

Why export?

Many businesses consider exporting because the domestic market offers limited growth and profits. By contrast, the international marketplace offers enormous potential, but exporting presents many new challenges and demands, and often requires a totally new approach to your business.

Getting Started

Exporting should not be seen as a short-term strategy. Whilst there are no hard and fast rules for success in exporting, you will need to invest a great deal of time, effort and money in “doing your homework”.

Overseas markets are different, and it is important that you know your market intimately before you go overseas. You also need to understand the technical aspects of exporting such as documentation, financing and freight. This involves doing a great deal of “desk research” and preparing a detailed market study. Agencies such as Austrade (the Australian Trade Commission), Australian Customs Service and the Australian Bureau of Statistics can provide much of the required information.

When considering an overseas market, you should first research trade barriers such as tariffs, duties and quotas. Also look at labelling and other product regulations, identify your competitors, and establish contact with potential agents and distributors.

Cultural and language differences also need to be considered. Your product, labelling and advertising may need to be adapted to satisfy the cultural, religious or political sensitivities in your overseas market. You may also need to have instructions, technical details and specifications translated into the local language, to avoid confusion.

Many export transactions occur in foreign currencies, and it is important that you understand the impact of foreign exchange rate movements on your business. You should consult the international department of your bank to ensure all the financial aspects of your export venture are covered.

Why Import?

Many of the tips about dealing with foreign companies and countries when exporting are equally relevant when importing.

It is important that you consider the demand for the product/s you intend importing, and look at the quality, presentation and packaging, and retail price of the goods. Trade consulates can assist in identifying overseas products and suppliers. Your industry association or the Chamber of Commerce may be able to provide contact details for counterpart organisations overseas.

Special considerations for importers

Customs and quarantine regulations apply to the import of products from overseas countries, and certain categories of goods are subject to import control (ie, permission must be obtained before the goods arrive in Australia).

The Australian Customs Service must clear all goods imported into Australia by air, sea or post, and importers are responsible for obtaining Customs clearance. Most imported goods are subject to Goods and Services Tax (GST), which is collected by Customs in the same way as customs duty.

It is a good idea to engage the services of a licensed Customs broker who can help you deal with the regulations and tariff requirements, pick-up and delivery of your cargo, and the processing of formal import documentation. It is wise to ensure that your broker is a member of the Customs Brokers Council of Australia, by phoning (07) 3252 1348.

As you are legally liable for products that you import into Australia, it is important to consider purchasing product liability insurance. Your insurer will require details of the product/s to assess the level of risk.

Assistance for Exporters and Importers

Information and advice on international trade is available from:

NT Department of Business, Economic & Regional Development:

Business Licence Information Service (BLIS)	1800 193 111
Trade Support Scheme (TSS)	(08) 8946 9550
Austrade	13 28 78
Australian Customs Service	1300 363 263
Australian Quarantine & Inspection Service	(08) 8237 7080 – 1800 020 504
Australian Institute of Export	(08) 8410 6233
International Business Council	(08) 8936 3100

For more information refer to other Fast Facts in this series or contact the Territory Business Centre on the numbers below or visit the TBC website

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