment to the market. However, trade shows can be costly investments, so you want to make sure that your approach is designed to give you the best possible chance at turning interest developed at the show into actual business. Unprepared exhibitors tend to be disappointed that the large number of conversations and apparent interest at shows do not translate to real sales.

#### **➤ Preparing for the show.**

- The first step to trade show success is to find the most suitable exhibition for your product(s) and market access strategy. If you are not yet prepared to exhibit you can simply attend shows to gather contacts and market intelligence.
- Many show organizers offer pre-show training sessions for exhibitors. If you are new to exhibiting at trade shows these on-site sessions are recommended and will likely impact your success during and after the show.
- You will need to develop professional displays and promotional materials and should strongly consider bringing product samples to distribute. Begin trade show material development early. Incorporate potential delays and complications into your time frame.
- Determine customs and import regulations that pertain to your sample products. At a minimum, you can consider bringing empty packaging to showcase how your product appears on the shelf.
- If the purpose of your trade show attendance is to begin selling, be sure to have determined your price for the local market prior to the show and make sure you bring sufficient stock to sell.
- Book appointments with prospective buyers ahead of time and be sure to inform any current clients or contacts that you have in the market that you will be at the show.

#### **➤ Differentiate your products and brand from other exhibitors.**

- Larger booths tend to create a bigger impact.

- Consider joining a delegation of Canadian firms to be part of a large presence and to effectively trade on the Canadian brand. Joining an [AAFC Canada Pavilion](#) is a great approach to attending trade shows, especially for new or smaller exporters.
- **Develop a strategy for converting inquiries into meetings and business.**
- Participating in trade shows can be relatively costly, so it is important to understand the show and the audience you will be interacting with; and to be sure that your approach is designed to give you the best possible chance at turning interest developed at the show into actual business.
  - Your exhibit should target specific prospects that are interested in the products you are selling.
  - The longer prospective leads are left unattended, the less likely they are to evolve into business opportunities. Do not rush to be on the first plane out as the event ends. Being available for meetings with potential buyers the week after a show is a good strategy.
- **While Singapore has a wide and changing calendar of shows and exhibitions, you are not limited to shows only in Singapore.**
- Singapore's most significant food and beverage event is the Food & Hotel Asia (FHA) show. In 2016, FHA attracted 47,630 trade visitors, 58 international pavilions and 3,198 exhibiting companies from 71 countries.
  - Although Singapore is your export destination, that does not mean you are confined to attending trade shows only in the City-State. An alternative strategy is to attend other large trade shows domestically or elsewhere in Asia as these shows are typically well attended by buyers from many countries.

#### **4.2.2 Websites, Web-portals and Social Media**

You can use your website and social media to boost consumer demand by providing real-time client interaction and tailored content for your target audience.

- **Establishing an online presence can be an effective way to drive consumer and importer demand for your product.**
- A well-constructed and easy-to-navigate website provides great opportunities for international inquiries and sales while also establishing credibility with your contacts, clients and distributors.
  - A local .sg web domain will help internet users in Singapore easily find your website and reinforce that you are established in the country.
  - You should build your site to support mobile e-commerce as it is unlikely to wane.
- **Engage in social media.**
- Singaporeans are among the most active social media users in the world. They use Facebook, YouTube, Google, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest as well as messaging apps such as WhatsApp.
  - The country has one of the most developed information communications and technology (ITC) infrastructures in the world.
  - Social media can be an effective way to build up a network and drive demand. As it continues to grow rapidly, it offers businesses new and meaningful ways to engage with other businesses, people, events and brands that are relevant to them.

- Decide on the best social media tools to reach your target audience and develop engaging and innovative content to differentiate yourself from competitors. For example, Facebook has more reach than any other social network in Singapore followed closely by YouTube.
- Regularly track and monitor the content viewed and feedback received.

#### **4.2.3 Utilizing in-market resources to find buyers**

- **Connect with industry associations and other professional bodies in Singapore.**
- **Engage [B.C. Trade and Investment Representatives](#) and [Canadian Trade Commissioners](#) with connections and on-the-ground expertise.**

### **4.3 – DUE DILIGENCE**

Companies face very low risks of corruption and scams in the city state as Singapore ranks among the least corrupt countries in the world. Nonetheless, to safeguard your company's business interest, you should conduct due diligence prior to making any transactions or contractual obligations.

- **Ask questions and avoid doing business with companies or agents that cannot provide you with necessary details.**
  - You might consider asking to see a notarized and translated copy of their business licence to determine information such as the establishment date, registered capital, name of legal representative, business scope, etc.
  - You could ask for a description of the scale of the company including audited or unaudited financial statements or records for the past few years.
  - You could ask for a list of their major customers including references.
- **Independently verify the information you have received.**
  - Use external data from government agencies, other authorized bodies and local experts to verify information provided by your potential partner.
  - Use the internet to conduct additional research. There may be comments, positive or negative, about the company or individual you are investigating online.
  - The [Trade Commissioner Service](#) can assist with some basic due diligence.
- **Your own preparedness is also integral to successful due diligence.**
  - Ensure you allow sufficient time to conduct your verification and due diligence.
  - Ensure that you have conducted the necessary market research.
  - Remain especially vigilant immediately after trade shows and similar events where your company details and contact information may have been widely displayed and or distributed.
  - Be sure to examine and trace the email address of any email that appears suspect. Avoid clicking on any links within unsolicited email.
  - One proven method of testing legitimacy and protecting your company is to request payment up front. If your buyer is truly interested this request will not be problematic as it is standard in many industries. You could also require a letter of credit.
  - Remember, common sense is your best defense. If the order appears “too good to be true” it probably is.
- **Transparency is an on-going process.**

- Rules and regulations, business environments and business partners are constantly changing. As such, due diligence is not a one off, standalone task. It is necessary throughout the exporting process, but it is particularly important in the initial building relationship phase.

## SECTION 5: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN SINGAPORE

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As with any other new market, it is important to understand certain cultural norms and practices common in Singapore in order to best support your business development. Many practices may seem familiar to you because Singapore is a commerce-friendly jurisdiction that tends to follow international business practices and standards. However, there are nuances among the Chinese, Malay and Indian members of the population of which you should be aware.

### 5.1 – INITIATING RELATIONSHIPS

Singaporeans place much emphasis on the importance of creating good relationships with others before doing business with them. As such, much of doing business in Singapore, at least initially, involves building relationships. This is often an unrushed process as Singaporeans are cautious and like to make sure they are doing business with someone they can trust.

- **Being introduced by a third person makes the first contact much easier as it gives you immediate access and credibility.**
  - A certain level of trust is also extended to you if you initiate contact via a mutual contact.
  - Without an introduction it can take a lot longer to gain that credibility and trust but there are other methods for achieving this. Trade shows offer one of the next best alternatives. Here you can meet potential buyers while maintaining plenty of credibility particularly if you display alongside any industry associations, the Provincial or Federal Governments.
  - Industry associations, provincial investment promotion bodies and even your freight forwarder are valuable sources for introductions. They are often aware of events at which you may meet prospective customers or can provide third-party introductions
- **Strong personal relationships and networking are instrumental to conducting business successfully in Singapore.**
  - Therefore, you should take time to get to know people before discussing business as they will only do business with people they know and trust. This requires patience and a certain level of groundwork on your behalf. All of which is still required whether you are fortunate to have a shared contact or not.
  - You must indicate that your organization is here for the long-term and is not looking only for short-term gains.
  - Professional business networking is an essential part of conducting business in Singapore and lends itself to expanding your exporting opportunities. Professional organization meetings, workshops, conferences, and even luncheons are all popular networking venues in Singapore.
- **Once you decide on Singapore you will have to commit time and resources to build the relationships and understand the subtleties in the market.**
  - You will need to develop deeper relations with your Singaporean counterparts than would be expected in Western markets as Singapore's market is relationship driven as opposed to transactional and opportunity based which is more typical in Europe and North America.
  - Spending time in the market and prioritizing return trips is perhaps the single most important thing you can do to build meaningful relationships with buyers and partners.
  - Initially, there may not appear to be any particular business opportunity but you must continue to foster that relationship and work towards some future opportunity.

## 5.2 – SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

Singaporeans are unlikely to take offence if you commit a social faux pas, especially when they understand that you come from a different culture. Exercise basic sensitivity at all times and ask if in doubt. The general advice would be to follow the lead of your host and be courteous at all times. More granular advice is listed below:

- **Being punctual in many countries is an important part of corporate culture, but in Singapore punctuality is taken to an even higher level.**
  - Being on time to meetings and social occasions or notifying others of any expected delay is paramount. Tardiness is viewed as a sign of disrespect.
  - Similarly, business meetings should be to the point and include direct discussion when handling any issues or priorities of money.
- **Throughout Singapore, Western clothing is very common, with casual dress dominating.**
  - In a business setting it is recommended that men wear long-sleeved shirts and ties, although one will generally not be out of place without a tie. Depending on the occasion, jackets may also be necessary but typically they are not required.
  - Women have a few more options. They can pair long-sleeved blouses with knee-length or mid-length skirts while lightweight business suits are also popular. Some women may also enjoy wearing summery shirt-dresses. Accessories should be of good quality but not overly ostentatious.
  - In some offices, and just about every private space, you'll be asked to remove your shoes. This is normal. If requested you can simply leave your shoes at the door.
- **The concept of 'face' is extremely important in Singapore.**
  - Face is a quality that reflects a person's reputation, dignity, and respect. Face can be given, lost, taken away or earned.
  - You give someone face by complimenting them, showing them respect or doing anything that increases their self-esteem. These actions must be done with absolute sincerity. Humiliating, insulting, or contradicting a person in front of someone else causes a loss of face.
  - In order to avoid losing face, Singaporeans control their behaviour and emotions in public and do not criticise directly. When doing business in Singapore, it is wise to remember that damaging face through overt confrontation or criticism can be disastrous for business relationships.
- **It is incredibly important to respect the hierarchy within a company you are doing business with.**
  - All organisational structures and relationships are determined by the hierarchy.
  - As a result, all key decisions will be made at the very senior levels. It is, therefore, important to ensure the right level of contact within an organisation if influence is to be brought to bear on the decision-making process.
  - It is also important to ensure that senior people are dealt with by contacts of similar status. Do not insult your contacts by sending in more junior, younger staff than are introduced to you.

### 5.3 – COMMUNICATION

Unlike most other jurisdictions in Asia, you will likely not require translation or interpreter services as you explore the Singapore market. However, there are important aspects of communication to be aware of.

- **English is the working language of Singapore.**
  - English is the language of business and administration, and is widely spoken while the official languages are Chinese, Malay and Tamil.
  - Translation and interpreting services are usually available at hotel business centres, but these services are unlikely to be required. Most Singaporeans are bilingual and speak their mother tongue as well as English.
  - Mandarin has been heavily promoted by the Government in recent years and is now the second working language.
- **In order to keep others from losing face, much communication will be non-verbal. You ought to closely watch facial expressions and body language to figure out what they are actually trying to say. Bare the following points in mind when interpreting non-verbal communication:**
  - Eye contact is intermittent, and holding a gaze is considered very challenging and impolite.
  - If someone sucks air through their teeth while you are speaking, it means they are unhappy with what you have just said. If possible, try to re-state your position or change your request.
  - Raise your hand to get someone's attention. Never signal or point at a person with the forefinger. Do not pound your first on an open palm. The forearm jerk is a rude gesture.
  - Never touch a person's or child's head. The head is considered sacred.
  - The foot is considered the lowest part of the body, and is thought to be unclean. The foot should never be used to point at someone, and you should never show the bottom of your feet. Tapping your foot or fidgeting your legs denotes feebleness and lack of interest.
- **Silence is an important element of Singaporean communication.**
  - Pausing before responding to a question indicates that they have given the question appropriate thought and considered their response carefully. You should mimic this behaviour.
  - Singaporeans do not understand Western cultural abilities to respond to a question hastily and think this indicates thoughtlessness and rude behaviour.
  - It is also important to not to jump into the conversation if your Singapore business colleague remains silent for a minute.

### 5.4 – TYPICAL MEETING PROTOCOL

Meeting etiquette will differ depending on the type of company you deal with. However, certain characteristics are likely to be constant regardless of the background of the people being met. The following points identify such constants:

- **Prior to the meeting.**
  - Appointments are necessary and should be made between three to four weeks in advance whenever possible.
  - The most formal way to schedule a meeting is to write to the person concerned, although most Singaporeans will schedule an appointment by telephone, fax, or e-mail. Avoid trying to schedule meetings during Chinese New Year (late January or early February).

- Once a meeting is confirmed, it is important to send them a list of your team members, their expertise and titles.
- Bring product brochures and a company profile with you to the first meeting.

➤ **Introductions and greetings.**

- Customs differ among the three major ethnic groups, age groups, gender and, of course, the situation. The following guidelines outline what you can typically expect across different groupings.
- The most senior person, irrespective of grouping, should enter a meeting room first and be introduced first.
- When meeting most men, a handshake will suffice. The Asian handshake is gentler than in the West, and may last two to three times as long. Many people in Singapore may also bow slightly when shaking hands, making it appropriate to return a small bow.
- While the Chinese tend to be comfortable with women and men shaking hands, you may find the Malaysian and Indian men less comfortable with shaking the hands of women. Instead, they will use the 'salaam' or 'namaste' greetings.
- Equally, Malay and Indian women generally do not shake hands. You will know this if they cross their hands in front of their chests. The protocol is to nod your head slightly in acknowledgement; you can use the namaste greeting when meeting with Indian women.
- When you first meet, expect some small talk. Your Singapore colleagues will want to get to know you well enough that they are comfortable working with you. You may be asked questions about your family or other personal details – this is usually not considered rude, but part of the getting-to-know-you phase. Politely sidestep these if you do not wish to answer.
- Always wait to be told where to sit. There is a strict hierarchy that must be followed.

➤ **Name titles.**

- Different ethnic groups also have their own ways of addressing each other. When in doubt it is not impolite to ask. The common and polite Singaporean phrase is 'How shall I address you?'
- When you are addressing a Chinese individual, you should use their title and then follow with their surname.
- The Malays do not use a family name. They use their own personal name followed by bin (son of) or binti (daughter of) before their father's personal name.
- The Indians use their personal name followed by s/o (son of) or d/o (daughter of) and the father's personal name.
- As a result, a Malay or Indian person might introduce themselves by their first name and then follow it with their professional title.
- If your host has a western name like "Peter", he should be introduced in the same way as in the West, i.e. given name before family name.
- If they want to move to a first name basis, they will advise you which name to use.

➤ **Business cards are exchanged after initial introductions at almost every initial meeting so be sure to have a sufficient supply of your cards.**

- When handing out business cards, be sure to give one to everyone starting with the eldest or most senior person in the room.
- The polite standard is to offer the business card with both hands, with the letters oriented towards the receiver. Hold the top corners of the card with the thumb and index fingers. Accepting a business card is also done with both hands.

- After you have received a business card from your contacts, make sure to examine it carefully then place it in a business card case or lay it in front of you on the table, face-up.
  - Never write on the business card, put it casually in your bag or haphazardly stash it in a folder.
  - Make sure your business card includes your job title.
  - The respect with which you treat your partner's business cards — and your own for that matter — is indicative of how one will treat the relationship.
- **During the meeting always be polite, professional, and patient regardless of the outcome. Failure to do so will cause others to lose face and may damage the relationship beyond repair.**
- Remember that initial meetings will likely focus on establishing relationships. It may be seen as rude to launch a sales pitch during the first meeting with a prospective client.
  - Business discussions are usually conducted in a very straight forward and formal manner.
  - It is important that the most senior team member leads the way so that your Singaporean counterparts can keep track of the hierarchy and seat you accordingly.
  - Your presentation should always be accompanied by top-notch material which should be well structured and informative and be accompanied by backup material, including charts and figures.
  - Since questioning authority is a taboo, it is important to encourage questions after making a presentation. Ask many open questions and go over important points several times to make sure you have interpreted all their communication correctly.
  - Singaporeans are very sensitive to retaining face. Therefore, they control their behaviour and emotions in public, do not confront or criticise other people openly and employ an indirect communication style.
  - Speaking too loudly is considered rude.
  - Deference to harmony and cooperation is a must.
  - Be patient. Sales cycles take longer than in the West.

## 5.5 – NEGOTIATIONS

Singaporeans are generally more cautious in wanting to arrive at the best deal. As a result, negotiations happen at a slow pace and typically comprise of many meetings. However, the pace of decision-making is quicker than in other Asian countries. Be prepared, patient and willing to allocate the necessary time and resources to engage and participate in what can often be a protracted process. Accepting this will serve you well.

- **You should proceed slowly, cautiously, without emotional display, seeking compromise.**
- Throughout your negotiations, show respect to elders and those in senior management.
  - Vague and ambiguous answers are often given in place of blunt disagreement in order to save face and preserve harmony. Phrases like 'I'm not sure' or 'We'll see' will often be used to mean 'no'. An explicit no will most likely never be uttered directly as Singaporeans do not want to embarrass the other person. In a similar vein, you should avoid using it too, while nodding or saying yes may only demonstrate comprehension.
  - You will be expected to read between the lines as Singaporeans are likely to hint at a point rather than making a direct statement, since that might cause the other person to lose face.
  - Although they avoid conflict in the meeting room, Singaporean business people are tough negotiators. They like to bargain but it is not a loud, aggressive style of bargaining. Instead, it is a slow, thoughtful process that allows relationships to grow.

- Be prepared with a mental list of concessions you would be willing to make in order to seal the deal.
- Your starting price should leave room for negotiation, so don't offer your best price initially. Business is more price than quality driven. You can be direct when dealing with issues of money.
- Do not use high-pressure tactics – you might be outmanoeuvred.
- A signed contract does not preclude later discussion of "settled" points.
- When a business deal is closed, it is often appropriate to exchange a small gift amongst the group involved in the negotiations. An important note, Singapore government officials and government employees may not receive gifts. It is illegal for them to do so.

## 5.6 – SOCIAL ENGAGEMENTS

Establishing relationships among friends and co-workers in Singapore through dining and entertainment is an important part of the country's business culture. Do not be surprised if business dinners are scheduled for every night of the week. Accepting invitations to social events is crucial as Singaporeans place a high value on long-term relationships. Do not become exasperated by this use of your time. View it as a necessary element of the relationship-building process.

- **Table manners are rather relaxed in Singapore, although there are certain rules of etiquette.**
  - Wait to be told where to sit. There is often a seating plan which typically aligns to the hierarchy of the group.
  - Avoid discussing religion or politics or telling jokes until you know someone well.
  - It is appropriate to allow your host to order all the dishes.
  - Drinks and appetizers are uncommon.
  - Wait for the host to tell you to start eating or for them to begin eating.
  - Food is usually put on the table with all dishes served at once and to be shared by all.
  - Food is served on a revolving tray when you are in a Chinese restaurant.
  - Never eat the last piece from the serving tray.
  - Chopsticks should be returned to the chopstick rest after every few bites and when you drink or stop to speak. When finished with your meal, place chopsticks on the chopstick rest (setting them on your plate means you are not finished).
  - Chinese may offer a banquet. A Westerner should always reciprocate with a banquet of equal value before departing.
  - Be on time for dinner in a Malay home. The dinner is usually served immediately with no drinks or appetizers beforehand.
  - Indians always wash their hands before and after a meal.
  - Malays and Indians use a spoon along with their hands to eat, but never use your left hand to eat. If given a spoon and fork, hold the spoon in your right hand and use your fork (left hand) to push food onto the spoon.
  - The host offers the first toast. You may reply later in the meal.
  - Never let the serving spoon touch your plate and never share your leftovers.
  - It is impolite to refuse initial offers of food or drink. To refuse seconds, place your hand above your plate and say, "No, thank you."
  - After the meal, expect to stay involved in discussion for at least an hour, further building relationships.

## 5.7 – GIFT GIVING ETIQUETTE

Gift giving is a common way of expressing thanks. There are cultural differences in how the three main ethnic groups treat gifts which are listed separately below. The following points are true of all groups, however. Small business-related gifts are usually sufficient. Gifts are typically wrapped, presented and received with two hands, and opened after the presenter leaves.

### ➤ Gift giving to ethnic Chinese:

- A gift may be refused three times before it is accepted.
- Do not give scissors, knives or other cutting utensils as they indicate that you want to sever the relationship. Letter-openers, however, are an exception.
- Do not give clocks, handkerchiefs or straw sandals as they are associated with funerals and death.
- Elaborate gift wrapping is imperative. Wrap gifts in red, pink, or yellow since these are happy colours but avoid white, blue or black paper.
- Never wrap a gift for a baby or decorate the gift in any way with a stork.
- Do not give odd numbers as they are unlucky. As are green hats.
- Do not bring food if invited to a formal dinner party. Bring a small gift of fruit, sweets, or cakes, saying that it is for the children. Flowers do not make good gifts as they are given to the sick and are used at funerals.

### ➤ Gift giving to ethnic Malays:

- Never give alcohol.
- Do not give toy dogs to children.
- Do not give anything made of pigskin as Malays are Muslim.
- Give the gift when you are departing, rather than when you arrive.
- Wrap gifts in red or green paper but avoid white as it symbolizes death and mourning.
- If you give food, make sure it is halal.

### ➤ Gift giving to ethnic Indians:

- If you give flowers, avoid frangipani as they are used in funeral wreaths.
- Money should be given in odd numbers, so give S\$11 rather than S\$10.
- Wrap gifts in red, yellow or green paper or other bright colours as these bring good fortune. Do not wrap gifts in white or black.
- Do not give leather products to a Hindu.
- Do not give alcohol unless you are certain the recipient imbibes.

## 5.8 – MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Once you have begun to work with a Singaporean businessperson, it is important to maintain the relationship as your counterpart will most definitely take a long term view of business relationships. You should invest time and energy into nurturing the relationship by continuing to engage with your contacts. Avoid the temptation to focus on other activities and other deals once a contract is signed. You can demonstrate your long term intent by some of the following examples:

### ➤ Commit to regular contact.

- An ongoing exchange of information helps each party understand the other so they can build on their mutual interests. Often there is nothing in particular to discuss yet your partners will

continue to communicate frequently. Relationships maintained in this way tend to have fewer problems and raise fewer complaints.

➤ **Continue to make visits to Singapore.**

- Given the preference for face-to-face business, visits to Singapore will remain a regular feature of your export venture even after the relationship has been established. These trips help maintain your already established relationship. You should also try to bring the same team with you on each visit so your buyers will be dealing with people they've already gotten to know.

➤ **Consider hosting your partners through reciprocal visits.**

- You may also like to consider reciprocal visits. Paying for your partners in Singapore to visit your Canadian operations is a good way of keeping them informed and motivated. About half of the trip should be devoted to rest and relaxation, leaving time for building the relationship and an affinity for Canada and Canadian products. When hosting Singapore guests, remember the effort they put into hosting and looking after you in Singapore and reciprocate this.

## SECTION 6: EXPORT SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

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### 6.1 – B.C. TRADE AND INVESTMENT REPRESENTATIVES AND CANADIAN TRADE COMMISSIONERS

The Canadian and British Columbia governments support export market development by locating staff in priority markets in order to provide current and on-the-ground advice and guidance to B.C. companies. Making use of these individuals is highly recommended, particularly if you have limited on-the-ground experience in the Singapore market.

#### B.C. Trade and Investment Representatives

British Columbia's trade and investment team is not currently based in Singapore. However, the South East Asia team can be a useful service and are active throughout the region.

- **B.C. Trade & Investment Representatives can assist current and potential B.C. exporters with a variety of services, including:**
  - Generating market intelligence and trade leads for specific B.C. products;
  - Advising on market entry and development strategies;
  - Providing contacts to an extensive network of international industry, government and community influencers and partners;
  - Supporting B.C. exporter's participation in trade missions, tradeshow and related events; and,
  - Providing training to introduce B.C. exporters to world markets.

#### Canadian Trade Commissioner Service

The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, with on-the-ground-intelligence and practical advice on foreign markets, helps Canadian companies make better, more timely and cost-effective decisions in order to achieve their goals abroad. As part of Canada's embassies and consulates, Trade Commissioners have privileged access to foreign governments, key business leaders and decision-makers.

- **Whether doing business abroad for the first time, or looking to expand into new markets, Trade Commissioners can work with you to:**
  - Determine if you are internationally competitive; decide on a target market; collect market and industry information and improve your international business strategy;
  - Determine the level of opportunity that exists in a particular market, advise on appropriate approaches to the market and gauge the amount of effort and resources required;
  - Connect with industry associations, potential buyers and partners, professionals in financial and legal institutions, agents and other business representatives to support the execution of your export strategy;
  - Assist with due diligence by conducting basic preliminary research on a local company from public sources, and the resolution of business problems and issues that you face in foreign markets.

Please note that conducting thorough background checks on local companies or providing translation or interpretation services is not part of the mandate of either the [B.C. Trade and Investment](#)

[Representatives](#) or the [Canadian Trade Commissioners](#). These services should be acquired directly by private sector service providers operating in foreign markets.

## **6.2 – LOAN AND COST SHARING PROGRAMS AND PROMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

Provincial and federal governments (and other agencies) offer several programs and engage in promotional activities aimed at supporting and developing exporters.

- [BC Ministry of Agriculture – Market Development](#)
  - The Ministry offers the BC Agrifood and Seafood Market Development Program aimed at further enabling B.C.'s agriculture, food and seafood sectors to increase export sales. This includes support for marketing skills training, market research and strategic planning, as well as participation in international market development activities.
- [Canada Pavilion Program](#)
  - The Canada Pavilion Program, a key component of markets and trade development, is aimed at making trade show participation easier at the world's premier food and beverage events 'where the world shops'. Trade shows continue to be integral in taking advantage of opportunities arising from market access gains.
- [Canada Brand](#)
  - Agriculture and Agri-food Canada has developed a suite of free tools to help Canadian agri-food and seafood companies gain a marketing advantage by linking Canada's positive image to their products. These include Canada Brand graphics and a photo library of high-quality images for use in marketing and promotional materials.
- [Export Guarantee Program](#)
  - Export Development Canada (EDC) will provide a risk-sharing guarantee on behalf of program participants to their financial institutions in order to provide firms with access to increased working capital and term financing.
- [Xpansion Loan Program](#)
  - A loan program offered by the Business Development Bank of Canada aimed at companies wishing to expand their market, including export markets. Eligible activities include launching new marketing campaigns, developing new products, obtaining a certification, expanding foreign or domestic markets, and others.

## SECTION 7: APPENDICES

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### **APPENDIX 1 – KEY CONTACT INFORMATION**

#### **B.C. Trade and Investment Representatives – South East Asia**

Website: <https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/global/trade-and-investment-representatives/southeast-asia/>

Email: [asia.pacific@gov.bc.ca](mailto:asia.pacific@gov.bc.ca)

#### **Canadian Trade Commissioner Service**

Website: [www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/sg](http://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/sg) or <http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/singapore-singapour/>

Email: [spore-td@international.gc.ca](mailto:spore-td@international.gc.ca)

#### *Singapore Office*

One George Street, #11-01

Singapore, 049145

Singapore

Tel: (011-65) 6854-5900

Fax: (011-65) 6854-5915

#### **Key Singaporean Government Agencies**

##### **Regulatory Authority for Meat, Poultry, Produce and Seafood imports**

Import & Export Division

Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (HQ)

JEM Office Tower, 52 Jurong Gateway Road

#14-01

Singapore 608550

Tel: (65) 6805 2992 (General Enquiries)

Fax: (65) 6334 1831

Website: <http://www.ava.gov.sg>

##### **Regulatory Authority for Processed and Retail Packed Foods**

Food Control Division

Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (HQ)

JEM Office Tower, 52 Jurong Gateway Road

#14-01

Singapore 608550

Tel: (65) 6805 2992 (General Enquiries)

Fax: (65) 6334 1831

Website: <http://www.ava.gov.sg>