

# How to find buyers on the European cut flowers and foliage market

As an exporter of cut flowers or foliage you are always looking for new buyers. It takes more than growing an attractive flower to acquire the ideal portfolio of customers for your business. Here are 10 tips to help you find the buyers you are targeting in Europe.

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## 1. Start with thorough market research

Start by identifying the countries in Europe and market segments that offer opportunities and the sales channels to reach these customers. For instance, do you want to sell through the auction system, or go directly to wholesale customers in European countries?

See our study [CBI Trade Statistics](#) to obtain insight into market sizes. This will help you to put trade flows into perspective and to understand the potential in various European countries as importers and consumer markets.

See CBI study on the [channels and segments in the cut flower and foliage](#) sector to find out about the differences between sales channels, and to identify which best fits your strategy to reach buyers in your target market segment.

Read our studies on opportunities in specific European markets, such as [Roses in Germany](#), [Carnations in the UK](#), European market for summer flowers and others.

## 2. Check the websites of sector organisations

European wholesalers are often member of a sector association. Many of these associations publish lists of members on their website.

These members could be your potential clients. These associations might also help you to get to know trade partners and to obtain information about the local flower sector. Check the website of the sector association in a specific country and the segment that offers opportunities for you.

The main wholesaler associations are:

### The Netherlands

- [VGB](#), the Dutch Association of Wholesalers in Floriculture Products. The association represents most Dutch wholesalers, and its members account for 65% of total Dutch exports. A [member list](#) is provided on the website.

## Germany

- [BGI](#), the German wholesale and import association. BGI represents at least three-quarters of all German wholesalers. The website contains a [list of members](#).

## United Kingdom

- [FWTA](#), the Flower Wholesale Trade Association. FWTA represents 14 British wholesalers. A [member list](#) is provided on the website.
- [FITA](#), The Flower Import Trade Association. The Flower Import Trade Association (FITA) is the Association for importers of cut flowers in the UK. Its members are ten of the most prominent importers of quality cut flowers from many countries, but especially from Colombia.

## Italy

- [Angroflora](#), the Italian board for flower and plant wholesalers. The website is in Italian, but a member list is provided under [Aziende Associate](#).

## 3. Visit trade fairs

Trade fairs offer opportunities to meet with current and potential buyers. Participating or just visiting trade fairs can help you to:

- Find prospective business partners in Europe and beyond (trade fair catalogues provide useful details);
- test market receptivity to your products and company;
- gain market insight.

To make your visit to trade fairs and exhibitions as successful as possible, do some research on your focus markets. Before you go, make a reasonable number of appointments to make your visit worthwhile.

Do not expect that visiting or participating in fairs generate orders immediately, especially if you are participating for the first time. However, your visit could generate a lot of new contacts with prospective trade partners and give you an opportunity to meet existing clients. Whether this results in business largely depends on your follow-up. After participating in several trade fairs, your presence should be noticed and you will begin to be regarded as a reliable partner.

The leading trade fairs in the European flower industry are:

- [IFTF](#), the Netherlands
- [FloraHolland Trade Fair](#), the Netherlands
- [IPM](#), Germany
- [Flormart-Miflor](#), Italy
- [Four Oaks Trade Show](#), the UK
- [Iberflora](#), Spain
- [Florissimo](#), France
- [Salon du Végétal](#), France

## 4. Check exhibitor lists on trade fair websites

If you can't visit trade fairs, at least visit their websites. Most trade fairs have a menu on their website with a list of participants and exhibitors. These are your potential clients.

## 5. Follow trade news

You should read the news and gain insights into market developments and competition by following the floricultural trade press. This can also help to find potentially interesting companies. Trade magazines are now being published online. Together with online news portals, these sources provide a steady flow of daily news to get to know the leading players in the European flower industry.

Some of useful online news resources are:

- [Vakblad voor de Bloemisterij](#)
- [Floraculture International](#)
- [Hortibiz](#)
- [Hortinews](#)
- [Floranexus](#)
- [Flowerweb](#)

## 6. Ask your local sector organisation

Assistance with market entry can also be found through local business support organisations and branch organisations in your country. Your own national sector organisation might have lists of foreign buyers interested in doing business in your country. Contact your sector organisation for more information.

## 7. Find buyer contact details through online registries and directories

The flower industry sector has several (online) registries through which you can find buyers. Here are a few:

- Search company listing on [Flowerweb](#);
- [Handboek BeP](#), with addresses of Dutch companies active in the flower industry.

More general company directories can be used to find wholesalers in European countries. Some online directories that cover the European market are:

- [Europages](#);
- [Kompass](#)
- [Wer Liefert Was](#).

## 8. Make sure you have a good quality website

You need a professional website because the internet is usually the first place a prospective buyer will go to find out more about you and your offer. You need to be found online and to have a representative website if you want to do business in Europe. The first impression of your website will determine whether a potential buyer will pursue contact with you.

### Tips:

Get a professional to design your website in accordance with European buyer expectations. Some growers in developing countries decide to have their website made by a European website builder with experience in the flower industry. Check out websites of European growers because sometimes the website builder is mentioned at the bottom of the homepage.

Maintain your website carefully, because it can capture the attention of your prospects and, more importantly, generate business. Treat your online presence like a digital showroom that gives your business visibility on a worldwide scale.

If you optimise your website for search engines, you are more likely to be found by buyers. See the [Google Search Engine Optimization Starters Guide](#) (PDF).

## 9. Send a mailing or newsletter

Once you have a list of potential partners, it is time to draw their attention to your company.

Here are some suggestions:

- Sending a mailing or newsletter via email is common practice and cost-effective.
- Do not write too much in your mailing or newsletter. It is better to send short, factual news.
- Write about news and developments in your company. Preferably, something of interest to your customers that strengthens your company's brand. For instance, obtaining MPS-A certification or installing new cold store facilities.
- Do not expect any reaction at first. Your prospects did not ask for your emails, so do not push.
- Send a newsletter no more than four times per year. Always offer the possibility to unsubscribe. If companies do not want to receive your news, take them off the mailing list. This shows your professionalism.
- It is better to have a small database of customers and high-value prospects than large numbers with low value!
- Never approach potential partners if you are not ready. Your website should be of good quality, and you should be able to reply to a request within 24 hours. And you should be able to answer in good English.


## 10. Use social media


Social media is a good means to get your business exposed to a larger circle of potential buyers. In the flower industry, Facebook and LinkedIn are followed, and also Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter offer access to new circles.


Recommendations:

- If you're not familiar with working with social media, invest time to find out how to use these media in your business. [LinkedIn](#), for instance, offers many helpful articles. Check the LinkedIn website for information about getting started on LinkedIn, growing your presence, and best practices.
- You might consider assigning a trained staff member to follow up the work related to social media.

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