

In Search of New Markets

The conclusion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations in 1994 substantially changed world trade. The result has been the opening up of international trade to global competition. Since then, it has become imperative for countries who have enjoyed preferential access to certain markets to find new markets and diversify their products.

This has short-term effects for developing Commonwealth member countries in the form of a possible reduction in their market share arising from an erosion of the protection guaranteed under the Lomé Convention, the General System of Preferences, the Caribbean Basin Initiative, etc., which they have used to build their exports.

It also has long-term beneficial effects if the greater market access under a rule-based system can be used by competitive enterprises in these countries to open up new markets. There are, for example, significant opportunities in the agricultural, textile, clothing and manufacturing sectors. Countries also need to familiarise themselves with the rules of the World Trade Organisation so that they can avoid heavy penalties should their trade policies and practice violate these rules.



(above) The Secretariat assists exporters in identifying and targeting new export market opportunities through contact promotion programmes

(right) The main driving force in the integration of the world economy is growth of international trade



Through the CFTC, the Secretariat assists in sensitising member countries to the rules, regulations and requirements of the new global trading environment; in their accession to the WTO; in finding new markets for their traditional and non-traditional products; in diversifying their products; and in improving their competitiveness in the global market. The focus of this assistance has been building institutional capacity in member countries and at the regional level.

Among recent activities, the Secretariat has published, in collaboration with the International Trade Centre and UNCTAD/WTO, a *Business Guide to the Uruguay Round*, and assisted Tonga in accession to the WTO. It has also organised a regional workshop on trade and environment for the Caribbean region and helped the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to prepare a plan for the

development of standardisation and quality assurance to improve the competitiveness of export products.

The Secretariat also helps small states to draw up a strategic framework which will contain practical recommendations to increase their trade.

Trade Promotion Assistance

The Secretariat assists exporters in identifying and targeting new export market opportunities through contact promotion programmes in which business people from developing countries visit markets and introduce their products to importers in these target markets. In 1995, for example, the Secretariat introduced representatives from the Mauritius garment industry to the Swedish and Danish clothing markets. Similar programmes were organised for Swaziland businesspeople to Western Europe, for Kenyans to South Africa and Namibia, and for Malawians to Zambia and Tanzania.

In order to enhance the competitiveness of industrial products from the Eastern and Southern Africa region, help was given to the COMESA Secretariat to prepare guidelines on the costing of industrial products. A study was also done in Zimbabwe, on women in export development, which identified areas for further technical assistance that would help bring more women into the export market sector.

An integrated marketing programme helps exporters of specific products – such as processed foods and herbal medicines – to meet the specifications, standards and requirements of the target export market. It involves product adaptation and development, design, quality, packaging and test marketing. Ghana, for example, was helped in such a way in exporting its jewellery and selected handicrafts to the United States.

Since 1994, as part of its assistance in institutional capacity-building, the Secretariat has organised, in collaboration with the Government of Singapore, an advanced training programme on export market development for middle-level management from export promotion agencies in countries such as India, Malawi, Pakistan, Tanzania and Uganda.

The Secretariat also helped to organise a regional symposium in June 1997 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for Asian Commonwealth member countries on trade promotion and development in the emerging multi-lateral trading system.

Export Sector Investment Promotion

The Secretariat helps some developing member countries to promote themselves as suitable places to invest in. In 1996/97, it conducted a Business Intensification Programme for the Sri Lankan electronics industry by bringing together Sri Lankan entrepreneurs and potential European investors to discuss and enter into joint venture arrangements. Brunei Darussalam is being given similar assistance to identify and attract investors from Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia and Malaysia to set up plants for the manufacture and export to other developing countries of products in the non-oil manufacturing sector.

Trade and Environment

No agreements were reached in the Uruguay Round on environment-related trade issues. Ozone depletion and global warming have since emerged as major pollution issues, and the primary industry and services

TOURISM MARKETING

With the reduction of tariffs, the general dismantling of non-tariff barriers, and the lowering of the preferential access under the General System of Preferences and the Lomé Convention following the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, the export earnings of a number of Commonwealth African-Caribbean-Pacific countries have fallen. As a result, affected countries, especially the island states, are giving increased priority to developing their tourism sector. The Secretariat provides assistance with marketing and strategic planning to ensure balanced and sustainable growth.

In 1996, the Secretariat assisted the Southern African Development Community in the preparation of a tourism marketing plan and strategy, as well as in the development of tourism protocols to facilitate co-operation, co-ordination and harmonisation in the tourism sector throughout the region.

In the Caribbean, The Bahamas, facing environmental problems such as the destruction of the terrestrial and marine ecosystems because of extensive tourism, has been assisted in workshops to build institutional capacity for the development of sustainable tourism and Nevis was assisted by a CFTC-funded expert in a project for the development of its tourism sites and services. In April 1997, the Caribbean Tourism Organisation received technical assistance in holding the first Caribbean Tourism Investment Conference in The Bahamas and for the preparation of an action plan to accelerate investment in the tourism industry.



Integrated marketing programmes help exporters meet the specifications, standards and requirements of export markets

sectors are coming under as much scrutiny as the manufacturing sector. The list of environmental issues has assumed a global character, often involving either the physical spill-over of pollutants or concern over loss of plant and animal genetic resources.

The continuing integration of the world economy has made it imperative that countries become increasingly sensitive to each other's behaviour and actions. The main driving force in this integration is the growth of international trade.

In October 1996, the Secretariat assisted Trinidad and Tobago in organising a Caribbean regional workshop on trade and environment to sensitise countries, and particularly their business enterprises, to the trade and environment issues being considered by the WTO. The workshop also prepared the countries for participation in the discussions leading to the formulation of trading rules based on environmental considerations. About 50 participants attended the workshop, including from business enterprises, regional organisations, and representatives of international bodies.