CBI MARKET SURVEY

THE PLANTS AND YOUNG PLANT MATERIAL MARKET IN GERMANY

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Report summary
This CBI market survey discusses, amongst others, the following highlights for the plants and young plant material market in Germany:

- Germany is the largest market for plants and young plant material in the EU. Even though consumption levels are already high, the market size is still increasing. Nevertheless, imports are decreasing. This is compensated by increases in local supply.
- Imports from developing countries, however, mainly consist of cuttings of which imports have remained relatively stable.

This survey provides exporters of plants and young plant material with sector-specific market information related to gaining access to Germany. By focusing on a specific country, this survey provides additional information, complementary to the more general information and data provided in the CBI market survey 'The plants and young plant material market in the EU', which covers the EU in general. That survey also contains an overview and explanation of the selected products dealt with, some general remarks on the statistics used, as well as information on other available documents for this sector. It can be downloaded from http://www.cbi.nl/marketinfo.

1. Market description: consumption and production

Consumption

Total market size
Germany is the leading market for plants in the EU. The total market size increased from € 3,940 million in 2003 to € 4,112 million in 2005. Both the large population and the high per capita consumption level contribute to the large size of the market. The forecast for the period 2004-2009 is moderately positive. The market is expected to grow to € 4,213 million in 2009. Continued increases in per capita consumption, from € 46 in 2004 to € 51 in 2009, represent an important factor contributing to this market growth.

Product groups
In 2004, flowering plants accounted for 76% of total plant sales and foliage plants for 24%. The most popular flowering and foliage plants, and their market shares, are shown in the next table.

Table 1.1 Market shares of major plant species, % of total expenditure, 2003/2004

Flowering plants			Foliage plants		
	2003	2004		2003	2004
Orchids	22.3%	23.9%	Cactus	7.7%	10.2%
Euphorbia pulcherrima	11.7%	11.3%	Ficus	8.7%	7.9%
Cyclamen	9.7%	8.9%	Palm	8.3%	7.6%
Rhododendron	7.1%	6.5%	Hedera	8.2%	5.5%
Pelargonium	4.2%	3.9%	Dacaena	3.7%	5.2%
Pot Rosa	3.4%	3.6%	Yucca	3.4%	4.6%
Primula	3.3%	3.5%	Fern	2.7%	2.3%
Kalanchoë	3.3%	3.5%	Ficus elastica	2.0%	1.9%

Flowering plants			Foliage plants		
	2003	2004		2003	2004
Anthurium	2.4%	2.5%	Philodendron	1.6%	1.8%
Amaryllis	2.4%	2.9%	Asparagus	0.6%	0.3%
Other	30.2%	29.5%	Other	53.1%	52.7%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**Total**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: GfK Germany, 2006

Market segmentation

The main purposes for plant purchases are occasions for which plants are bought as gifts and personal use. Gifts accounted for 50% of plant purchases in 2004, a 3% decline since 2002. Personal use accounted for 49% in 2004; the share in plant purchases for this purpose increased by 5% since 2002.

People buying plants as gifts are often elderly people. The plants they buy are mostly flowering plants. Major occasions for giving plants are birthdays (39%), no reason (16%), visits (13%), thank you (11%), house move (5%) and visits to people in the hospital (2%).

People over 60 years old account for 47% of total expenditure on plants. People under 35 years old account for only 11% of total expenditure on plants. The share of people buying plants also increases with age. Only 17% of people under 25 buy plants, while this is 67% in the 60+ category. German people above 50 years old value indoor plants for their contribution to the atmosphere, while the group between 30 and 50 years old considers plants more as a decoration. The German youth mostly does not have much time, space or money for plants. However, it is notable that they have a small preference for foliage plants over flowering plants.

Another type of segmentation is the segmentation by region. In 2004, significantly more East-Germans (51%) bought plants than West-Germans (44%). The difference increased by 3% compared to 2003.

The institutional market (hotels, restaurants, offices, etc.) in Germany is fairly stable. 87% of companies buys plants and flowers, mostly for decoration or as a present for employees or business relations. Foliage plants have a 44% share of this market, flowering plants 31% and flowers 21%. Plants are gaining in importance, as German consumers increasingly appreciate that plants last longer.

Patterns and trends in consumption

- Sales in Europe's largest market, Germany, have been growing steadily since 2001. Between 2001 and 2004 the market sales increased by 10%. In the same period, sales of cut flowers decreased by 7%. Consumption moved from cut flowers to indoor plants.
- Per capita consumption expanded from € 44 in 2000 to € 46 in 2004.
- The market share of Orchids in sales of flowering plants has increased to 22%. The main potted Orchid sold in Germany is Phalaenopsis.
- When purchasing, the German buyer pays attention to the plant’s expected longevity, its size, and the requirements for its care.
- The share of people buying plants decreased slightly between 2002 and 2004. From 47% in the former year to 46% in the latter year.

Production

Total production

The number of growers cultivating outdoor plants in the open air and in greenhouses decreased from 8,616 in 2000 to 7,055 in 2004. The production area also decreased from 2,075 hectares to 1,943 hectares. The production area for indoor plants decreased from 1,410 hectares to 1,060. In 2004, a total area of only 3,004 hectares remained for the cultivation of plants in greenhouses. The value of the production coming from this land, € 907 million, is almost at the same level as 2002 after an increase by 3% in 2003 and a decrease by 3% in 2004. The German organisation Zentralverband Gartenbau, estimates a total production of 250 million ornamental plants per year.

In contrast to The Netherlands, Germany cultivates more in the open air than under glass. Most Dendranthema and Rosa plants are cultivated under glass, while summer flowers and perennial plants are cultivated in the open air. Perennial plants are mainly represented by Viola and Pelargonium. The main pot plants produced by German growers are the Erica gracilis, followed by Azaleas.

The most important horticultural areas in Germany are located in Nordrhein-Westfalen, Niedersachsen, Bayern and Baden-Württemberg. The western area, Rain am Lech, is a new horticultural area, where mainly flowering plants, perennial and others outdoor plants are cultivated. A number of horticultural areas, such as Bautzen, Forst and Gorlitz, is also located in Eastern Germany; however, they are relatively smaller than the areas in the Western part of the country.

Trends in production

- Production of pot plants is decreasing in Germany under pressure of increasing costs and international competition (The Netherlands, Denmark, Poland).
- German producers are increasingly specialising in the cultivation of garden plants like Erica caluna.
- As a result of price pressure for many bulk products, a shift from small family-owned growers towards more professional business-like companies can be recognised.
- Marketing and sales is becoming more important as products are increasingly sold directly, without using the auction system.

Opportunities and threats

The decreasing number of growers can be interpreted as a positive development for exporters in developing countries, as it means a reduced number of competitors. However, the small decrease in production area and the stable production value indicate scale increases and more efficient production. In other words, competition has become 'smaller' but stronger.

Useful sources

- Horticulture association: http://www.g-net.de
- Horticulture information system: http://www.hortigate.de
- International Association of Horticulture Producers: http://www.aiph.org

2. Trade: imports and exports

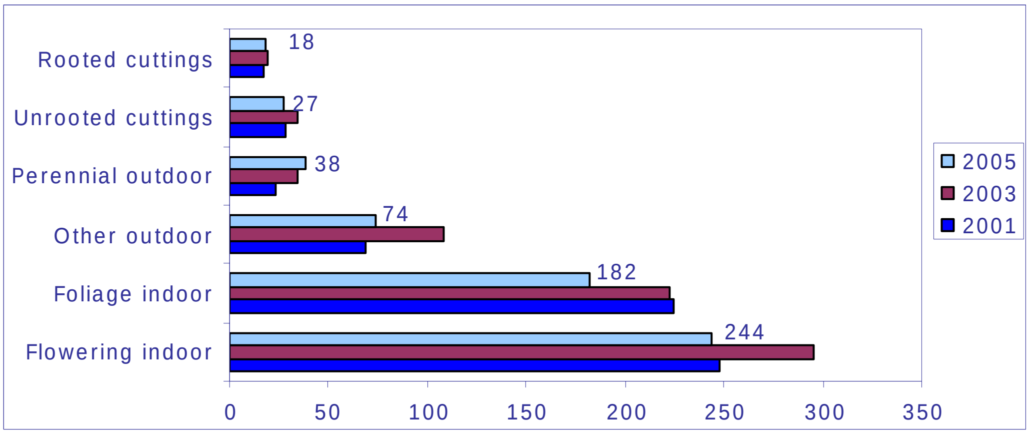
Imports

Total imports

Germany is the leading market for plants and young plant material in the EU. Imports amounted to € 583 million in 2005. Compared to 2001, the total value of imports decreased by 4.5%.

Imports by product group

Figure 2.1 German imports of plants and young plant material, 2001-2005, € million



Source: Eurostat (2006)

Finished indoor plants represented 73% of total imports of plants and young plant material in 2005. Flowering plants ranked first as the main imported finished indoor plants, accounting for 42% of total imports into Germany.

Table 2.1 Leading suppliers of plants and young plant material to Germany (share in imported value, 2005)

Product	**2001** € thousand	**2005** € thousand		**Leading suppliers in 2005** (share in %)	**Share in German imports**
Unrooted cuttings	28,811	27,150	Intra-EU: Extra EU excl DC*: DC*:	Spain (30%), France (5%), The Netherlands (5%) Israel (8%), Singapore (1%) Kenya (25%), Ethiopia (6%), Costa Rica (4%), Turkey (2%), Egypt (1%), Brazil (1%)	49% 9% 42%
Rooted cuttings	17,254	17,808	Intra-EU: Extra EU excl DC*: DC*:	The Netherlands (72%), Belgium (7%), Denmark (6%) India (1%), Dominican Republic (1%), Guatemala (1%)	94% 3% 3%
Perennial plants	23,428	38,352	Intra-EU: Extra EU excl DC*: DC*:	The Netherlands (76%), Italy (9%), Denmark (5%)	100% 1% 0%
Other outdoor plants	68,581	74,082	Intra-EU: Extra EU excl DC*: DC*:	The Netherlans (55%), Slovakia (20%), Italy (9%) Singapore (1%)	98% 1% 1%
Flowering plants	247,613	243,623	Intra-EU: Extra EU excl DC*: DC*:	The Netherlands (70%), Denmark (16%), Italy (7%)	100% 0% 0%
Foliage			Intra-EU:	The Netherlands (75%), Denmark (8%),	99%

Product	**2001** € thousand	**2005** € thousand		**Leading suppliers in 2005** (share in %)	**Share in German imports**
plants	224,827	182,055	Extra EU excl DC*:	Italy (5%)	1%
			DC*:	China (1%)	1%
Plants and young plant material	610,513	583,069	Intra-EU:	The Netherlands (67%), Denmark (10%), Italy (6%)	97%
			Extra EU excl DC*:		1%
			DC*:		3%

Source: Eurostat (2006)
*DCs: Developing countries

The Netherlands was by far the largest supplier of plants and young plant material to Germany. It accounted for 67% of all German imports in 2005, a market share which remained fairly stable for the period reviewed. Note that imports from The Netherlands are partly re-exports. Kenya was still the major developing country supplying Germany in 2005 (€ 6.9 million), increasing its exports by 24% since 2001. Another major developing country supplying Germany was Ethiopia which increased its exports from € 0 to € 1.6 million between 2001 and 2005. In that period, when the Ethiopian floriculture sector started to develop, German young plant producers, like Poinsettia and Pelargonium propagator Red Fox (Dümmen), set up own propagation facilities in Ethiopia.

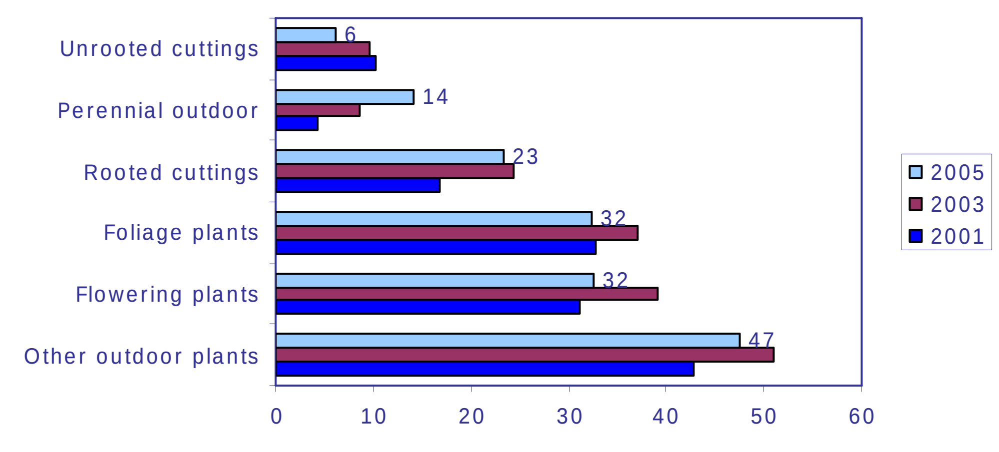
Imports from Costa Rica increased significantly between 2001 and 2003. However, imports decreased again after 2003 and amounted to only € 1.4 million in 2005. The total market share of developing countries in German imports of plants and young plant material has remained around 2%. Developing countries supplied mainly cuttings (unrooted).

The European market for tropical young pot plant material is for a large part dominated by Dutch importers. These importers not only supply Dutch growers, but also many growers in other countries like Germany. Besides the supply via Dutch importers, some relatively small numbers of tropical pot plant cuttings are imported by local German importers and growers directly.

Exports

In 2005, Germany was the fifth leading exporter of plants and young plant material, with exports amounting to € 156 million. Rooted cuttings and finished outdoor plants other than perennial plants were relatively more important in German export than in overall EU exports of plants and young plant material. Perennial plants is also becoming an important export product. Perennial plants was the only product group showing continued increases in exports over the period 2001 to 2005.

Figure 2.2 German exports of plants and young plant material, 2001-2005, € million



Source: Eurostat (2006)

Opportunities and threats
- Supplying via the German auction Landgard offers good opportunities for developing country exporters.
- Major German import companies which import directly and supply regional wholesalers, wholesale markets and retail chains also offer opportunities.

Useful sources

- EU Expanding Exports Helpdesk - http://export-help.cec.eu.int/
  Go to: trade statistics.
- Eurostat – official statistical office of the EU - http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int
  Go to: 'themes' on the left side of the home page - 'external trade' - 'data – full view' - 'external trade - detailed data'.

3. Trade structure

Trade channels

Wholesale level
It is estimated that about 1,500 wholesalers are currently active in Germany (including cash-and-carry and including 800 wholesalers specialized in cut flowers), distributing some 5% of all pot plants. The rest is sold directly by growers to retailers and consumers. Most wholesalers are active in both western and eastern German states. In the eastern part, former state-owned wholesale chains, which have been privatised, are also now fulfilling a wholesale function.

There are traditional wholesale markets, spread out amongst almost all the main cities (Hamburg, Berlin, Düsseldorf and Cologne). The Verband Deutscher Blumengrossmärkte consists of 14 wholesale markets. Products sold by growers and wholesalers in these markets mainly aim at regional florists.

The average size of importers has decreased significantly since 1997. In 2002, only 17 of 715 companies importing from The Netherlands had a turnover of over € 1 million. Many large importers went bankrupt. At the same time, a number of smaller importers were started.

The German auction, Landgard (previously NBV-UGA), plays an important role in the German plant trade. Total turnover of flowers and plants at Landgard amounted to € 820 million in 2005 of which plants account for about two thirds. The auction has also developed 29 so-called 'Abholmärkte' (cash-and-carry) in Germany, one in Vienna (Austria) and another one in Prague

(Czech Republic). This number is expected to increase further. This organisation imports some plants (mainly from Europe) to complement the assortment, and also accepts plants from foreign producers. It is estimated that 70-80% of production in the Niederrhein region of Germany is traded at this wholesale organisation.

Table 3.1 Purchasing channels of German wholesalers, % of turnovers, 2002

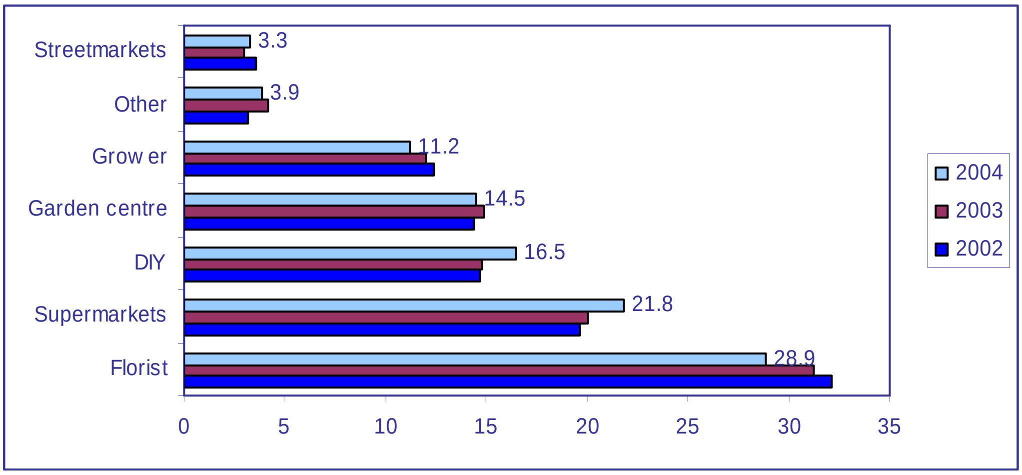
	Foliage plants	Flowering plants
Wholesaler/importer on wholesale level	32	18
Netherlands exporter	6	6
Direct from Netherlands auction/clock	16	6
Direct from Netherlands auction/intermediary	6	10
Own production	3	6
Exporter, not Netherlands	7	13
Direct from German grower	6	7
Cash-and-carry	5	4
Direct from German auction (NBV-UGA)	4	4
Direct from Netherlands grower	4	3
Netherlands “flying Dutchman”*	3	2
Wholesaler/importer not on wholesale level	3	0
German grower	1	0
German “flying Dutchman”	0	1
Other “flying Dutchman”	0	0
GASA (Danish sales organisations)	3	14

* Netherlands wholesalers supplying directly from their trucks
Source: Flower Council of Holland (2006)

The above table gives an overview of purchasing channels of German wholesalers for foliage and flowering plants. Wholesalers/ importers on wholesale level, Netherlands auctions (clock and intermediary), and Netherlands exporters are the major purchasing channels for German importing wholesalers. The Netherlands suppliers were preferred because of the high quality of the products, and the good relation between price and presentation. Other factors which have also determined the choice were the trustworthy and broad assortment of products of Netherlands suppliers.

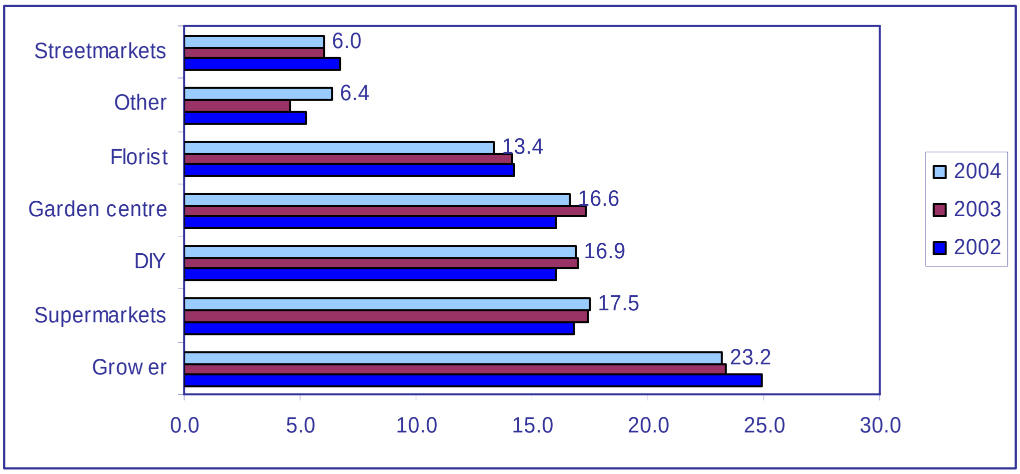
Retail trade
There are some 14 thousand florists in Germany. Leading florist organisations are Fleurop and Fachverband Deutsche Floristen. The share of florists in plant sales is decreasing under pressure from supermarkets and DIYs. The main reason for buying plants at supermarkets is the relatively low price. Another important reason is the ‘one-stop-shopping’ concept.

Figure 3.1 Market shares of retail channels for finished indoor plants, 2002-2004 % of value



Source: Flower Council of Holland (2005)

Figure 3.2 Market shares of retail channels for perennial plants, 2002-2004 % of value



Source: Flower Council of Holland (2005)

The supermarket chain leading the sales of indoor plants at supermarkets is Edeka. Since 2004, Aldi has become the leader in sales of perennial plants; its market share is rising.

Table 3.2 Share in the plant market of a number of supermarkets selling plants, 2002-2004, % of value

	Indoor plants			Perennial plants		
	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
Edeka	4.1	4.5	5.2	3.7	4.3	4.0
Rewe	4.0	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.0
Tengelmann	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.5
Markant	2.8	2.9	3.6	1.7	1.5	1.6
Spar	1.0	1.2	1.2	0.5	0.5	0.4
Aldi	3.1	3.5	3.5	4.1	4.1	5.0
Metro	1.8	1.4	1.4	0.9	0.7	0.7
Others	82.6	82.5	80.8	85.2	84.8	84.8
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: Flower Council of Holland (2006)

Remarkable is the importance of the so-called ‘Bau Märkte’ or Do-It-Yourself shops (D.I.Y. shops). Major Bau Märkte are Obi, Praktiker, Bauhaus, Hornbach and Zeus. These shops and supermarkets mainly supply lower priced products, consequently, the market price of plants in general is under pressure.

Garden Centres and “Do-It-Yourself” stores
The number of DIYs (Do-It-Yourself) with their own department for flowers and plants is increasing. These DIYs are more professionally equipped and therefore are considered as garden centres. The distinction between DIYs and garden centres is nowadays not easy to make.

DIYs mainly supply plants, not because of their lack of knowledge on and experience with flowers, but rather because of the degree of care and attention flowers require in comparison to plants.

In 2003, there was a total of 3,083 garden centres and DIYs with departments for garden products. The most important garden centres in Germany are Dehner, Blumen Risse and Klee Garten-Fachmarkt. The number of DIYs with a garden department increased, mainly represented by Obi, Praktiker, Toom, AVA-Marktkauf, Hornbach and Bauhaus.

Growers selling to consumers
In Germany, a number of growers sell also directly to consumers. Often, part of their greenhouse has been set up as a small garden centre. Growers with a direct channel to consumers have a positive image amongst elderly people. According to German consumers, growers supply varied plants and of good quality. It could be difficult for some consumers to reach growers since they are usually located at places outside purchasing centres, or at the border of cities. Many growers are also located nearby funeral/cremation facilities.

Indoor plants accounted for 27% of growers’ total turnover, while perennials have a market share of 28%.

Trends
Traditional wholesalers are currently facing hard times. Florists, street vendors and growers are purchasing less at traditional wholesalers. The latter are under pressure from competition by retail chains, uncertain succession, little capital and direct purchases from auctions in The Netherlands. Some large wholesalers have reorganised and, at the same time, new small-sized wholesalers have come into existence. These wholesalers have less time for transport of their purchases. It is therefore expected that specialised liners will increase in number to take care of regular transport.

Wholesalers are increasingly integrating retail sales in their businesses.

The increase of selling points resulted in a competitive war, in which price is regarded as a weapon. Important aspects during purchasing are “quick”, “frequent”, “efficient quantity” and “complete”. Just-in-time suppliers are more in demand, resulting in orders being placed more often and for small quantities.

Useful sources
- Landgard: http://www.landgard.de
- Lebensmittel zeitung (ranking of main supermarkets): http://www.lz-net.de/rankings/handeldeutschland/
- Fleurop: http://www.fleurop.de
- Fachverband Deutsche Blumisten: http://www.fdf.de/

4. Prices and margins

The average price of indoor plants remained fairly stable (-1.8%) between 2002 and 2004. In the latter year, the average price per plant amounted to € 3.83. One of the factors pushing the average price down is the price decrease for orchids, an important plant species in German plant sales. The price of outdoor plants increased slightly (2.8%). This development was largely due to increasing prices of plants in the medium-priced segment.

Table 4.1 Average price per plant (€), 2002-2004

	2002	2003	2004
Indoor plants	3.90	3.88	3.83
Flowering plants	3.67	3.67	3.55
Foliage plants	4.70	4.51	4.64
Outdoor plants	1.07	1.13	1.10

Source: Flower Council of Holland (2006)

Useful sources

A few European organisations publish prices for finished plants on a regular basis. ITC in Geneva collects prices at the wholesale level on EU markets and publishes a weekly bulletin. The German auction Landgard publishes some of its prices in their annual report. These prices should be seen only as indicative for the products traded in Germany and are an average of the different sizes traded. The International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH) publishes information on prices and trends of plants in their statistical yearbook.

- ITC Market News Service (MNS): http://www.intracen.org
- Landgard: http://www.landgard.de
- International Association of Horticultural Producers: http://www.aiph.org

5. Market access requirements

As a manufacturer in a developing country preparing to access Germany, you should be aware of the market access requirements of your trading partners and the German government. Requirements are demanded through legislation and through labels, codes and management systems. These requirements are based on environmental, consumer health and safety and social concerns

Legislative requirements

National legislation in EU countries is compulsory for all products traded within the country concerned. Therefore, as an exporter in a developing country you have to comply with the legislative requirements which are applicable to your products. For information on legislation for plants and young plant material, go to 'Search CBI database' at http://www.cbi.nl/marketinfo, select your market sector, and the EU country of your interest in the category search, click on the search button and click on legislative requirements for an overview of all documents on legislation in your country of interest.

Non-legislative requirements

Social, environmental and quality-related market requirements are of growing importance in international trade and are often requested by European buyers through labels, codes of conduct and management systems. For information on non-legislative requirements applicable to plants and young plant material, go to 'Search CBI database' at http://www.cbi.nl/marketinfo, select your market sector and the EU country of your interest in the category search, click on the search button and click on your subject of interest under non-legislative requirements for an overview of all documents on the subject concerned in your country of interest.

Packaging

Packaging can serve two functions. First, it protects plants from damage during transport. Second, consumer packaging can improve presentation of a product. However, consumer packaging rarely takes place in supplying countries as it often increases volume and subsequently, transport costs. Packaging specifications should always be set in consultation with the buyer.

Tariffs and quota
Tariffs and quota applicable in Germany are the same as for the EU. Information regarding these market requirements can be found in the EU survey. The general VAT rate in Germany is 16% as of February 2006. However, the VAT rate generally applied to plants is 7%. Former plans to increase this rate have not been executed.

6. Business practices

For general information on business practices, exporters should refer to the EU Survey, CBI's Export Planner and CBI's Image Builder manual.

Selecting a suitable trading partner
Finding a trade partner in Germany should not deviate from the general EU method as described in the EU survey. German importers generally look for new suppliers in developing countries by visiting the country of interest, through recommendations or through trade fairs. The most common ways for developing country exporters to approach German customers are through direct (e)mail, personal visits as follow-up, inviting potential German customers to visit them, building a network and visiting international trade fairs.

After obtaining contacts, evaluating potential trade partners should be done according to criteria such as information quality, geographic coverage, the kind of trade relation the partner is interested in, the position of the partner and the financial status and credibility.

Coming to terms with your trade partner
As in the rest of Europe, both general and specific offers are common in Germany. Therefore, common practices as detailed in the EU survey apply. When establishing an overseas price for your products, factors involved are: costs such as production, packaging, transportation and handling, promotion and selling expenses; the demand for your product or service and the maximum price which the market is willing to pay. Conformity to market prices depends on the product's novelty. How you price your product is worth a good deal of thought and effort, since it directly affects your ability to make a profit.

The most commonly used terms in the plant trade are *open account* and *payment in advance*. Selling on open account carries the greatest risk for the exporter. Sometimes, initial export shipments are partly pre-paid before the products are shipped. In the case of co-operation agreements with overseas companies, payment terms could also include periodical payments.

Export terms of sale determine which costs are covered in the price of the cargo, at which point ownership transfers to the buyer and at which point responsibility for the cargo is transferred. The most commonly used term of sale is FOB (Free on Board). Under this term, the seller quotes a price for goods which includes the cost of loading at the port of departure. The buyer arranges for transportation and insurance. CFR (Cost and Freight) and CIF (Cost, Insurance, Freight) are less frequently used terms. Special attention should also be given to contract fulfilment in reference to contingencies which might occur while the sale order is being processed, shipped etc.

Cultural differences
A profound knowledge of German business culture is one of the main keys to a durable relationship. In spite of all modern communication tools, the personal relationship with a trading partner often makes or breaks a durable co-operation. The general business culture in Germany is described below:
- Germans are formal and never use first names;

- They like to be addressed by Herr (Mr.), Frau (Mrs) or Fraulein (Ms) and their last names;it is important to check beforehand whether your counterpart has a title: in this case titles should be used also: Herr Doktor Schmidt or Frau Ingenieurin Albrecht;
- The first impression is important when doing business with a German business. Clothing, use of language, showing respect and well-prepared presentation material backed up by sufficient statistical information are all important.
- German purchasers like to come quickly to the point and are well prepared for the meeting; as they want to eliminate uncertainties as much as possible, they will ask a lot of details;
- Offer your German counterpart 'certainties': assurances, guarantees, references to check you and your company out; company background, expertise and track record are very important elements for Germans in their search for certainties;
- Solid knowledge of markets and products are the key to credibility.
- Knowledge of the position of the contact person is necessary to understand this person's responsibilities.
- Hierarchical differences are stronger than in most other northern European countries and must be respected.
- Dress correctly and formally; avoid flashy and contrasting colours and expensive watches, rings, bracelets, etc.;
- Come strictly on time; German purchasers usually have very tight schedules and attend many meetings on one day; they usually inform you how long the meeting will last and the points they want to cover;
- They require detailed planning and concrete arrangements and expect you to adhere to them; prepare yourself in detail for this meeting: mistakes or inability to reply to questions will not be tolerated and mean the end of a possible business relationship;
- Try to get friendly with the secretaries; they have a lot of influence in scheduling the appointments for their bosses; here again, never address them by their first names.

Many sources on business practices and culture can be found on Internet, such as http://www.communicaid.com/germany-business-culture.asp. Please keep in mind that the above concerns general remarks and therefore, in conducting business use your intuition and an understanding attitude.

Sales promotion
Common practices of trade promotion should not differ considerably from other European countries. Although most German are able to speak English, it is of course preferable that export/sales personnel of your company is capable of speaking some German. In general, good care should be taken of existing contacts, by using prompt, constant and reliable communication. Letters of inquiry should always be replied to. An essential tool used in sales is a detailed and up-to-date customer database.

Visiting and participating in a trade fair can be an efficient tool for communicating with prospective customers or even trading. It can also be an important source of information on market developments, production techniques and interesting plant varieties.

Assistance with market entry can also be sought through local business support organisations, import promotion organisations such as CBI and branch organisations focusing on the horticultural sector.

Please refer to CBI's Export planner and Your image builder for more information on this subject.

Trade associations
- BGI (Association of the German Flower Wholesale and Import Trade): http://www.bgi-blumen.com
- Zentralverband Gartenbau e.V. (ZVG) (German growers association): http://www.zvg-bonn.de

- Fachverband Deutscher Blumisten (FDF) (German florists association): http://www.fdf.de/

Trade fairs

- IPM: http://ipm.messe-essen.de (International Plant Show held every January or February in Essen, Germany. The show features plants and horticultural equipment and is the largest show of its kind in the world)
- Hortec: http://www.www.hortec.de (Trade fair focused on cultivation equipment)
- IFLO: http://www.messe-essen.de (Trade fair for florists)
- Gafa: http://www.gafa-koeln.de (Garden trade fair)
- IGW, Internationale Grüne Woche: http://www.fair.gruenewoche.de

Trade magazines

- TASPO: http://www.taspo.de
- Deutscher Gartenbau (DEGA): http://www.ulmer.de
- Grüner Markt: http://www.ulmer.de
- CAMPOS: http://www.campos-net.de
- Florist: http://www.florist.de
- ZVG Gartenbau Report: http://www.g-net.de
- Floristik International: http://www.ulmer.de/artikel.dll/fi

This survey was compiled for CBI by ProFound - Advisers In Development and Mr. Milco Rikken of ProVerde in collaboration with Mr. Jan Lanning.