

# Grow Global

## A Planning Guide for Scottish Businesses to Begin Selling Internationally

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### **Executive Summary**

Scotland’s ambitious exporters have never had more opportunity—or support. Scottish Development International (SDI) and Scottish Enterprise-backed projects delivered £1.73 billion in planned international sales in FY 2022/23 alone, with a 20% increase year-on-year.

Recent wins include the UK-India FTA (July 2025), an EU trade reset, and a new Six-Point Export Plan focused on diversification, US market penetration, and overseas missions.

Only 12% of Scottish SME employers currently export, yet those that do sell to both the EU (73%) and non-EU markets (84%), with the USA as the top single destination (56%).

This guide distills proven international marketing and export practices tailored to Scotland’s strengths—food & drink, renewables, life sciences, tech, and creative industries—so your business can join the success stories and scale sustainably.

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# International Marketing and Export Best Practices for Scottish Businesses

## Scotland's Export Landscape – Opportunities at a Glance

Scotland's export landscape shows clear opportunities. The EU accounts for the largest share of international goods exports, followed closely by the USA. Key sectors include food and drink, manufacturing, professional services, renewables, and technology. Exports to the rest of the UK dominate overall trade, yet international markets deliver diversification and stronger margins.

Recent highlights underscore momentum. Scottish salmon exports surged in key Asian markets like China and Vietnam. Defence and energy firms secured major international deals with export finance backing. Priority markets focus on high-growth economies alongside established EU and US relationships.

## Why Export? The Benefits and Realistic Risks

Exporting brings compelling advantages. Businesses gain new revenue streams and accelerate growth. Market diversification builds resilience against domestic fluctuations. Scaling internationally creates economies of scale, sparks innovation, and enhances brand reputation at home. Products often enjoy extended lifecycles in global markets.

Risks require careful management. Currency volatility, post-Brexit regulations, cultural differences, and initial costs can challenge newcomers. Strategic planning, expert advice, insurance, and available support tools minimise these hurdles effectively.

## Step 1: Get Export-Ready – Research and Assess

Begin with thorough preparation. Complete the free Export Assessment Tool on the Scottish Enterprise website for a personalised readiness report. Research target markets, demand levels, competitors, pricing potential, and compliance requirements. Access market intelligence, credit checks, and consumer insights through dedicated resources.

## **Step 2: Evaluate Internal Capability**

Evaluate your internal readiness next. Assess management commitment, financial capacity, production scalability, intellectual property protection, and team expertise. Enrol in the free Preparing to Export online programme to build essential knowledge and confidence.

## **Step 3: Develop Your Export Strategy**

Develop a focused export strategy. Outline clear targets, priority markets, entry methods such as direct sales, distributors, or online marketplaces, and key milestones. Incorporate a digital approach with an optimised website and ecommerce platforms to reach customers efficiently.

## **Step 4: Start Selling Online**

Start selling online to test the waters. Use your own site alongside established international marketplaces that simplify fulfilment and payments. Boost visibility through targeted SEO, influencer partnerships, and digital advertising campaigns.

## **Step 5: Master Logistics, Documentation and Compliance**

Master logistics and compliance essentials. Classify products accurately with commodity codes. Select appropriate Incoterms for shipping responsibilities. Prepare necessary export declarations, labelling, and tariff documentation. Sector-specific rules, especially for food and drink, demand particular attention. Leverage Scottish Enterprise guides and UK border updates for smooth operations.

## **Step 6: Secure Finance and Manage Risk**

Secure funding and protect against risks. Explore UK Export Finance options including buyer guarantees, working capital support, and non-payment insurance. Consult Scottish Enterprise for tailored finance advice, grants, and banking partnerships designed for exporters.

## **Step 7: Enter the Market and Scale**

Enter your chosen market and pursue growth. Participate in trade missions, webinars, and networking through the GlobalScot network of international business leaders. Start with pilot activities to validate demand before full-scale commitment.

## **Step 8: Monitor, Adapt and Review**

Monitor performance continuously. Track key metrics, adapt strategies based on results, and review progress regularly. Explore additional markets or sectors as your experience builds.

## **Quick Checklist to Stay on Track**

Use this quick checklist to stay on track. Complete the Export Assessment Tool first. Compile solid market research. Draft and refine your export plan. Verify intellectual property and trademarks. Arrange secure payment terms and insurance. Identify reliable logistics partners. Contact a Scottish Enterprise adviser promptly.

## **Key Considerations for Scottish Businesses**

Post-Brexit realities shape EU trade. Attend ongoing masterclasses in major Scottish cities to navigate customs and rebuild connections. Leverage Scotland's premium provenance—clean, high-quality, innovative—as a powerful marketing edge. Prioritise digital and ecommerce channels for easier SME entry. Engage local partners or GlobalScot members for cultural and on-the-ground insights.

## **Free and Low-Cost Support Ecosystem**

Tap into a robust support ecosystem at low or no cost. Scottish Enterprise offers the Export Assessment Tool, Preparing to Export programme, market research, events, and dedicated advisers.

Reach them at 0300 013 3385 or sign up for monthly export updates. Scottish Development International and GlobalScot provide in-market expertise. UK Government resources include Great.gov.uk, the Export Support Team, and UKEF finance managers. Sector bodies and the Find Business Support portal add further value.

## Real Scottish Success Stories

Scottish success stories inspire action. Scotch Whisky reaches over 160 countries with billions in annual value, built on heritage and brand strength.

Salmon producers achieved record growth through targeted expansion into EU, US, and Asian markets. Digital leaders like Skyscanner scaled globally from Scottish roots. Renewables and tech firms land multi-million contracts with export finance support.

## Your Immediate Action Plan

Take immediate steps to launch your journey. In week one, complete the Export Assessment Tool and review your personalised report. Book an adviser call with Scottish Enterprise or UKEF in week two.

Research two or three priority markets and enrol in the Preparing to Export programme in week three. Attend free webinars or missions ongoing, then review progress quarterly.

## Get Started Today

Contact support today. Visit [scottish-enterprise.com/exports](https://scottish-enterprise.com/exports) or call 0300 013 3385. Explore [ukexportfinance.gov.uk](https://ukexportfinance.gov.uk) and [great.gov.uk](https://great.gov.uk) for additional tools.

Scottish businesses that plan strategically and leverage available support consistently outperform those that delay. The global market welcomes premium Scottish products. Your next international order awaits—start with one simple assessment today.

Compiled from official Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise, and UK Export Finance sources (March 2026). Verify latest sector figures for your planning.