

CHAPTER 3

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC COUNSELING AND ASSISTANCE



U.S. Commercial Service, ITA, U.S. Department of Commerce

The U.S. Commercial Service helps U.S. companies, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, increase their international market share and sales. Through its global network of more than 1,700 trade specialists located in 108 domestic offices and 150 posts in 80 countries, CS works one-on-one with companies through every step of the exporting process, helping them leverage world-class market research, promote their products and services in target markets, meet qualified international buyers and distributors, and overcome challenges and barriers they may encounter while doing business in international markets.

Much of the trade-related information and many of the trade-related tools the CS offers are accessible through the Internet at www.export.gov. Companies can also call 800-USA-TRAD(E) to speak with a CS trade specialist about their specific issues. For hands-on, customized assistance, companies can work directly with CS trade specialists located in any of the CS offices around the country (often referred to as *U.S. Export Assistance Centers*). All domestic CS trade specialists are directly linked to their international counterparts (often referred to as *foreign service commercial officers*) in markets around the world, ensuring that CS customers get the comprehensive in-country assistance they require.

International companies interested in sourcing U.S. products and services can find the tools and information they need on the Web Site of the U.S. Commercial Service post—usually a U.S. embassy or consulate—in their respective country. Alternatively, they can contact the CS post in that country directly. A complete listing of domestic and international locations and contacts is available at www.export.gov.

Contact: For more information on the U.S. Commercial Service, visit www.export.gov. To contact a CS trade specialist, call 800-USA-TRAD(E) (800-872-8723), fax (202) 482-4473, or e-mail tic@ita.doc.gov.

Trade Information Center, CS, ITA, U.S. Department of Commerce

CS trade specialists working in the TIC provide export counseling and assistance on Asia, Western Europe, Latin America, Africa, the Near East, the Western Hemisphere, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Country-specific counseling is available at no cost on country conditions; commercial laws, regulations, and practices; standards; government procurement; certification requirements; distribution channels; business travel; opportunities and best prospects for U.S. companies; tariffs, taxes, and customs procedures; commercial difficulties encountered in doing business abroad; and other market information. The TIC is the U.S. government's designated point of contact for help with documentation to qualify for NAFTA benefits and other free trade agreements. The TIC, through www.export.gov, provides extensive country and regional information, including a downloadable NAFTA Certificate of Origin, a tariff and Harmonized System number lookup tool, and contact information on foreign customs offices and trade offices in the United States.

Contact: For general information on exporting, visit www.export.gov. To contact a trade specialist working in the TIC, call 800-USA-TRAD(E) (800-872-8723), fax (202) 482-4473, or e-mail tic@ita.doc.gov.

China Business Information Center, CS, ITA, U.S. Department of Commerce

The China Business Information Center (BIC) is a comprehensive resource provided by the U.S. Commercial Service for small businesses that are interested in or are already doing business in China. The China BIC consists of an extensive Web site, a call center staffed by trade specialists, and a China seminar series, which is available nationwide. These seminars provide comprehensive guidance on entering the Chinese market and accurately portray the realities and challenges inherent in doing business there.

Contact: For information on doing business in China, visit www.export.gov/china. To contact a U.S. Commercial Service trade specialist working in the China BIC, call 800-USA-TRAD(E) (800-872-8723), fax (202) 482-4473, or e-mail chinabic@mail.doc.gov.

Middle East Business Information Center, CS, ITA, U.S. Department of Commerce

The Middle East Business Information Center is a comprehensive resource provided by the U.S. Commercial Service for small businesses that are interested in or are already doing business in the Middle East and North Africa. The Middle East BIC consists of an extensive Web site and a call center staffed by trade specialists.

Contact: For information on doing business in the Middle East and North Africa, visit www.export.gov/middleeast. To contact a U.S. Commercial Service trade specialist for this region, call 800-USA-TRAD(E) (800-872-8723), fax (202) 482-4473, or e-mail tic@ita.doc.gov.





Business Information Service for the Newly Independent States, CS, ITA, U.S. Foreign Commercial Service, U.S. Department of Commerce

The Business Information Service for the Newly Independent States (BISNIS), an initiative of the U.S. Commercial Service, provides market information, practical advice, trade and partner lead opportunities, and referrals to U.S. and Eurasian companies to facilitate U.S. exports and other forms of business development with Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union. BISNIS services, which are free for U.S. and Eurasian companies, include

- BISNIS Online (www.bisnis.doc.gov), containing the latest market information, leads, and resources for doing business with Eurasia
- E-mail updates on market reports and leads from Eurasia
- U.S. export and partner leads for Eurasia (*BISNIS Trades & Tenders* and *BISNIS Search for Partners*)
- BISNIS FinanceLink, for U.S. companies and companies in the newly independent states that have agreed on a U.S. export transaction and seek financing
- ExpoLink Eurasia, a unique Russian-language promotion tool for U.S. companies' goods and services
- Consultation and guidance for both practical and strategic business development decisions
- *BISNIS Bulletin*, the bimonthly BISNIS newsletter highlighting commercial developments in Eurasia

Contact: For information on doing business in the newly independent states, visit www.bisnis.doc.gov. To contact a CS trade specialist working in BISNIS, call 800-USA-TRAD(E) or (202) 482-4655, fax (202) 482-2293, e-mail bisnis@ita.doc.gov, or visit www.bisnis.doc.gov.

U.S. Embassies and Consulates, U.S. Department of State

U.S. Department of State staff advance U.S. foreign economic policy interests abroad and report extensively on the impact of economic developments on U.S. foreign trade and investment policy objectives. Foreign service officers (FSOs) provide political and economic briefings and advise U.S. firms on the business culture and practices of the host country. They advocate on behalf of U.S. business with key ministries in foreign countries and seek to build foreign government support for U.S. foreign economic policy goals. FSOs are responsible for commercial work in 95 embassies and 35 consulates not covered by the Commercial Service. FSOs work closely with their CS colleagues worldwide.

Contact: For more information, call the U.S. Department of State main line at (202) 647-4000. Visit the U.S. Department of State's Office of International Information Programs at <http://usinfo.state.gov>. Find out more about U.S. embassies at <http://usaembassy.state.gov>.



Regional Bureaus, U.S. Department of State

Country desk officers in regional bureaus in Washington, D.C., maintain regular contact with overseas diplomatic missions and can provide U.S. exporters and investors with economic and political information from both a country and regional perspective.

Contact: Visit the regional bureau's home page at www.states.gov/countries/, or contact a particular regional bureau as follows: Africa, (202) 647-3502; East Asia and Pacific, (202) 647-3487; Europe, (202) 647-4174; Near East and North Africa, (202) 776-8457; South Asia, (202) 736-4255; or Western Hemisphere, (202) 647-3341.

Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) maintains more than 60 offices overseas, mostly located in U.S. embassies, to represent the interests of U.S. agriculture and carry out market promotion. The FAS also offers assistance to exporters of U.S. farm and forest products in 20 agricultural trade offices overseas. The FAS supports U.S. food exporters with marketing and assists them at foreign trade shows. Agricultural FSOs perform advocacy activities in policy negotiations, monitor and report on market access, and represent individual U.S. exporters in foreign customs disputes.

Contact: Call FAS Outreach and Exporter Assistance at (202) 720-7420. Call the AgExport Services Division at (202) 720-7420. The FAS home page is www.fas.usda.gov.

