



## [Exporting garden tools to Europe](#)

The European market for garden tools has recovered strongly from a dip in 2013. This offers opportunities for exporters from developing countries. The social aspect of gardening and the popularity of growing your own food are important drivers of garden tool sales. As functional objects, the most important properties of garden tools are their functionality and durability. Europe's growing consumer group of gardeners aged 55 years and over especially values ergonomic design and comfort.

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## 1 . Product description

The product category of gardening equipment is quite broad. It consists of:

- hand tools
- power tools
- mowers
- watering equipment.

Because developing countries mainly produce hand tools for the garden, this study focuses on these. Garden hand tools include tools for growing and protecting plants, such as

- weeding tools
- garden hoes and forks
- spades
- shovels
- rakes
- planters
- pruners
- pick mattocks
- brooms
- axes

- lawn edgers.

This study uses the following codes to indicate trade in garden tools:

Table 1: Product codes

Harmonised System (HS)	Prodcom	Description
8201.1000	2573.1010	Spades and shovels, with working parts of base metal
8201.2000	2573.1020	Forks, incl. pitchforks, with working parts of base metal
8201.3000	2573.1030	Mattocks, picks, hoes and rakes, with working parts of base metal (excluding ice axes)
8201.4000	2573.1040	Axes, billhooks and similar hewing tools, with working parts of base metal (excluding ice axes)
8201.5000	2573.1050	Secateurs and similar one-handed pruners and shears, including poultry shears, with working parts of base metal
8201.6000	2573.1060	Hedge shears, two-handed pruning shears and similar two-handed shears, with working parts of base metal
8201.9000	2573.1070	Scythes, sickles, hay knives, timber wedges and other hand tools of a kind used in agriculture, horticulture or forestry, with working parts of base metal (excluding spades, shovels, mattocks, picks, hoes, rakes, axes, billhooks and similar hewing tools, poultry shears, secateurs and similar one-handed pruners and shears, hedge shears, two-handed pruning shears and similar two-handed shears)

## Quality

### Functionality

Garden tools need to be functional. Their specific function depends on the tool.

### Durability

Garden tools must also be durable. They should be able to withstand regular contact with dirt and water. The weakest part of the tool is where the metal is attached to the handle. To prevent breakage, the attachment must be firm. The design of garden tools also needs to prevent rust. Use, for example, stainless steel or galvanised metal.

### Product safety

Product safety is an important requirement for garden tools. Remember this when designing your products. Garden tools often need to be sharp, tools like trowels, spades and axes. Although gardeners often wear protective gloves and/or shoes, the tools must be safe to use.

## Labelling

- Information on the outer packaging should correspond with the packing list sent to the importer.
- Labels on the outer box of garden furniture should include the:
  - producer
  - consignee

- material used
- quantity
- size
- volume
- caution signs.
- EAN or barcodes on the product label are common in Europe.
- Your buyer will specify what information they need on the product labels or on the item itself. For instance logos or 'Made in ...' information. This is part of the order specifications.
- Use English for labelling, unless your buyer indicates otherwise.

## Packaging

### Importer specification

You should pack garden tools according to the importer's instructions. They have their own specific requirements for:

- the use of packing materials
- the filling of boxes
- palletisation
- the stowing of containers.

Always ask for the importer's order specifications. These are part of the purchase order.

### Damage prevention

Proper packaging minimises the risk of damage caused by transport. How an item is packaged for export depends on how easily it can be damaged. Packaging should ensure that the items inside a cardboard box cannot damage each other. It should also prevent damage to the boxes when they are stacked inside a container.

Packaging therefore usually consists of inner and outer cardboard boxes. The inner boxes are filled with materials to protect the products, for instance bubble wrap or paper, depending on the buyer.

### Dimensions and weight

Packaging must have easy-to-handle dimensions and weight. Such standards are often related to labour regulations at the point of destination. The buyer will have to specify them.

Boxes are usually palletised for air or sea transport. Exporters have to make maximum use of pallet space.

### Cost reduction

Nesting the items inside a container reduces costs. Packaging has to provide maximum protection. However, using excess materials or shipping 'air' must also be avoided. Waste removal is a cost to buyers. You can reduce the amount and diversity of packing materials by:

- partitioning inside the boxes by using folded cardboard
- matching inner and outer boxes by using standard sizes
- considering packaging and logistical requirements when designing your products
- asking the buyer for alternatives.

### Material

Importers are increasingly banning wooden crating and packing. This is due to their unsustainability and the high cost of the material and its disposal. Economical and sustainable packing materials are more popular. Using biodegradable packing materials can be a market opportunity. For some buyers, it may even be a demand.

### Wooden tool handles

Wooden tool handles can mould or crack. Dry the wood properly after production. Condensation inside the container during transport can cause mould. This is caused by humid air that becomes colder at night and warmer during the day. Proper air ventilation inside the container is required to

prevent this. Before shipment, inspect containers for air holes. You can also place products to reduce humidity amongst the cargo. Make sure the importer's instructions are followed in this regard.

### Consumer packaging

As gardening has become a widespread hobby, garden tools make good gifts. Consumer packaging is therefore not uncommon in this product group, especially online.

## 2 . Which European markets offer opportunities for exporters of garden tools?

European imports of garden tools have recovered strongly from a dip in 2013. Developing countries supply about a third of these imports. Europe's main importers of garden tools are:

- Germany
- the Netherlands
- the United Kingdom
- France

Especially the United Kingdom is an interesting focus country, with a strong market for developing countries' exports.

### Trade statistics

Where is consumer demand?

- Europe's demand for garden tools is considerably higher than its production. This drives the need for imports, making Europe an interesting market.
- European consumption increased slightly from €420 million in 2010 to €431 million in 2014, with an average annual growth rate of 0.7%.
- European consumption of garden tools is highest in Germany at €91 million. France follows at €74 million and the United Kingdom at €50 million.

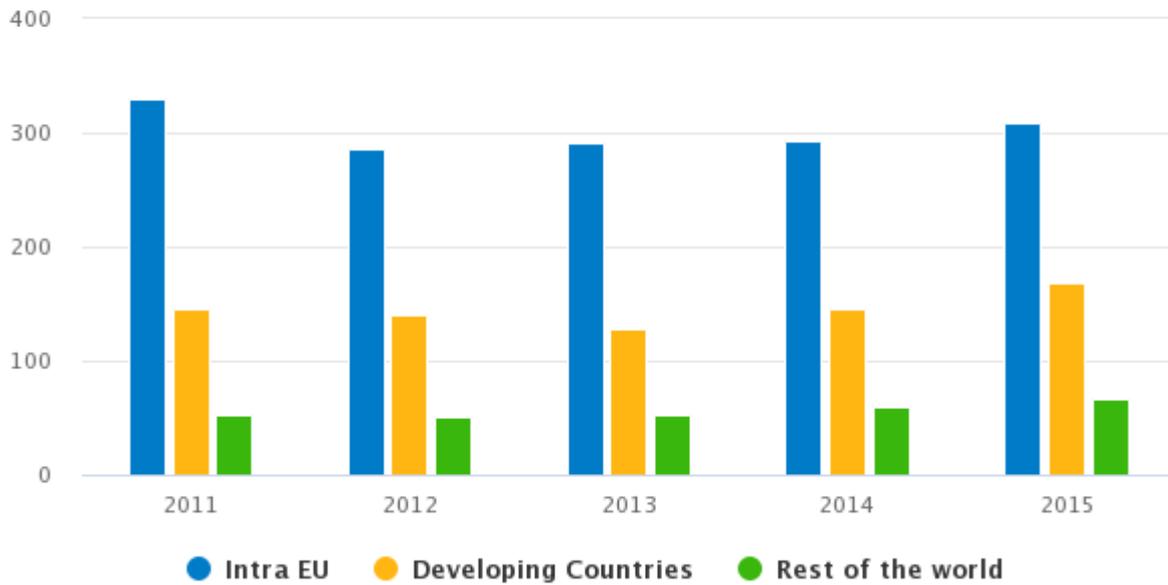
What is the role of European production in supplying European demand?

- European production of garden tools is relatively stable at around €300 million in value. Between 2010 and 2014, this resulted in a negative average annual growth rate of -0.2%.
- Germany, France and Finland are responsible for 25%, 14% and 13% of European garden tool production respectively.

Which countries are most interesting in terms of imports from developing countries?

### Figure 1: European imports of garden tools

By main destination

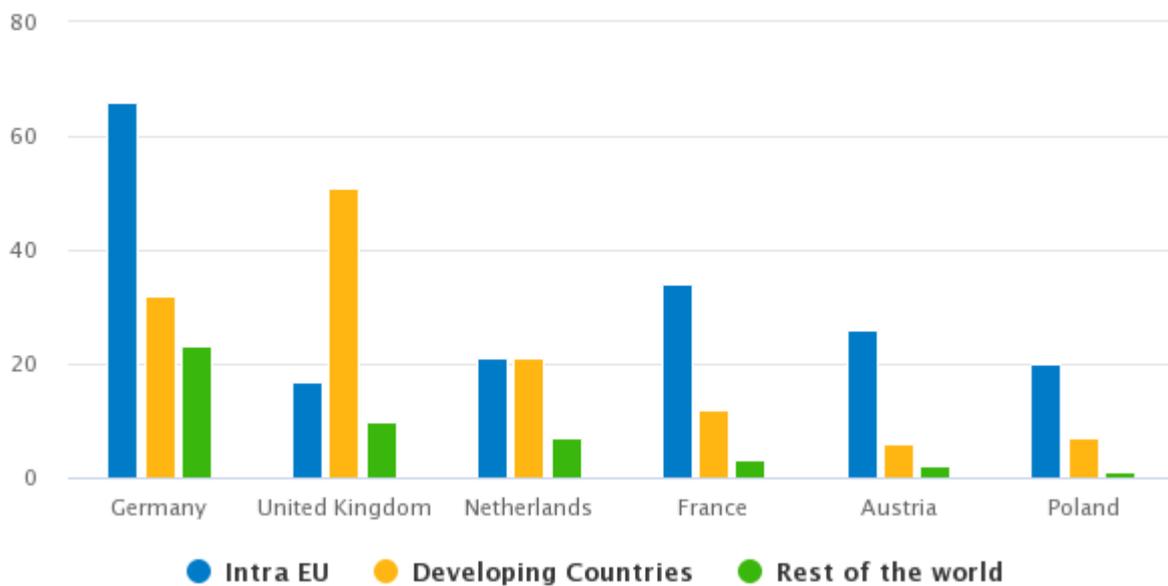


Source: Trademap

Source: Trademap

### Figure 2: Main importers of garden tools

2015

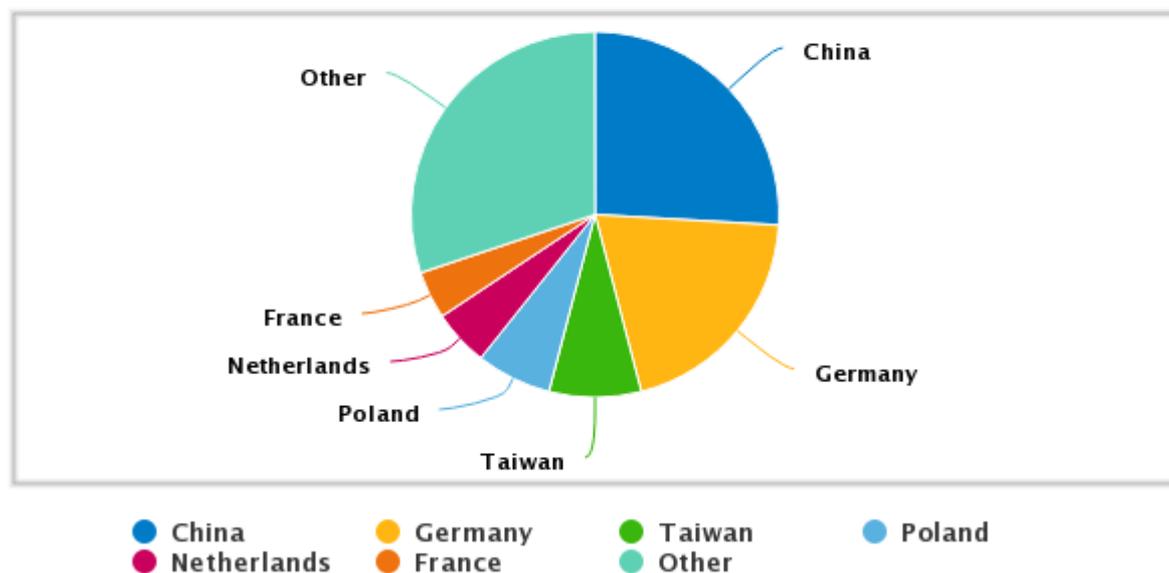


Source: Trademap

Source: Trademap

Figure 3: Leading suppliers of garden tools

2015



Source: Trademap

Source: Trademap

- In 2014 and 2015, European imports of garden tools recovered strongly from a dip in 2013. They reached €544 million in 2015. This resulted in an average annual growth rate of 0.7% between 2011 and 2015.
- In the coming years, European imports are expected to keep growing moderately.
- Developing countries supplied 31% of European imports in 2015, amounting to €169 million. This share is predicted to increase slightly in the coming years.
- Germany is Europe's leading importer of garden tools, with €120 million in 2015. The United Kingdom (€77 million), the Netherlands and France (€49 million each) follow.
- These main importing countries also lead in imports from developing countries, especially the United Kingdom, which sources 65% of its total garden tool imports from developing countries.
- In the United Kingdom, imports from developing countries grew strongly by €12 million between 2011 and 2015. In the Netherlands and France these imports increased by €3.0 million and €1.5 million respectively. However, in Germany they decreased slightly by €1.5 million.
- China is Europe's main supplier of garden tools, with 26% of imports in 2015. Other leading suppliers among developing countries are India and Vietnam.

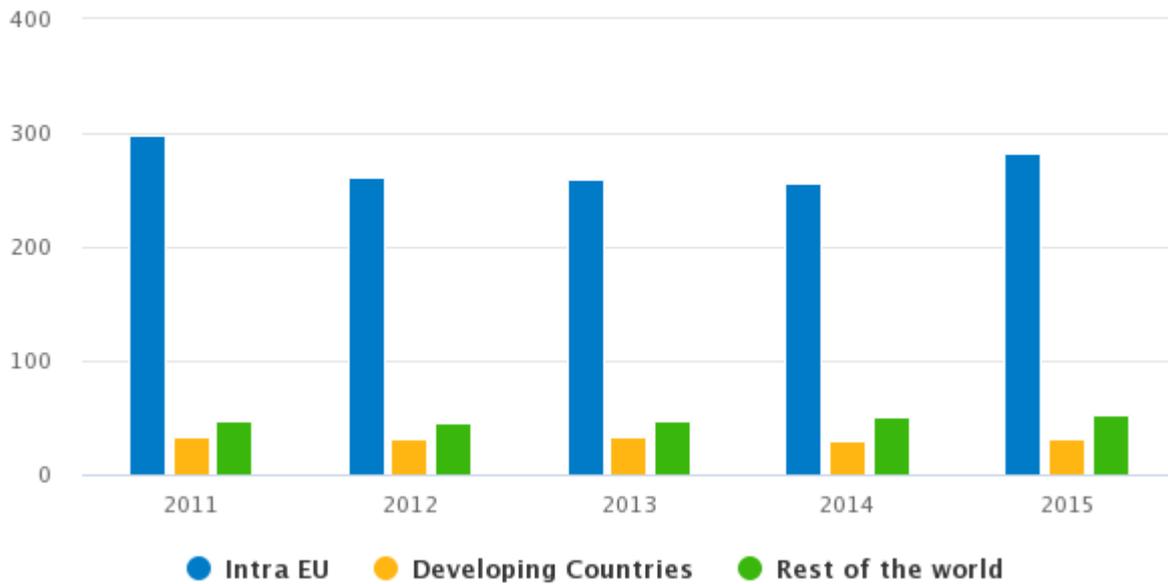
## Tips

- Focus on Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and France. With strong imports from developing countries, the United Kingdom is an especially interesting market.
- Compare your products and company to the strong competition from China, as well as India and Vietnam. You can use [ITC Trademap](#) to find exporters per country. You can compare by:
  - market segment
  - price
  - quality
  - target countries.

What role does export play in supplying European demand?

Figure 4: European exports of garden tools

By main destination



Source: Trademap

Source: Trademap

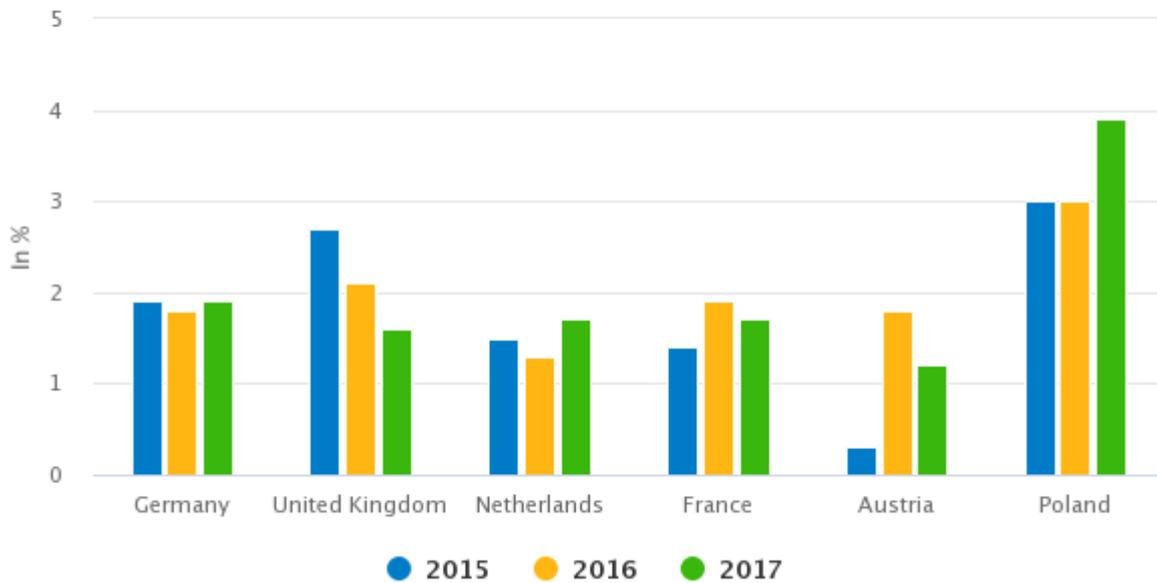
- European exports of garden tools mainly regard trade within Europe.
- Germany (€106 million), Poland (€40 million) and Finland (€34 million) are Europe's leading garden tool exporters.

## Macro-economic indicators

Real private consumption expenditure

## Figure 5: Real private consumption expenditure growth

Change from previous year



Source: Eurostat

Source: Eurostat

- Private consumption expenditure is an important indicator for the European home decoration market. The sector is closely linked to economic conditions. When money is tight, consumers postpone buying non-essential items until they have enough disposable income.
- Between 2015 and 2017, European private consumption expenditure is expected to increase. This means that consumption of luxury and decorative products is likely to rise. Especially in emerging markets, consumers will have more money available to spend on these products. Consumers in mature markets already spend a fair amount of money on luxury items, so growth in their consumption is expected to be moderate.

### 3. Which trends offer opportunities on the European market for garden tools?

As a place for active and passive leisure, the garden has become a main focus in consumption within home decoration & home textiles. European consumers want to be close to nature. They are looking for a retreat from everyday work stress. Gardens are becoming an extension of the living room, where they can relax and enjoy the company of friends and relatives, with food and drinks. This has made the garden a place to decorate, often in line with the style used inside the home.

This passive enjoyment of the garden is complemented by an active component in the form of gardening. This is a hobby and a source of pride for an increasing number of European consumers.

#### Grow your own

Growing your own vegetables and herbs is a growing trend. European consumers view it as healthier and more sustainable than going to the grocery store. Presenting their home-grown crops at the table also gives them a sense of pride and status. This trend drives the demand for garden tools. These could be tools for cultivation, maintenance, disposal and composting.

#### Tips

- Offer garden tools for the entire gardening process.
- Include tools for different types of gardeners, from hobbyists to more dedicated gardeners.

The latter often need more specialised tools and are slightly less price-sensitive.

- As gardening is an important hobby to many, gardening tools are popular gifts. To appeal to the gift market you can:
  - add consumer packaging
  - create sets of garden tools
  - stimulate a passion for collecting.

## Spending time together

Gardening also has an important social value. Garden plots and allotments can create a sense of community, while gardening at home brings the family together.

### Tips

- Offer starter kits to make gardening accessible for everyone.
- Include garden tools and sets for kids. These can range from toy-like items to genuine versions of adult tools.

## Convenience

The average hobby gardener wants convenience when it comes to garden tools. They do not mind getting their hands dirty, yet do not want gardening to be a physical strain or burden. This is especially important to Europe's large consumer group of gardeners aged 55 and older. Garden tools increasingly meet their needs, with ergonomic design and offering more comfort.

### Tips

- Include accessories in your product range to keep tools handy, such as toolboxes and tool belts.
- Offer ergonomic work tools and useful aids, such as gardening kneepads or kneeling boards. This prevents muscle ache and caters especially to elderly gardeners.

## Indoor or small gardens

Urban consumers often do not have a garden. They do their gardening on a balcony, roof terrace, windowsill or even at the office. This gives consumers the same benefits (being close to nature, bonding, pride) as the outdoor experience. Garden tools for the middle segment increasingly need to match the style of the interior. As such, style trends can influence their design.

### Tips

- Supply hand tools or miniature garden tools for gardening in small spaces, or for houseplants.

- Add colour and decoration to outdoor garden tools. This helps the mid-segment consumer to match their indoor and outdoor style.
- Distinguish your garden tools using innovative ideas or superior aesthetics.
- Provide gift packaging.

For more information on trends, see our [special study about the garden](#). Also see our study about [trends in home decoration & home textiles](#) for general trends in the sector.

Other relevant studies about outdoor home decoration include

- [birdhouses](#)
- [garden furniture](#)
- [garden pots](#)
- [watering cans](#).

## 4 . With which requirements should garden tools comply to be allowed on the European market?

See our study about [buyer requirements for home decoration & home textiles](#) for the requirements applying to garden tools.

With which legal and non-legal requirements must your product comply?

General product safety

The European Union's [General Product Safety Directive](#) applies to all consumer products, including garden tools. It states that all products marketed in Europe must be safe to use.

### Tips

- Read more about the [General Product Safety Directive at the EU Export Helpdesk](#).
- Use your common sense to ensure normal use of your product does not cause any danger.
- The [RAPEX database](#) lists products that the European Union rejects at the border, or which are withdrawn from the market. Check the database for garden tools for an idea of what issues may arise.

European legislation

Europe has specific [packaging and packaging waste legislation](#). It for instance restricts the use of certain heavy metals.

Europe also has [requirements for wood packaging materials](#) (WPM) used for transport, such as

- packing cases
- boxes
- crates
- drums
- pallets
- box pallets
- dunnage.

## Restricted chemicals: REACH

The REACH regulation lists restricted chemical residues in products that are marketed in Europe. For garden tools, this applies to arsenic and creosotes as wood preservatives for the handles.

### Tips

- The European Chemical Agency provides useful information and tips on REACH. See for instance:
  - [REACH Annex XVII](#), a list of all restricted chemicals
  - [Information on REACH for companies established outside Europe](#)
  - [Questions & Answers on REACH](#).

## Timber Regulation

It is important to note that the European Union's [Timber Regulation](#) also applies to garden tools containing wood. To export these tools to Europe you must prove any timber used was harvested legally. Products with a [FLEGT](#) or [CITES](#) license comply with the Timber Regulation.

### Tips

- For more information, see the [Frequently Asked Questions about the Timber Regulation](#).
- The EU FLEGT Facility has more information about [FLEGT licensing](#).
- For more information on CITES permits, you can contact your [National CITES Management Authority](#).

## What additional requirements do buyers often have?

### Sustainability

Social and environmental sustainability make your products stand out in the European market. Consider sustainable raw materials and production processes. European buyers increasingly demand the following certification schemes.

- [Business Social Compliance Initiative \(BSCI\)](#): European retailers developed this initiative to improve social conditions in sourcing countries. They expect their suppliers to comply with the BSCI Code of conduct. To prove compliance, the importer can request an audit of your production process. Once a company has been audited, it is included in a database for all BSCI participants.
- [Ethical Trading Initiative \(ETI\)](#): This initiative is an alliance of companies, trade unions and voluntary organisations. It aims to improve the working lives of people across the globe that make or grow consumer goods.

You can use standards such as [ISO 14001](#) and [SA 8000](#) to read up on sustainable options. However, only niche market buyers demand compliance with such standards.

### Tips

- Optimise your sustainability performance. Reading up on the issues included in the

initiatives will give you an idea of what to focus on.

- Buyers appreciate a good story. If you can show that you have considered your company's performance, this may be a competitive advantage. Consider, for instance performing a self-assessment like the [BSCI Self-Assessment for Producers](#), or following a code of conduct such as the [BSCI Code of Conduct](#) or the [ETI base code](#).
- For more information, see our special study on [Sustainability in the Home Sector](#).

## What are the requirements for niche markets?

### Fair trade

The concept of fair trade supports fair pricing and improved social conditions for producers and their communities. Especially when the production of your garden tools is labour-intensive, fair-trade certification can give you a competitive advantage.

Common fair trade certifications are from:

- [World Fair Trade Organization](#) (WFTO)
- [Fairtrade International](#)
- [Fair For Life](#).

### Tips

- Ask buyers what they are looking for. Especially in the fair-trade sector, you can use the story behind your product for marketing purposes.
- Check the [ITC Standards map database](#) for more information on voluntary standards and their requirements, including fair production.

### FSC certification

[FSC](#) (Forest Stewardship Council) certification is the most common label for sustainable wooden products, including garden tools with wooden handles. The FSC label guarantees that a product's source material comes from responsibly managed forests. These products are especially popular in western European markets.

### Tip

- For more information, see the [three steps towards FSC certification](#).

## 5 . What competition will you be facing on the European garden tool market?

The competition for garden tools does not differ significantly from the sector in general. See our study about [competition in home decoration & home textiles](#) for a general overview. Also refer to our [top 10 tips for doing business with European buyers](#).

## 6 . Which channels can you use to put garden tools on the European market?

The market channels and segments for garden tools do not differ significantly from the sector in general. See our study about [market channels and segments for home decoration & home textiles](#) for a general overview.

### Market channels

In Europe, garden tools are often distributed through:

- garden centres
- DIY (do-it-yourself) outlets.

As the gift value of gardening tools increases, they are also becoming available from:

- general department stores
- lifestyle stores.

### E-commerce

E-commerce is increasing and can help you reach a broader range of customers. Retailers often combine online and offline channels. Consumers research and purchase products online, where they shop around and compare prices.

To supply e-commerce, you have to be able to work with:

- individual packing
- individual labelling
- limited minimum orders.

### Tips

- See our special study about [E-commerce in the 21st Century](#) for more information.
- Target e-tailers if you can meet the additional requirements.

### Trade directories and fairs

These trade directories and fairs are useful sources for finding trading partners in Europe.

- Garden centre directories in [Ireland](#), [the United Kingdom](#), [the Netherlands](#) and [Belgium](#)
- [Ambiente](#), Frankfurt, February
- [Maison et Objet](#), Paris, January (main) and September
- [Spoga + gafa](#), Cologne, August (specifically for the garden)
- [Tendence](#), Frankfurt, August

### Market segments

Garden tools are mainly a mid-market product. Within this mid-market, the following sub-segments exist:

- low-mid
- mid-mid
- high-mid.

#### Low-mid

In the lower-middle segment, consumers consider gardening a leisure activity. Such tools are functional but not overly precise or professional. Kids' tools belong in this segment, due to their hobby-like nature. Prices are generally reasonable.

## Mid-mid

In the mid-mid segment, the decoration of garden tools is important. The tools must look good, as well as be functional. They have a gift-like nature, meaning:

- they often come in attractive packaging
- they follow interior trends in their colour and decoration
- both retail and lifestyle brands are relatively important
- they frequently come in sets, also to allow beginners to start with a complete kit.

## High-mid

At the higher end of the mid-market, garden tools are well designed. Both in terms of looks and performance. This gives consumers owning or gifting these tools a sense of status. It allows them to identify with famous TV gardeners. The high-mid segment also includes professional tools. These are often endorsed by famous gardens (such as [Kew](#)), horticultural societies or TV gardeners. Distribution is selective, through specialist gardening shops or designer stores.

## 7 . What are the end-market prices for garden tools?

Prices for garden tools cover a wide range, as this is a broad product group. Table 2 gives an example of the varying prices for a trowel and a rake (for leaves).

Table 2: Indicative consumer prices for garden tools

	Low-mid	Mid-mid	High-mid
Trowel	€2.40-2.99	€2.99-10.00	€10-35
Rake	€5.99-11.00	€11-30	€30-60

For small garden tools like trowels, there are minor price differences. The majority of these tools are in the mid mid-market. Larger tools like rakes however, have a broader price range. This also depends on their handle.

### Tips

- The value perception of your product in the chosen segment determines its price. Offer what is expected in your chosen target segment, for instance in terms of functionality and durability. Your price needs to match that of similar products. To determine your price, study consumer prices in your target segment. Adjust your prices accordingly.
- Understand your segment. Offer a correct marketing mix to meet consumer expectations. Adapt your business model to your positioning in the market.

Figure 6: Indicative price breakdown for garden tools, mark-ups in %



Source: ProFound, 2014

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).