

Business in Netherlands

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What are the Opportunities?

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Barriers to market entry are low and the transparent legal framework and sophisticated financial services system, which, combined, make the market an attractive place for UK companies. Geographically close to UK with excellent transportation links to main and regional UK airports, make exploring the market cost effective.

Life Science sector in the Netherlands

The life sciences sector has developed steadily over the last five years and this trend should continue. In 2004, despite a generally unfavorable economic climate, the dedicated life sciences companies in the Netherlands expanded, in number of companies (+8 percent), and research and development expenditure (+9 percent). Sales of biotechnology-related products in the pharmaceutical and chemical industries are predicted to grow from five percent in 1999, to 20 percent in 2010. Biotechnology components of the food industry, the process equipment industry, and the environmental sector are also expected to grow, specifically in the areas of nutraceuticals, functional foods, personalized medicine and pharmacogenetics.

Over 400 companies are active in biotechnology in the Netherlands today, placing the Netherlands among Europe's largest life sciences markets. Many of these companies are linked to universities and non-profit research institutes and are located near university cities. Together, these companies account for an annual \$1.2 billion investment in life sciences and related research in the country, or about 20 percent of the total amount spent nationwide on private research and development.

In the industrial chemical sector, the Netherlands is active in the development and use of enzyme systems, microorganisms and metabolic pathway engineering. DSM, Purac, Avebe, and Fujifilm Diosynth are the largest producers of intermediary goods; Unilever, Organon, and Merck Animal Health are the largest producers of end products. The largest supplier companies in industrial chemical biotechnology are Paques and Applikon.

Biotechnology also plays a key role in the country in the development of "functional" foods with higher nutritional value and in nutrigenomics, which seeks to match the nutritional content of foods to individual life styles and genotypes. Companies working in this area of food sciences are clustered in the so-called "Food Valley" in Wageningen, where the Wageningen University and Research Center also plays a prominent research role. In contrast, few genetically modified (GM) crops are currently under development in the Netherlands, as crop trials are effectively prevented by existing (EU) regulatory burdens and protests from environmental groups.

Source: UK Trade & Investment (<http://www.ukti.gov.uk>),
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