



CBI
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

CBI Product Factsheet:

Fresh Cut flowers and foliage in the European specialised retail market

Introduction

Flower shops are the main sales channel for cut flowers in Europe. Competition from supermarkets and other unspecialised stores is increasing. In response, flower shops are lowering prices, diversifying their product offerings, paying more attention to their shop design and online shops, and organising joint purchasing. European flower shops are becoming more professional than ever. The specialised retail channel is supplied by specialised wholesalers through cash and carries or "Flying Dutchmen" who bring flowers to the florists' shops. A large share of the flowers in the specialised channel is sourced through the Dutch flower auction, which thus serves as the main point of entry for developing country (DC) exporters who want to supply the specialised market.

Description of the product and the market

Cut flowers are flowers or flower buds (often with some stem and leaf) that have been cut from the plant bearing it. Cut flowers are used for home decoration and for decorating the interior of offices, as gifts for birthdays and special Holidays, for weddings, celebrations, and for funerals. Cut flowers are sold in bouquets with or without foliage, in bunches of the same flowers (mono-bunches), and as single flowers. There are numerous kinds of popular cut flowers and foliage varieties in the European market. The most important commercial cut flowers in Europe, in terms of turnover, are roses. Other popular flowers are e.g. chrysanthemums (spray and disbud), carnations, tulips, lilies, gerberas, cymbidium and freesias. The corresponding HS code for international traded cut flowers is 0603 – "Cut flowers and flower buds of a kind suitable for bouquets or for ornamental purposes, fresh, dried, dyed, bleached, impregnated or otherwise prepared". Foliage is grouped under HS code 0604 – "Foliage, branches and other parts of plants, without flowers or flower buds, grasses, mosses and lichens, of a kind suitable for bouquets or for ornamental purposes, fresh, dried, dyed, bleached, impregnated or otherwise prepared".

The cut flower market can be divided into two markets: the specialised and the unspecialised retail market. The first encompasses all the specialised florists and street market stalls in which flowers are the primary product, and the latter includes the unspecialised retailers that sell flowers in addition to their regular assortment, like supermarkets and gas stations. The specialised retail market includes flower shops, market stalls, and online flower shops.

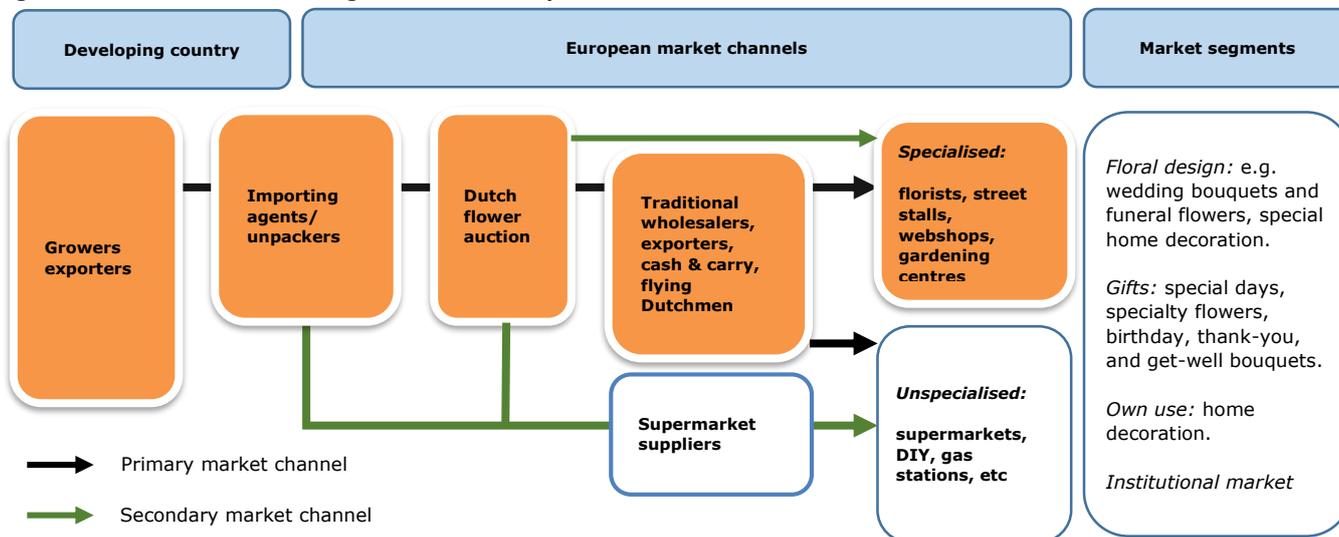
Fresh cut roses on display in a flower shop



Source: Shutterstock.

Flower shops generally sell a whole range of flowers and plants. Flower shops range from small to larger stores with indoor and outdoor sales displays. Flower shops usually also sell hardware, like vases and pots, baskets of flower bulbs, and associated gifts. The range of flowers and plants sold in flower shops is generally larger than the assortment sold in supermarkets. Street market stalls and kiosks vary in size and assortment. Internet sales are becoming increasingly important and many florists and flower relay organisations now sell flowers online. However, there are differences between European countries, with respect to market share and the general presence of flower shops, street and market stalls and online sales.

Figure 1: Market channels and segments in the European market for cut flowers



In the specialised flower retail market, supply from the auction clock and traditional wholesalers or cash and carry establishments play a dominant role. In order to limit transaction and logistics costs, a number of specialised trading companies and flower auctions have emerged. Many florists buy at cash and carry establishments or from 'Flying Dutchmen' (fixed route line riders or exporters) bringing flowers from the Dutch flower auction or from wholesalers to florists. The auction clock and cash & carry's of the wholesalers offer a wide assortment of fresh flowers and foliage. The presence of a large number of buyers at the auction (physically or through E-commerce applications) means that the auction offers an easy point of access to the market and competitive prices. However, the auction clock also has disadvantages. Since there is less contact between buyer and seller, it is more difficult to build long-term committed trade relationships.

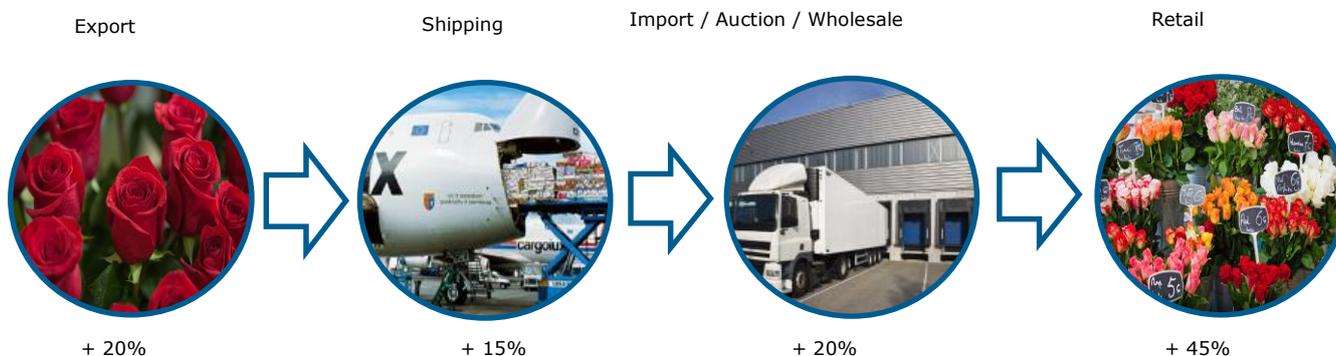
Table 1: Main advantages and disadvantages of trading via the flower auction

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many customers from the specialised florist market and traditional wholesalers and therefore large demand for many types and varieties of flowers Neutral and transparent price setting, based on supply and demand Increases in supply volumes can easily be absorbed. Temporary oversupply can (easily) be sold at the auction. Guaranteed payment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As you do not know who your buyers are before the sale, it is difficult if not impossible to address (changes in) requirements of specific market segments, or to prepare promotional activities with buyers. Higher overall auction costs due to the structural cost of the clock system.

The majority of florists are connected to a so-called flower relay organisation such as [Fleurop-Interflora](#) and [Euroflorist](#), which are flower delivery chains with which individual florists are associated. The benefit of belonging to such an organisation is that by providing support in marketing and sales, product and design, and international links, a relay organisation allows a florist in one part of the country to 'send' flowers to a person in another part of the country by using the network of associated florists. The flower relay organisations have extensive online marketing and sales facilities.

The figure below gives an estimation of the price breakdown of fresh cut flowers in the European market. This breakdown indicates value-added and gross margins in the different parts of the supply chain. Auction and wholesale costs are estimated to account for about 20% of the final shop price, shipping accounts for an estimated 15% and the price paid to the exporter for a further 20%. It is estimated that about 55% of the costs of specialised flower shops in Europe are made up of the buying of the flowers.

Figure 2: Price breakdown



Product specifications for the specialised retail market

The Netherlands is the main trade hub for cut flowers in Europe. The Dutch flower auction ([FloraHolland](#)) is the central marketplace for buying and selling cut flowers. There is an excellent system of traders and logistical service providers to facilitate the trade in cut flowers. The Dutch Flower Auctions Association ([VBN](#)) issues a range of specific standards for trade in cut flowers that are widely used in the European cut flower trade.



Source: Flower Watch

There are specific requirements regarding quality, size, packing and information on the product set by the Dutch Flower Auctions Association ([VBN](#)) in agreement with growers and traders. These requirements must be met by growers in order to sell flowers at the auction. The auction serves as an important trade platform for DC exporters, especially for those supplying the specialised florist market channel. The requirements listed below are therefore mainly these set by the auction, which are widely adopted as minimum requirements across the entire cut flower industry.

Quality and grading: Cut flowers may be traded if they meet VBN requirements. These requirements consist of two parts: [general requirements](#) for all flowers supplied and [specific requirements for individual flowers](#). Products which do not meet the requirements regarding pre-treatment, minimum quality, bacteria content and ripeness are not traded and are destroyed if necessary ([VBN](#)).

- Cut flowers are traded in 3 quality groups: A1, A2 and B1, depending on the extent to which they meet the quality and grading criteria. A1 cut flowers must meet all the minimum requirements on internal quality, freshness, freedom from parasites, damage, deficiencies, deviations, contamination, absence of leaves on the lower 10 cm of the stem, stem straight and sturdy enough to bear the flower, uniformity of colour, thickness, sturdiness and bouquet volume, and proper packaging. Any deviations from these requirements may result in downgrading from A1 to A2, or B1. Cut flowers that do not meet at least the criteria for B1 are not traded.

Growers are responsible, through self-assessment, for grading and the reliability of the information they provide with their lot at the Dutch flower auction. However, the auction monitors customers' claims for refunds to check supplier reliability. Such claims may arise for example from the provision of incorrect product information on the consignment note or labels. The Quality Index (QI) is based on the number of customer refund claims or other complaints over the past 8 weeks. Information on your QI, including the number and content of product refund claims, is shared with customers and reported

back to you. In general a grower's good reputation, based on constant quality, is often rewarded by a higher average price per stem.



Source: FloraHolland.

Packaging: Fresh cut flowers are usually exported (by air) in cardboard boxes. After arrival, cut flowers are often repacked into plastic flower containers (buckets) at the auction in the Netherlands or at the importing wholesaler. Choosing the right packaging material is very important. The size of the boxes determines efficient packaging and transportation. Make sure that you check the auction packaging specifications or your customers' own requirements.

Labelling: When exporting to the Netherlands through the auction every stacking cart must be accompanied by a fully and correctly completed consignment note containing information about the stacking cart. Refer to the VBN [general product specifications for Cut flowers](#) for a list of the information required. In addition, every packaging unit needs to be labelled with product and supplier information, namely:

- Supplier number;
- Variety name;
- Amount (e.g. stems) per packaging unit (e.g. bucket, etc);
- The grading marks (Class A1, A2, B1)
- Supplier name.

Additional product labelling will generally take place at the auction/wholesaler or bouquet producer. Additional labelling is often required for direct trade. The barcode and/or QR-code, article code, selling price and other details imposed by the supermarkets should already be printed on labels.

- Tracking/tracing information;
- GLOBALG.A.P., MPS, FFP, or other certification label;
- Pre-labelled with price information (see picture).

Tips:

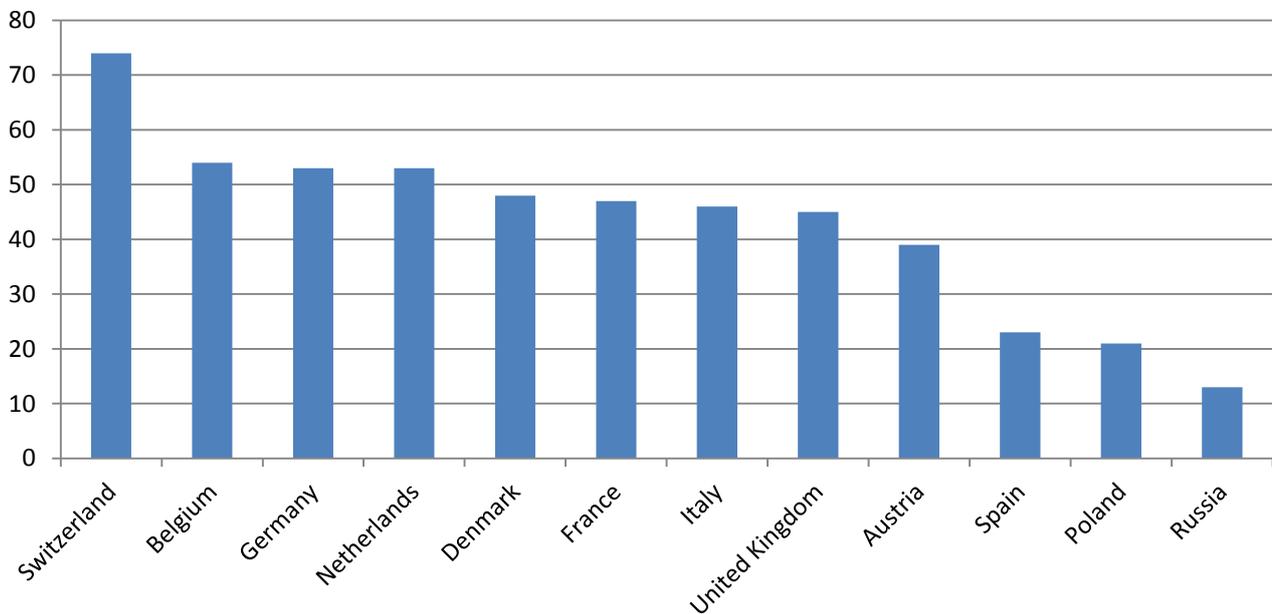
- Visit the VBN website regularly to find out about changes in product specifications.
- Contact your import agent or your potential client about any additional requirements if you wish to supply directly to the European import market without making use of the Dutch flower auction.

What is the demand for cut flowers and foliage on the European specialised market?

General information and figures about consumption and trade developments in the European market for cut flowers and foliage are provided in the [CBI Trade Statistics for Cut flowers](#). Below, developments in the specialised market are explored.

Consumers in more mature and higher income markets in Europe spend between € 20 and € 50 per capita on cut flowers and foliage. Expenditures per purchasing occasion or per bouquet are higher in the specialised retail channel than in the unspecialised channel (supermarkets). People in Switzerland, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands spend the most per capita. Consumption in other countries, such as Spain, is about half of that. Exact data on consumption for many Central and Eastern European countries is missing, however industry sources and export data indicate that consumption of cut flowers is growing. At the moment we estimate cut flower consumption in Central and Eastern Europe at € 10 to € 20 per capita per year.

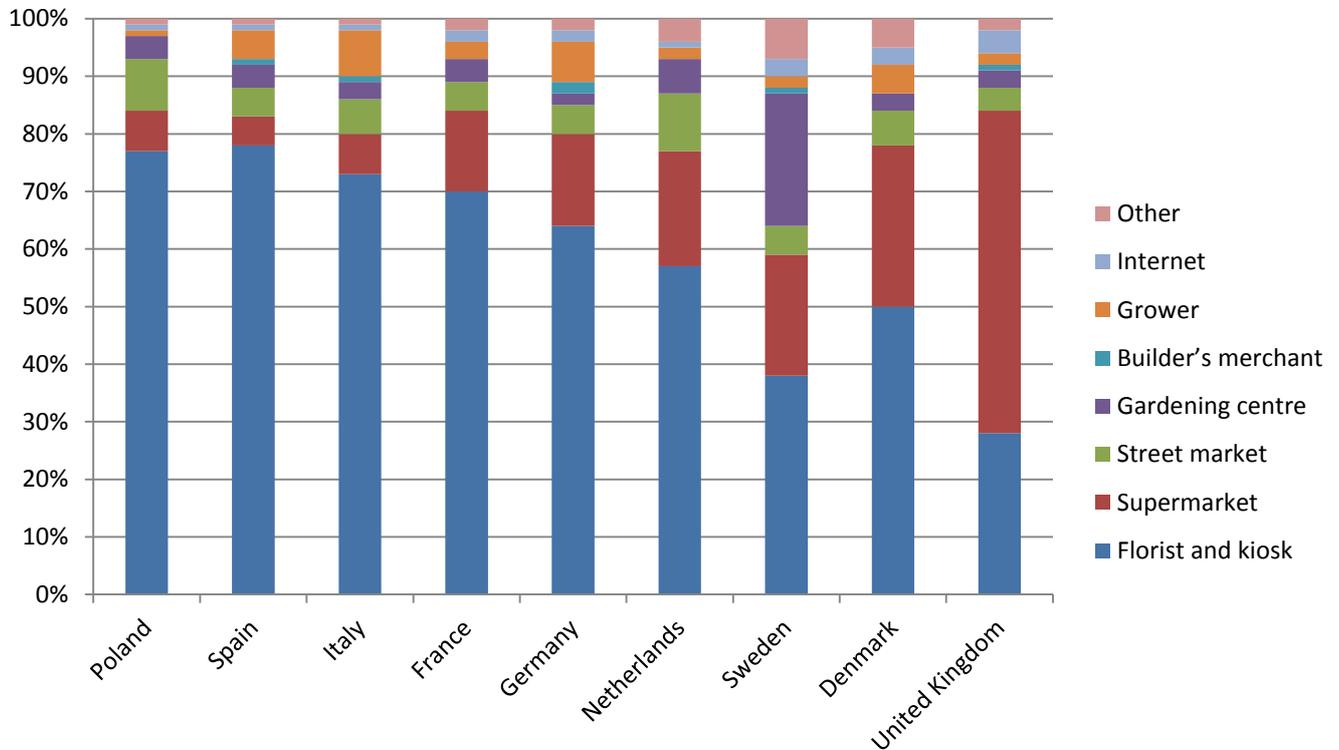
Figure 3: Estimates of consumption of cut flowers in selected countries, in 2013, in Euros per capita



Source: Rabobank, floriculture map, 2015; Eurostat and World Bank.

The market share of the specialised retail channel in total sales of cut flowers differs widely between countries. Florists and street market stalls in Central and Southern Europe generally have a higher market share than in Scandinavian countries and the UK. Data are lacking for many countries, but in general the market share of florists has been declining gradually in favour of supermarkets. In Poland, where florists still had a market share of 77% (of the sales value) in 2013, this share is expected to fall further to 73% in 2018 (Source: FloraHolland / forecast BureauSierteelt.nl). Some regional differences are noteworthy, such as the important role of gardening centres as vendors of cut flowers in Sweden, and the growing importance of online sales, especially in those countries where supermarkets are a dominant player. With the exception of Spain, the market share of florists is expected to fall further in the next few years in all countries listed in Figure 3. However, the specialised retail channel, including street market stalls, gardening centres and online sales, will remain the most important market channel for many years to come.

Figure 4: Market share for cut flowers per sales channel, per country in % of value, in 2013



Source: FloraHolland / Bureausierteelt.nl.

Tips:

- Contact your trade partner to discuss their clients' needs.
- In Central and Eastern Europe, single flowers are particularly popular during special days like First School Day and Labour Day. During other special days like Women's Day, the focus is more on luxury bouquets and mono-bunches.

Flower shops generally demand high quality flowers. It is the main sales channel for specialties and novelty flowers. Informed florists constantly look for opportunities to attract (new) customers and most are willing to experiment with small amounts of new flowers. This is why the Dutch flower auction and specialised cash and carry establishments are so important to this retail market channel: they carry a vast assortment and allow retailers to buy in relatively small quantities. Supermarkets are generally more demanding in terms of product uniformity, conformity to specifications, quantities and pricing. Use of the flower auction and traditional wholesale channel is an easier way of entering the European market.

Tip:

- Good quality is important in every market channel, also for low priced flowers. A vase life of approximately 7 days is often regarded as the minimum.

Bear in mind that prices, quality, assortment and promotion options differ considerably between sales channels and market segments. Florists are more expensive than supermarkets as they carry a larger assortment, provide additional advice and generally produce a variety of bouquets on demand.

Many florist shops specialise in e.g. wedding or funeral flowers. They demand the highest quality flowers. White and red flowers are associated with weddings, although customs differ between countries.

Tip:

- When targeting flowers for specific events like weddings and funerals, find out about consumer preferences and market your flowers accordingly. Find specialised importers and wholesalers to build trusted partnerships.

Consumers in the UK buy more mixed flower bouquets than e.g. consumers in Poland or the Czech Republic. In the Netherlands, Hungary and the Czech Republic mono-bunches of the same flowers are popular.

Tip:

- Discuss consumer preferences with potential buyers and market and promote your flowers for a specific group of customers.

Markets also differ in terms of consumer age profiles. In some mature markets like the Netherlands, Switzerland and Denmark, where the consumption of cut flowers is relatively high, on average purchasing consumers are older. In countries where supermarkets have large market shares – like the UK – and in upcoming markets in e.g. Eastern Europe – cut flower consumers are generally somewhat younger.

Tip:

- Marketing can target specific groups of consumers. Flowers are often bought because of traditions and customs. Specific flowers with specific attributes are preferred for each age group and socio-economic consumer segment. Discuss consumer preferences within target markets with your buyer and align your marketing strategy accordingly.

Tips:

- The Netherlands is an important trade hub for cut flowers and is the main destination for flowers coming from the South. If you want to supply the EU market, consider trading via the [Dutch wholesale industry](#). The Dutch Flower Auction [FloraHolland](#) is a main source for the specialised retail channel. Florists either buy directly at the auction or from specialised wholesalers/cash and carry establishments. Use the extensive network of the Dutch flower industry. Wholesalers can be contacted via [VGB](#).
- Direct trade from developing countries to final markets in Europe is slowly increasing. The role of the Netherlands as a physical trade hub for cut flowers is decreasing somewhat. Explore direct export opportunities to countries within and outside the EU.
- Much of the trade is still financially administered at the Dutch Auction and Dutch trading companies are often still involved. Even with direct trade to Europe – bypassing the auction clock – using the auction trade services provides you with financial security as payments are swift and guaranteed.
- International trade data can be consulted in the [ITC Trade Map](#).

What trends offer opportunities in the European specialised market for cut flowers?

You can find more information on general trends and developments on the European market for cut flowers in [CBI Trends](#).

Florists are competing against growing sales through the unspecialised market channel

Supermarkets are increasingly dominant. Supermarkets offer the much-wanted convenience of one-stop shopping. This becomes more important as people's lives are getting busier with work and other social obligations. In some North-western European markets, florists struggle to compete with cheaper flowers at supermarkets and petrol stations. Many florists respond by also offering a range of lower priced bouquets and mono bunches of flowers such as roses, carnations and gerbera.

The specialised retail market channel via the flower Auction has the advantage of guaranteed payments. Direct trading involves the possibility that suppliers may have to wait longer for payment, which can lead to cash flow problems throughout the entire cut flowers value chain. Dutch wholesale traders export to many European countries. In some countries, they have experienced problems with agreed payment terms. Many florist shops have difficulties in generating a sufficient level of cash flow and paying their bills. Supplying via the Dutch flower auction means payment security. Payments are wired to your account soon after the auction. If you supply directly, you must wait longer (between 30 and 60 days).

Direct trade between producers and European wholesalers, bypassing the Dutch flower auction, is increasing. Wholesale traders set a wide variety of buyer requirements (based on the requirement set by their client) that may deviate from the general auction requirements.

In Northwestern Europe older people buy more flowers than younger people. This has led to worries about future sales and attempts by many flower retailers to attract a younger consumer base.

Tips:

- When targeting the specialised retail channel, find out what buyers really value most. Feedback from the buyers at the auction is a good way to start identifying and improving your company's key success factors.
- When making export plans and promoting your flowers, paying attention to younger customers and their specific preferences can greatly improve your chance of success, as European florists are looking for ways to increase sales in this consumer segment.
- A long vase life is essential in order to supply the European market successfully. Make sure that the product is cut while the buds are not fully open and treated well during transport.
- Make clear agreements with your wholesale trader on payment terms and check past payment behaviour with colleagues. Some grower associations and also FloraHolland offer services that include checks on customers' payment behaviour.

Moderate growth and emerging markets in Europe

Overall demand for cut flowers in the EU is only growing moderately. Population growth and income growth are relatively low in traditional markets in Western, Northern and Southern European countries. Only in Central and Eastern Europe are incomes expected to grow substantially. Central and Eastern Europe has become an important market for cut flowers, but remains small compared to the traditional markets. In Eastern Europe flowers are mostly bought as a present in the specialised market channel (e.g. Mother's day, Valentine's Day, First Day of School). The expected growth in demand in Central and Eastern Europe will also drive demand in the specialised trade channel, as florists and kiosks are the main sales outlets in most of these growing countries. A good way to enter the Eastern European markets is through Dutch traders that have experience in supplying florists in these countries.

Tip:

- Invest in a sustainable relationship with your European buyers and look for possibilities to expand exports to emerging European countries.

Increasing demand for socially responsible and sustainably produced roses in the EU

Mainly in traditional markets such as the UK, Germany and Scandinavia demand for roses that are certified socially responsible and environmentally friendly is increasing. Demand for certified flowers is less prominent in the traditional florist and market stalls sales channels. While large supermarket chains require suppliers to comply with production standards that involve good agricultural practices and environmental and social standards, the florist channel lags behind in terms of such requirements. It is however expected to become more environmentally friendly in the future. Main elements of environmental responsibility are energy consumption during transport, pesticide use, and water use. These elements are translated into the various certification schemes.

Tips:

- Large retailers are starting to demand social standards, like Fairtrade roses, MPS-SQ or ETI. Retailers often ask for a variety of certificates. Such certification is not yet widely demanded by traditional florists, but interest in and demand for certified flowers is growing in the cut flowers market as a whole.
- Compliance with these schemes should not be taken lightly. Audits take place on a frequent basis.
- Find more information about sustainability and corporate social responsibility certification schemes at ITC Standards Map (<http://www.standardsmap.org/>) and CBI Buyer Requirements (<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/cut-flowers-foilage/buyer-requirements/>).

In order to reduce costs and to limit CO2 emissions, shipment by sea container is being developed as an alternative transport modality. Roses are already shipped by container from Colombia and Kenya and the number of sea shipments is increasing.

Tip:

- Follow the developments in sea transport of cut flowers. E.g. through the [GreenChange project website](#).

Longer vase life

Quality is a prerequisite for supplying the EU market. Good quality is important in every market channel, also for low priced flowers. A vase life of approximately 7 days is often regarded as the minimum.

Tip:

- A long vase life is essential in order to successfully supply the EU market. So make sure that the product is cut while the bud is still closed and treated well during transport.

Increasing internet sales and ICT in the supply chain

IT systems are now prevalent in the cut flower marketing process. Online business (E-commerce) is taking over the physical buying process at the auction and at wholesale cash and carries. Telephone calls are replaced by mouse clicks in the web shop. This has had a significant impact on trade. Examples include the auction's distance buying system and (linked) web shops of both the auction- and wholesale trade. This leads to the disconnection of physical supply logistics from the actual trading place. Purchases are based on a digital product image. Growers therefore need to pay constant attention to consistent quality and reliable information as wholesalers prefer to work with the most reliable suppliers. Unreliable or false information about product quality may lead to a lower 'quality rating' and a loss of sales.

Tips:

- E-commerce requires information standards and reliability in terms of quality and the information provided. Learn about buyer requirements, quality control and E-commerce-related IT systems. Check [Floricode](#), a sector initiative for the registrations, standards and codes, for information management in the ornamental industry.
- ICT systems are vulnerable to trust issues. Be consistent and as honest as possible when supplying digital information about product quality.
- Online shop: Stocks are increasingly held at suppliers (upstream) with integrated stock management systems. This requires growers and exporters to respond quickly and efficiently to orders.
- The Dutch Association of Wholesale Trade in Horticultural Products VGB and the Dutch Flower Auction FloraHolland can provide a range of information about available software systems and electronic applications.

What requirements should cut flowers and foliage comply with to be allowed on the European market?

What legal and non-legal requirements must my product comply with?

Plant health

Roses exported to the EU, must comply with EU legislation on plant health. The EU has laid down phytosanitary requirements to prevent the introduction and spread of organisms harmful to plants and plant products in the EU.

Tips:

- Check with the relevant [National Plant Protection Organisation](#) for the exact procedures for obtaining the phytosanitary certificate.
- A model phytosanitary certificate can be found in [Annex VII](#) of the Plant Health Directive.

Roses imported in the EU must be accompanied by an official 'phytosanitary certificate' guaranteeing the phytosanitary conditions of plants and plants products, and also that the shipment has been officially inspected, complies with statutory requirements for entry into the EU and is free of quarantine pests and other harmful pathogens.

Tips:

- Check if your country and the country you want to export to have implemented digital services to facilitate the import and export process. For example in Holland there is the [CLIENT export](#) system, which is also used by the Kenyan and Ugandan inspection authorities.
- Read more about [plant health](#) in the EU Export Helpdesk

Phytosanitary certificates are issued by your National Plant Protection Office (NPPO).

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

Developing new rose varieties is often very expensive. The developers of new varieties want their return on their investments. To prevent just anybody from using these new varieties, they are protected by intellectual property rights. In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on breeders' rights and illegal products are rejected from the market.

Tips:

- Make sure that you know exactly who owns the IPR for your species and pay the necessary royalties.
- An interesting trend is that breeders' only allow their new variety to be grown by a select group of growers. Staying in contact with breeders and offering perfect conditions for growing their new variety may therefore be an advantage.

Full overview of requirements for cut flowers:

For a list of requirements for roses consult the [EU Export Helpdesk](#) where you can select your specific product under chapter 06031100.

Tip:

- Familiarise yourself with the protection frameworks for new plant varieties, for example from the [Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties](#) (UPOV) or the [Community Plant Variety Office](#) (CPVO).

What additional requirements do buyers often have?**CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility**

EU consumers are paying more and more attention to social and environmental circumstances during the production of roses. As a result EU buyers require you to meet certain environmental and social standards in the form of certification of B2B schemes and consumer labels. Compliance with environmental and social standards (focusing on good agriculture practices, pesticide use and water use) is a very common requirement in the unspecialised retail channel. In the specialised market channel, these requirements are not very common yet. Nevertheless, we expect attention to environmental and social aspects of production to become more prevalent in the future. Larger joint purchasing organisations set up by flower shops are already implementing standards and introducing premium range flowers with specific labels (see requirements for niche markets below).

Tips:

- Both buyers and consumers (especially in Western and Northern Europe) consider environmentally friendly production very important and this importance is expected to increase in the future. Becoming certified is essential.
- Use your good practices and certification as a marketing tool when communicating with (potential) buyers.
- There is an abundance of standards to choose from (although the actual criteria show a lot of similarities). To determine which scheme you should follow, the market you are targeting will probably be decisive (which country do you want to export to and which trade channels do you use?)

Most buyers in the specialised retail channel do not yet demand certification, though the demand for certification is increasing in some countries such as Germany, the UK and Scandinavia. It might be a good idea from a strategic perspective to investigate the options for your company. The most important B2B schemes for roses are MPS, GLOBALG.A.P., Fairtrade and ETI. MPS offers several standards: MPS-ABC certification covers environmental performances and is considered a must for growers. Furthermore they have several other schemes such as MPS-SQ (focusing on social issues), MPS-GAP (on Good Agricultural Practices) and MPS-Quality. The most comprehensive standard is MPS-Florimark, which is a combination of the aforementioned four schemes.

Tips:

- Consult [Channels and Segments](#) to see how market channels are changing.
- [MPS](#) gives an overview of all MPS schemes including links to the criteria per scheme.
- Compare the requirements of different certification schemes by consulting the ITC Standards Map.

Cold chain management

Proper cold chain management has a positive effect on the quality and vase life of roses. Therefore EU buyers' demands for cold chain protocols are growing. Note that, although improving your cold chain management may be a challenge, the higher product quality should also improve your profits.

Tips:

- Developing and implementing cold chain protocols will be vital to survival in the coming years.
- Do not wait until buyers ask for improved cold chain management, but anticipate the developments.

What are the requirements for niche markets?**Fairtrade certification**

In the specialised retail channel, standards that are communicated through a consumer label still represent a relatively small part of the market, mostly in North-western Europe. The most important label is [Fair Flowers Fair Plants \(FFP\)](#) and to a lesser extent [Fairtrade International](#). FFP flowers can now be found at a wide variety of florists and also at a number of online flower shops.

Tips:

- Always check with your buyer if he/she requires certification and which certification he/she prefers.
- Consult the [Standards Map database](#) for the different labels and standards relevant to cut flowers.
- You can find participants of the FFP certification scheme on the website: <http://www.fairflowersfairplants.com/en/find-participants.aspx>

What competition do I face on the European specialised market?

For more general information about market competitiveness for fresh cut flowers and foliage you can have a look at the [Market Competitiveness information](#) available on the CBI market intelligence platform. This section provides some additional information about the market competitiveness of the EU market for fresh cut flowers.

To supply the European (specialised retail) market, producers require, among other things, a considerable investment and access to advanced knowledge about growing quality flowers. It is difficult for inexperienced producers to enter the market

successfully. The EU market can be accessed by supplying the Dutch flower auction, with a specific focus on specialised flower retail. Specialised flower shops represent the main retail market for cut flowers in most European countries. An advantage of supplying this particular market is that it offers more room for product differentiation. Labelling (such as FFP) may be a way of communicating your company's information and profile to consumers. The traditional auction and wholesale channel and specialised retail offer much more room for product differentiation and special varieties. Specialised wholesalers can deal with smaller quantities and find interested buyers for good quality flowers.

Tip:

- Find an importer that is knowledgeable about your product and operates in the right market channel. Attending Trade Fairs like [IPM in Essen](#) (Germany), [IFTF in Vijfhuizen](#) or [IFTEX in Kenya](#) is a good way of meeting importers and acquiring knowledge about the Dutch Auction and the European market.

Useful sources

Export and market entry support:

- CBI - <http://www.cbi.eu>
- CBI Market Information - <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/>
- EFSA - <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/>
- EU Export Helpdesk - http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/index_en.html

Certification schemes for the specialized retail market:

- Fair Flowers Fair Plants - <http://www.fairflowersfairplants.com/home-en.aspx>
- ISEAL Alliance - <http://www.isealalliance.org>
- ITC Standards Map - <http://www.standardsmap.org>
- MPS - <http://www.my-mps.com/en/>

Marketing and trade standards:

- EU legislation on Organic Production - http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/eu-policy/legislation_en
- UNECE Standards for Cut flowers - http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/flowers/flower_e.html
- VBN Dutch Flower Auctions Association - <http://www.vbn.nl>
- VBN Product specifications - <http://www.vbn.nl/en-US/Productinfo/Pages/Productinformations.aspx>

Statistics and sector information:

- AIPH - <http://www.aiph.org>
- Eurostat - <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>
- ITC Trade Map - <http://www.trademap.org>
- UN Comtrade - <http://comtrade.un.org>



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