

# U.S. Country Commercial Guides



Qatar 2020

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## **Doing Business in Qatar**

### **Market Overview**

The U.S. and Qatar enjoy a strong commercial, economic, political, and security relationship. In 2019, Qatar's real gross domestic product (GDP) contracted at a rate of 0.18%, according to the World Bank. Even though Qatar has just 300,000 citizens, it enjoys one of the highest GDP per capita in the world and looks to overseas partners to achieve strategic goals, creating opportunities for U.S. businesses. While the contraction has deepened to 4.3% thus far in 2020, largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic and low hydrocarbon prices, the International Monetary Fund estimates Qatar's real GDP growth will rebound to 5% in 2021. U.S. exports to Qatar increased by 47.7% from 2018 to 2019, totaling \$6.5 billion in 2019. U.S. companies performed well in the market, particularly in the energy, defense, technology, and engineering sectors, among others.

Despite Covid-19 macroeconomic contractions, Qatar remains among the most fiscally stable markets in the Gulf. In April 2020, Moody's labeled Qatar's currency peg as "credible" thanks to the GOQ's solid asset buffers, which include over \$35 billion in net international reserves at Qatar Central Bank and \$30 billion worth of liquid assets, in addition to the more than \$300 billion in assets held by the country's sovereign wealth fund, Qatar Investment Authority (QIA). Qatar's strong fundamentals have helped boost confidence in the Qatari riyal and have enabled the country to maintain its currency peg to the U.S. dollar, the only currency regime in the GCC region not to come under stress during the double crisis of rock bottom oil prices and the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a global leader in liquified natural gas (LNG) extraction, Qatar's national oil and gas company, Qatar Petroleum (QP), is an important player both in Qatar and globally. QP is currently in the midst of its North Field LNG Expansion, which will increase LNG production in two phases. The first phase of North Field project is expected to increase capacity by 43% from 77 million tons per annum (mtpa) to 110 mtpa by 2025. The second phase, called the North Field South Project (NFS), will further increase the production capacity from 110 mtpa to 126 mtpa a total of 64% increase by 2027. This project includes the development of six LNG mega trains, creating significant opportunities for U.S. energy companies. Since the onset of the Gulf Rift, QP has inked several long-term supply agreements with companies in Bangladesh, China, Vietnam, Thailand, and Pakistan and announced a flurry of overseas acquisitions in hydrocarbon blocks in Brazil, Oman, Mexico, South Africa, Argentina, Cyprus, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Kenya, Guyana, and Cote d'Ivoire. In 2019, QP invested \$18 billion in the U.S. energy sector in the Golden Pass Terminal (\$10 billion) and a petrochemical plant on the Texas Gulf Coast (\$8 billion).

The Qatari government has continued its focus on initiatives and efforts to diversify the economy and reduce excess spending, under the plan known as Qatar National Vision 2030. Qatar's infrastructure and transportation sector has been a key focus of spending in recent years, with projects such as the Hamad International Airport expansion, the last phase of the new Hamad Port, numerous road and highways projects, and the creation of the Doha Metro train network (three lines). In addition to supporting Vision 2030, these projects are timely and near completion as Qatar prepares to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the world's largest sporting event. The 2020 national budget priority shifted from hard infrastructure toward Vision 2030's goals for education and healthcare infrastructure, in addition to initiatives supporting Qatar's already robust efforts and achievements to reduce dependency on foreign-produced food. These initiatives will likely be bolstered by the new law governing Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), which the Amir signed on May 31, 2020. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has led efforts on the PPP law, along with other agencies including the Ministry of Finance.

Qatar has proven its resiliency in recent years, despite regional unrest and the Gulf Rift. On June 5, 2017, the governments of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Egypt severed diplomatic and trade relations with the State of Qatar and imposed a series of travel, trade, and economic restrictions, including closing the Saudi-Qatar land border, blocking airspace to Qatari-registered aircraft, and limiting certain maritime traffic. The Rift has completely halted all direct routes between these four countries and Qatar, impacting the movement of trade and

people to this day. Post-Rift, Qatar moved quickly to establish other sources of imports and continues that effort under its national food security goals. In many cases, this need to diversify trading partners has created new opportunities for U.S. suppliers, as well as other regional partners, such as Turkey, Oman, Kuwait, and India.

Given the complications surrounding the Rift, U.S. companies are increasingly seeking direct representation in Qatar versus handling via a regional office elsewhere in the Gulf. U.S. companies are encouraged to engage directly with their local Qatari partners, representatives, or agents to ensure business continuity and alternatives for sourcing and shipping of U.S. goods into Qatar. The U.S. Embassy in Doha and the U.S. Commercial Service continue to closely monitor the restrictions imposed on Qatar and provide guidance and support to U.S. companies wishing to enter the market, as well as those already doing business in the country. For the most up-to-date information, please reach out to the U.S. Commercial Service at the U.S. Embassy in Doha.

## **Market Challenges**

**Economic Overreliance on the Hydrocarbon Sector:** Qatar's continued reliance on hydrocarbons as a revenue source is evident in its fiscal forecasting, which remains constant in 2020 with the 2019 budget. Despite efforts to promote the non-hydrocarbon sectors and diversify the economy from hydrocarbons to knowledge-based sectors, the oil and gas sector has consistently contributed to at least 80 percent of the government of Qatar's total revenues since 2014, as well as 90 percent of Qatar's total exports. Qatar's multi-billion-dollar ongoing investment in infrastructure, including highways, lodging facilities, and new stadiums for the 2022 FIFA World Cup has generated steady growth in the non-hydrocarbon portion of GDP since 2018. However, as non-revenue generating investments, they are unlikely to significantly offset the existing reliance on hydrocarbons. However, via the national Vision 2030, Qatar is focused on its goals to diversify and is investing in knowledge-based sectors like education, healthcare, and ICT to support this visionary goal.

**Scams:** The U.S. Commercial Service and the U.S. Embassy receive constant reports of scams directed at U.S.-based firms. These scams often involve a nefarious person or entity posing as a legitimate Qatar-based entity or investor. U.S. firms that are approached by entities claiming to be Qatari representatives or investors, particularly if they request any sort of private information and/or advance fees, should contact the U.S. Commercial Service in Doha to confirm the veracity of the opportunity before proceeding.

**Foreign Ownership:** Qatar generally encourages foreign investment and has enacted some key reforms in recent years to foster FDI. Qatar's former foreign investment law (Law 12/2000) generally limited foreign investment and ownership of local entities to 49% of capital. As part of the government's efforts to attract more foreign companies and investors to the Qatari market, a new foreign investment law was approved in January 2019 (Law 1/2019), allowing 100% foreign ownership in most sectors, with full repatriation of profits, protection from expropriation, and several other benefits. However, these new laws remain largely unproven and the processes to start a business remains sluggish and laden with red tape. In its 2020 Ease of Doing Business report, the World Bank ranked Qatar 108<sup>th</sup> of 190 economies in the world for its ease of starting a business.

Additionally, with regard to foreign ownership of real estate investments, the government enacted a law (Law 16/2018) to allow foreign individuals, companies, and real estate developers freehold ownership of real estate in ten designated zones and usufructuary rights up to 99 years in 16 other zones. This law also allows foreign real estate investors and owners to request residency in Qatar for as long as they own their property.

**Government Procurement:** Procurement Law 24/2015 aims to promote a fair, transparent, simple and speedy tendering process. The law removed the Central Tendering Committee and created a Government Procurement Department within the Ministry of Finance which has oversight responsibility over the majority of government tenders. The law also called for the forming of committees for tender disputes resolution, allowing two-stage tendering, and providing performance bond waivers for SMEs. Nonetheless, there are some persistent concerns regarding

transparency in procurement by government entities, particularly due to a lack of clarity in the conditions and criteria of tenders, improper notification or explanation to non-qualifying companies, and the inability of bidders to formally challenge awards. Qatar gives preferential treatment to suppliers using local content in bids for government procurement. Bids for government contracts that contain goods with Qatari content are discounted by 10%. Participation in tenders with a value of QAR 5,000,000 (\$1.37 million) or less is limited to locally registered contractors, suppliers and merchants. The Government Procurement Department also created a website [Government Procurement Services](#), to consolidate all tenders with the goal of providing relevant information to interested bidders; unfortunately, not all government tenders are included in this portal. Qatar is not a signatory to the WTO Agreement on government procurement.

**Import Duties:** While this doesn't present a major barrier, it is important for U.S. companies to make sure their products are not subject to import restrictions and that proper import duties are paid. The import duty for most processed food products is a flat 5% ad valorem. There are no import duties for live animals, fresh fruits and vegetables, seafood, grains, flours, tea, sugar, spices, and seeds for planting. As a GCC country, Qatar applies the Unified Customs Law. This includes the imposition of a 5% tariff on the cost, insurance, and freight values of products such as textiles, apparel, and travel goods. An excise tax of 50% was introduced on energy and sugary drinks on January 1, 2019. A 100% excise tax was also introduced on alcohol and "specialty" products, including tobacco and pork.

**Import Restrictions:** Qatar has no import quotas. Non-tariff barriers, however, arise occasionally. For instance, unlicensed military and security items are not allowed. Furthermore, prior to 2012, the government maintained a ban on pork imports. The sale of pork remains heavily regulated and sales are restricted to only one distribution point in all of Qatar, which is managed by the Qatar Distribution Company (QDC).

**Standards and Labeling:** As part of the GCC Customs Union, Qatar works with other member states toward unifying custom standards and conformity assessment regimes. Nonetheless, each member state is applying its own existing standards until a uniform GCC standard is set. The Embassy commercial team has received periodic complaints of European standards being favored over U.S. standards.

**Food Labeling and Packaging:** Labeling and marking requirements are compulsory for any products exported to Qatar. Labels must either be in Arabic only, or bilingual with Arabic as the second language. Labels must be applied prior to transportation. Production and expiration dates are required to be on all "original" food labels.

**Personal Connections:** Corruption in Qatar does not generally affect business. Qatar ranks 30<sup>th</sup> in the world on Transparency International's 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index, a position it shares with Spain, Portugal, and Barbados, with a score of 62/100 (with 100 being very transparent and 0 being very corrupt). While Qatar's score reflects less transparency than businesses can expect to find in the United States (69/100), Qatar has the second-most transparent score in the Middle East/North Africa region. However, with a very small population of Qatari nationals, the power of personal connections in Qatar plays a major role in the local business culture. Companies need to be very cognizant in selecting the right local partner. If companies opt not to open a local office, they should travel regularly to the market to ensure they maintain the necessary connections to succeed.

**Travel Advisories:** Stringent Covid-19 travel restrictions have been in place since March 2020, halting business travel to/from Qatar. U.S. citizens visiting Qatar are advised to check the U.S. [Embassy's website](#) for the latest information on travel to Qatar.

## **Market Opportunities**

The U.S. Commercial Service assesses that the best market opportunities for U.S. companies are in sectors such as infrastructure, ICT, food products, energy, healthcare, aviation, and defense.

The Government of Qatar budgeted \$57.8 billion for expenditures in 2020, of which 43% was allocated spending on “Major Projects,” a category that includes infrastructure, healthcare, transportation, and education. Government spending will continue to support the long-term strategic goals set forth under the Qatar National Vision 2030, which include developing a knowledge-based economy and increasing the share of GDP derived from non-extractive industries.

The government has taken several initiatives to encourage more foreign companies to do business and invest in Qatar over the past year. The MoCI is leading the efforts on both the Foreign Direct Investment Law and Public Private Partnership (PPP) law. The PPP law was approved by the cabinet in April 2019 and signed by the Amir of Qatar on June 1, 2020, establishing a framework and providing increased opportunities for U.S. firms to gain access to the country's infrastructure sectors, particularly in the healthcare, education, and waste management subsectors.

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector has also been a key focus of the government since the 2017 announcement of a “Smart Nation” program, which allocated more than \$1.5 billion for ICT solutions in the transport, logistics, health, sports, and environmental sectors and is aimed at transforming Qatar into one of the most digitally-connected countries in the world. The Ministry of Transport and Communications has taken the lead on this program, and has announced landmark deals with major U.S. companies, including with Microsoft on an Azure Data Center, which is scheduled to open in Qatar in 2021.

The embargo on Qatar significantly complicated food trade routes. Qatar imports over 90% of its food, and prior to the June 2017 blockade, Qatar received nearly 40% of these shipments via Saudi Arabia. Major food suppliers to Qatar were forced to establish alternative trade routes and food security became and continues to be a top priority. The government of Qatar continues to aggressively invest in local food production and has notably improved its food security since 2017, both by importing food products from a more diverse set of trading partners and by investing heavily in building food industries from the ground up, which presents an array of opportunities for U.S. companies.

The energy sector, specifically oil & gas production in Qatar, continues to present some of the greatest opportunities for U.S. companies, especially with Qatar's mega North Field LNG expansion project, which is set to increase natural gas production by 43% in 2025 from 77.1 million tons per annum (mtpa) to 110 mtpa and targeting to achieve 64% mark at 126 mtpa in 2027. Qatar Petroleum plans to develop and operate a new petrochemical complex in Ras Laffan Industrial City, which will feature the region's largest ethane cracker. Such projects provide additional opportunities for American companies to consider. Recently, Qatar Petroleum invited investors to participate in the recently announced Tawteen program, a localization initiative that aims to create domestic manufacturing and service opportunities for the energy sector supply chain.

The strong and growing bilateral security partnership between Qatar and the U.S. is demonstrated by the recent series of major U.S. defense sales to Qatar. Qatar's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program forms the cornerstone of security cooperation between U.S. and Qatari forces, with a total case value of over \$26 billion. Since 2014, the U.S. has also authorized the permanent export of over \$2.8 billion in defense articles to Qatar via the Direct Commercial Sales (DCS) process. As demonstrated in recent years, Qatar's plan to expand and modernize its military will continue to provide opportunities for foreign military and direct commercial sales, especially training and capacity building programs across all branches of the Qatar Armed Forces. In addition to military modernization initiatives, Qatar's significant demand for aviation technology is driven by the global expansion plan of the national commercial airline, Qatar Airways, as well as Qatar's sole commercial airport, Hamad International Airport. Lastly, security solutions are a top priority in 2020-2021 as Qatar prepares to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

## Market Entry Strategy

If you are a new-to-export company, contact your [local U.S. Commercial Service office](#) first for free export counseling and a balanced assessment of your company's potential for success overseas, including in Qatar.

- **Come visit:** As in many Middle Eastern countries, personal engagement with potential agents and partners is key to successfully conducting business in Qatar. Before booking travel, please confirm you meet entry requirements with the Qatari government, particularly given strict testing, quarantine, and pre-arrival entry permit requirements due to Covid-19.
- **Get a lawyer:** Acquiring good legal representation in Qatar is an important first step to entering the market. Hiring a lawyer is especially important before concluding commercial agreements to ensure U.S. businesses have the necessary legal protections. Occasionally, American firms report difficulties, including delayed payments with their local business partners once their company starts making a profit. The U.S. Embassy maintains a [list of law firms](#) currently operating in Qatar.
- **Feasibility study:** U.S. firms already established in the market recommend that new entrants carefully conduct a feasibility study. This study should be based on factors such as existing competition, market channels and local tastes. The Commercial Service offers various industry market research reports, as well as *Customized Market Research* that can form a strong basis for a viable feasibility study. Please contact the Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy in Doha for more information.
- **Vet partners:** The Commercial Section at the U.S. Embassy offers several services to help you thoroughly vet and identify prospective Qatari business partners. These services include the *International Company Profile*, the *International Partner Search*, and the *Gold Key Service*. These services are described here in more detail: [U.S. Commercial Service Qatar](#).
- **Maintain independence:** Having a reliable local partner can mean the difference between success and failure in Qatar. While local partners are an indispensable part of a market entry strategy, U.S. firms should be sure to check with subject matter experts locally on specific and technical areas that may be outside the local partner's area of expertise.
- **Adapt:** Successful U.S., European, and other foreign companies understand that doing business internationally always creates challenges and doing business in Qatar is no exception. Learn to live with new procedures and laws by injecting a healthy dose of flexibility into your business plan. The Commercial Service suggests U.S. firms insist on payment by letter of credit to avoid costly payment delays.

## Resources

### Telecommunications

#### [Ooredoo Group](#)

Ooredoo Group is one of the world's largest mobile telecommunication companies, with a customer base of 115 million across 10 countries, including: Algeria (33% of the market), Indonesia (22%), Iraq (37%), Kuwait (32%), Myanmar (18%), the Maldives (50%), Oman (43%), the West Bank and Gaza (30%), and Tunisia (41%). Over two thirds of Qatari residents use Ooredoo. Ooredoo Group is 68% owned by the GoQ, with the remaining share listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange.



### [Vodafone](#)

Vodafone Global Enterprise division provides telecommunications and IT services to multinational corporate clients in over 65 countries, partly owned by the Qatar Foundation.

### **Transportation**

#### [Qatar Airways](#)

Qatar Airways is the state-owned flag carrier of Qatar. Headquartered in the Qatar Airways Tower in Doha, it operates a hub-and-spoke network, linking over 100 international destinations from its base in Doha, using a fleet of over 100 aircraft.

#### [Hamad International Airport](#)

Formerly known as New Doha International Airport (NDIA), the airport opened on April 30, 2014. It has become a major international gateway to the region, and is currently undergoing a major expansion.

#### [Mowasalat](#)

Mowasalat, popularly known as the “The Transport Company” in Qatar, started its activities by providing land transport services and solutions in October 2004.

### **Utilities**

#### [Kahramaa](#)

Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation “Kahramaa” is the sole transmission and distribution system owner and operator (TDSOO) for the electricity and water sector in Qatar.

### **Bilateral Business Councils**

#### [American Arab Chamber of Commerce](#)

12740 West Warren, Suite 101  
Dearborn, MI 48126 USA  
Phone: (313) 945-1700  
Fax: (313) 945-6697  
Contact: Fay Beydoun, Executive Director  
Email: [faybeydoun@americanarab.com](mailto:faybeydoun@americanarab.com)

#### [U.S.-Qatar Business Council](#)

1341 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 4A  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: (202) 457-8555  
Fax: (202) 457-1919  
Contact: Ambassador Anne W. Patterson  
Email: [programs@usqbc.org](mailto:programs@usqbc.org)

#### [National U.S. -Arab Chamber of Commerce](#)

Main Office – Washington, D.C.:  
1023 15th Street, N.W., Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: (202) 289-5920  
Fax: (202) 289-5938  
President: Mr. David Hamod  
Email: [INFO@NUSACC.ORG](mailto:INFO@NUSACC.ORG)

Houston Office:  
1330 Post Oak Boulevard, Suite 1600  
Houston, TX 77056  
Phone: (713) 963-4620  
Fax: (713) 963-4609  
Contact: Ms. Rand Zalzal  
E-mail: [rzalzal@nusacc.org](mailto:rzalzal@nusacc.org)

New York Office:  
420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 2034  
New York, NY 10170  
Tel: (212) 986-8024  
Fax: (212) 986-0216  
Contact: Mr. Gilbert Hage  
E-mail: [ghage@nusacc.org](mailto:ghage@nusacc.org)

Los Angeles Office:  
8921 S. Sepulveda Boulevard, Suite 206  
Los Angeles, CA 90045  
Phone: (310) 646-1499  
Fax: (310) 646-2462  
E-mail: [eatallah@nusacc.org](mailto:eatallah@nusacc.org)

[Bilateral U.S. Arab Chamber of Commerce](#)

5721 Memorial Dr. Suite 206  
Houston, TX US 77007  
Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 571870  
Houston, TX US 77257-1870  
Phone: 713-880-8168  
Fax: 713-880-8278  
Contact: Aida Araissi, Founder and Managing Director  
Email: [info@arabuschamber.org](mailto:info@arabuschamber.org), [aida@bilateralchamber.org](mailto:aida@bilateralchamber.org)

**Washington Contact Information**  
**Trade Assistance and Promotion Office (TAPO)**

[Foreign Agricultural Service \(FAS\)](#)

*U.S. Department of Agriculture*  
Ag Box 1052  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250  
Tel: 202-720-7420  
Fax: 202-690-4374

**Country Trade or Industry Associations in Key Sectors**

[American Chamber of Commerce Qatar](#)

The Gate Mall, Doha, Qatar  
Tel: +974 4496-819  
Contact: Lisa Saad

Email: [lisa.saad@amchamqatar.org](mailto:lisa.saad@amchamqatar.org)

[Qatar Chamber of Commerce & Industry \(QCCI, includes International Chamber of Commerce\)](#)

P.O. Box 402, Doha, Qatar

Tel: (+974) 4455 9111

Fax: (+974) 4466 1693; 4466 1728

Contact: Sheikh Khalifa Bin Jassim Bin Mohammed Al Thani, Chairman

Email: [info@qcci.org](mailto:info@qcci.org), [qcci@qatar.net.qa](mailto:qcci@qatar.net.qa)

[Qatari Businessmen Association](#)

P.O. Box 24475, Doha, State of Qatar

Tel: (+974) 4435 3120

Fax: (+974) 4435 3834 / 4435 3847

Contact: Sheikh Faisal Bin Qasim Al Thani, Chairman

Email: [qba@qataribusinessmen.org](mailto:qba@qataribusinessmen.org)

**Country Government Offices Relating to Key Sectors and/or Significant Trade Related Activities**

[General Authority of Customs](#)

P.O. Box 81, Doha, State of Qatar

Tel: (+974) 4445 7457

Fax: (+974) 4441 4959

Email: [questions@customs.gov.qa](mailto:questions@customs.gov.qa)

[Civil Aviation Authority](#)

P.O. Box 3000, Doha, State of Qatar

Tel: (+974) 4455 7333

Fax: (+974) 4455 7105

Email: [info@caa.gov.qa](mailto:info@caa.gov.qa)

[Ministry of Commerce and Industry](#)

P.O. Box 1968, Doha, State of Qatar

Tel: (+974) 4494 5001, 4494 5555

Fax: (+974) 4494 5000

[Ministry of Finance](#)

P.O. Box 83, Doha, State of Qatar

Phone: (974) 4441 3300/3131

Fax: (+974) 4443 1177 / 4443 5370

[Qatar Petroleum](#)

P.O. Box 3212, Doha, State of Qatar

Phone: (+974) 4484 6444 / 4449 1444

Fax: (+974) 4483 2024

[Government Communications Office](#)

Council of Ministers, Corniche Street P.O. Box 636 Doha, Qatar

Email: [media@gco.gov.qa](mailto:media@gco.gov.qa)

[Ministry of Interior](#)

P.O. Box 2433, Doha, State of Qatar  
Tel: (+974) 4434 8070 / 4434 8888  
Fax: (+974) 4472 7828  
Email: [info@moi.gov.qa](mailto:info@moi.gov.qa)

[Ministry of Transportation and Communications](#)

P.O. Box 22332, Doha, State of Qatar  
Tel: (+974) 40451111  
Fax: (+974) 4499 4655  
Email: [info@motc.gov.qa](mailto:info@motc.gov.qa)

[Ministry of Municipality and Environment](#)

P.O. Box 1966, Doha, State of Qatar  
Tel: (+974) 4449 2666  
Fax: (+974) 4432 2002

[Ministry of Public Health](#)

P.O. Box 42, Doha, Qatar  
Tel: (+974) 4407 0000  
Email: [info@moph.gov.qa](mailto:info@moph.gov.qa)

**Government and Quasi-Government Organizations**

[Hamad General Hospital, A Member of Hamad Medical Corporation](#)

P.O. Box 3050, Doha, State of Qatar  
Phone: (+974) 4439 4444  
Fax: (974) 4439 1118

[Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development](#)

P.O. Box 5825, Doha, State of Qatar  
Phone: (+974) 4454 0000  
Fax: (+974) 4480 6117  
Email: [info@qf.org.qa](mailto:info@qf.org.qa)

[Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation \(Kahramaa\)](#)

P.O. Box 41  
Doha, State of Qatar  
Phone: (+974) 4484 5555  
Fax: (+974) 4484 5496  
Email: [pof@km.com.qa](mailto:pof@km.com.qa)

[Qatar Electricity and Water Company \(QEWG\)](#)

P.O. Box 22046  
Doha, State of Qatar  
Phone: (+974) 4485 8585  
Fax: (+974) 4483 1116  
Email: [Welcome@qewc.com](mailto:Welcome@qewc.com)

[Ooredoo Group](#)

P.O. Box 217

Doha, State of Qatar  
Phone: (+974) 4440 0400  
Fax: (+974) 4447 6231  
Email: [investor@ooredoo.qa](mailto:investor@ooredoo.qa)

### **Market Research**

To view market research reports produced by the U.S. Commercial Service please go to [EXPORT.GOV](http://EXPORT.GOV) and click on Country and Industry Market Reports.

Please note that these reports are only available to U.S. citizens and U.S. companies. Registration to the site is required and is free.

Note: Agricultural reports are available via the Reports Office, USDA/FAS, Ag Box 1052, Washington, D.C. 20250-1052 and via the [FAS Home Page](#) on the Internet.

### **Trade Events**

Please click [here](#) for information on upcoming trade events.

### **Guide to Our Services**

The U.S. Commercial Service offers customized solutions to help U.S. exporters, particularly small and medium sized businesses, successfully expand exports to new markets. Our global network of trade specialists will work one-on-one with you through every step of the exporting process, helping you to:

- Target the best markets with our world-class research
- Promote your products and services to qualified buyers
- Meet the best distributors and agents for your products and services
- Overcome potential challenges or trade barriers
- Gain access to the full range of U.S. government trade promotion agencies and their services, including export training and potential trade financing sources

To learn more about the Federal Government's trade promotion resources for new and experienced exporters, please click on [EXPORT.GOV](http://EXPORT.GOV).

For more information on the services the U.S. Commercial Service offers to U.S. exporters, please click [here](#).

U.S. exporters seeking general export information/assistance or country-specific commercial information can also contact the U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center at (800) USA-TRAD(E).

To the best of our knowledge, the information contained in this report is accurate as of the date published. However, The Department of Commerce does not take responsibility for actions readers may take based on the information contained herein. Readers should always conduct their own due diligence before entering into business ventures or other commercial arrangements. The Department of Commerce can assist companies in these endeavors.

## **Leading Sectors for US Exports & Investments**

### **Agribusiness, Agricultural Equipment/Technologies, and Food Products**

#### **Overview**

Qatar's population has more than quadrupled since 2000, increasing dependence on food imports and leading to a growing sense of national food insecurity. By 2015, Qatar imported about 80 percent of its food, relying on imports for a wide range of food products, including cereals, dairy, meat, fruits, and vegetables. Food security grew in importance following the 2017 Gulf Rift that halted food supply lines overnight from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates,

Qatar has made significant strides in increasing resilience by increasing local food production since the onset of the Rift, when food security went from being a goal to a national security priority and necessity. The cultivation of food crops is a difficult task in Qatar due to extremely high temperatures, desert climate, acute lack of rain/water, and limited availability of fertile soil. As such, noteworthy opportunities exist for U.S. companies with technologies and equipment for improving Qatar's food reserves, implementing water-conserving agricultural technologies, improving local food standards and testing, building an aquaculture industry, and developing climate-resistant crops.

Since Qatar is heavily dependent on its limited groundwater supply for agriculture, Qatar is actively seeking innovative agricultural technologies to increase the use of treated sewage and desalinated water for human-consumption crops. Aquaponics, vertical farming, and similar technologies are some of the new techniques that Qatar is exploring to increase the sustainability and reliability of its water supplies, thus achieving a national food security goal of improving resilience and self-reliance for their national food stocks.

Lastly, while food security is the primary goal, Qatar has also focused on diversifying its sources of imported foods, to the benefit of U.S. food producers.

#### **Sub-Sector Best Prospects**

- Water conservation and reuse technologies
- Aquaculture
- Vertical farming
- Aquaponics
- Desalination
- Food manufacturing, standards, and testing
- Food products

#### **Opportunities**

- [Agriteq](#) is the only event in Qatar where local and international agriculture professionals exchange expertise, discover trends and developments, and seize business opportunities in this sector.

#### **Web Resources**

[Qatar FAIRS Export Certificate Report 2020](#), issued by USDA/Foreign Agricultural Service.

[Qatar National Food Security Program \(QNFSP\)](#)

Contact the [Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy](#) in Doha or the Foreign Agricultural Service in Dubai.

## Aviation & Defense

### Overview

#### *Aviation*

Given Qatar Airways' continued global growth strategy, especially with adding more direct routes to the United States (10 as of August 2020), aviation is an active industry in Qatar for U.S. suppliers. Boeing and Gulf Stream dominate the market as a result of the nature of their aircraft offerings, but other U.S. suppliers provide information technology, ground support equipment, and similar services to Qatar Airways Group and Hamad International Airport. Qatar Airways Group maintains one of the most rigorous approved vendor lists and processes in Qatar.

#### *Defense*

As Qatar manages one of the most ambitious military modernization programs in the world, the Qatar Armed Forces will continue to rely on foreign military and direct commercial sales. Major purchases since 2014 include Apache helicopters, Javelin missiles, Early Warning Radar, PAC 3 Patriot systems, and F-15 aircraft. The Qatari military is also sponsoring an initiative to create a vast network of military training facilities and programs focused on supporting their recent defense acquisitions.

The U.S. military strategic partnership in Qatar has made great strides since 1992. Qatar has proven to be a reliable partner in the region and has hosted approximately ten thousand U.S. military troops and forward headquarters for U.S. Central and Air Force Central Commands at Al Udeid Air Base – the largest U.S. air base outside the continental U.S. The U.S. and Qatar also signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement in 1992, which was renewed in 2013 for an additional ten years.

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

The 2020 budget is centered on security and defense equipment, training, and technologies needed for Qatar's role as host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup; this focus is anticipated for the 2021-2022 budgets, as well.

Over the last decade, the most commonly bought items include anti-ballistic missile systems and a new generation of fighter aircraft. Military electronics and cyber systems, helicopters for special forces teams, light tactical armored vehicles with weapons systems, GBU-35 bunker-buster ammunition to be used against concrete-protected nuclear facilities, guided air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles, Apache attack helicopters, and Patriot and Javelin air defense systems are also common purchases.

### Opportunities

- Training and capacity building programs
- Cyber Security and Electronic Warfare Systems
- Anti-tank weapons systems
- Integrated air and missile defense systems
- Navy & Marine defense systems

### Web Resources

Contact the [Office of Military Cooperation Qatar](#) and the [Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy](#) in Doha.

## Architecture Engineering & Construction

### Overview

The architecture, engineering, and construction sectors continue to experience a slow-down, despite the government's continued plan for the Qatar National Vision 2030 and World Cup 2022 development. Stagnant low oil prices over recent years have led to budget cuts across all government agencies, in addition to the Amir's focus on austerity measures. Total government spending in 2018 on construction was \$9 billion, mostly on infrastructure developments (highways, port development, and new military base development). The largest project with a construction component to be awarded in 2020 is Qatar Petroleum's North Field LNG Expansion project.

### Opportunities with Major Government Agencies

- Ministry of Municipality and Environment
- Public Works Authority (Ashghal)
- Ministry of Transport and Communications
  - Qatar Rail
  - Hamad International Airport
  - Hamad Port
  - Qatar Ports Management Company (Mwani)
- Qatari Diar/Lusail Real Estate Development Company
- Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy
- Private Engineering Office
- Qatar Foundation
- Qatar Petroleum

The public and private sectors rely heavily on international expertise in the areas of architectural, construction, and engineering services, creating opportunities in this sector for U.S. firms. U.S. firms are largely present in the design, project, and construction management/supervision services field.

Over the past few years, Qatar has expanded public transportation. Qatar Rail opened its first metro line in May 2019 and has since opened two additional lines, with the entire network serving 37 stations, serving as a non-automotive mode of transportation available for the public.

### Largest Ongoing Infrastructure Projects

Project	Total Project Value (USD, Billions)	Expected Completion Date	Details
Lusail	45.0	2019	Mixed-use development
Qatar Rail	40.0	2026	Metro and rail links
Major Expressway Program	20.0	Ongoing	Ashghal expressways
Hamad International Airport Expansion – Terminal 2	15.5	2020	Hamad International Airport
Local Roads	14.6	2020	Ashghal roads and drainage
Barwa Al Khor	10.0	2025	Mixed-use development
Hamad Port	7.4	2020, two container terminals open	New port south of Doha
Sharq Crossing (Currently on hold)	5.0	2021	Crossing for Doha bay



## 2022 World Cup Stadiums

Stadium	Status	Contractor	Seat Capacity
Khalifa Renovation	Completed	MIDMAC-Six Construct JV	40,000
Education City	Completed	J&P Qatar, Conspel, and J&P Avax	40,000
Al Janoub (al Wakra)	Completed	MIDMAC/Porr/Six Construct JV	45,000
Al Bayt	Commissioned	Salini Impregilo/Galfar Engineering/Cimolai	60,000
Al Rayyan	Commissioned	Al Balagh – Larsen & Toubrou	40,000
Ras Abu Aboud	Commissioned	HBK Contracting	40,000
Lusail	Commissioned	HBK Contracting - China Railway Construction Company (CRCC)	80,000
Al Thumama Stadium	Commissioned	Al Jaber Engineering – Tekfen Construction	40,000

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

- Building materials
- Engineering and architectural services
- Construction and project management services
- Specialized contractors and service providers for education and healthcare facilities

### Trade Shows

- Project Qatar – December 7-10, 2020 (scheduled) – Doha Exhibition and Convention Center

### Web Resources

- Contact the [Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy.](#)

## **Automotive**

### **Overview**

The automotive industry experienced a very slight increase on the overall new vehicle sales in 2019, with Asian brands continuing to dominate the market. The automotive sector is forecast to contract in 2020 for both commercial and passenger vehicles, so the primary market opportunities in the automotive sector are centered in the automotive aftermarket parts.

With just slight increase on the purchase of new vehicles, it is expected that demand for spare parts will continue to grow in the next few years as people look to repair, modify, or upgrade their vehicles. High demand for used spare parts such as brake pads, transmission controls, AC functions, coolant, wipers, and belts continue to prevail in 2020 because of the overall economic cycle. Aftermarket parts manufactured in the United States for European models are an opportunity for U.S. suppliers. The demand for spare parts, car care products, and accessories has likewise increased as the number of used vehicles grows every year. Counterfeit parts remain a concern in Qatar.

Electric vehicle (EV) adoption is still in the very beginning stage, but Qatar aims to attain 20% EV market share by 2030, with plans to install EV charging stations throughout the country.

Qatar does not have domestic auto production, but it has automotive investments in several countries, including bus production in Oman and vehicle production in Turkey. The Qatar Investment Authority also owns a 17% stake in German carmaker, Volkswagen.

### **Sub-Sector Best Prospects**

- Car care products
- Aftermarket parts, accessories, and spare parts

### **Opportunities**

- Tenders published by the different governmental institutions
- Market penetration through appointment of distributors

### **Web Resources**

Contact the [Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy](#)

## Education Training and Equipment

*(Services statistics are not available.)*

### Overview

Qatar is using its hydrocarbon-fueled wealth, in part, to invest in educational reform. The Government of Qatar recognizes that it must develop a diversified, knowledge-based economy to ensure the country continues to thrive over the long-term. Qatar continues to overhaul its primary and secondary schools, as outlined in the country's National Vision 2030, and the 2020 budget prioritized education spending.

Qatar has nearly 250 independent schools, which function like charter schools in the United States. While the Government of Qatar requires that all independent schools comply with national curriculum standards in all core subjects, the government is gradually modifying its educational curriculum to match international baccalaureate standards. The government continues to look to expand the number of primary and secondary private schools to cater to the growing population of foreign professionals working in Qatar and to provide more options to Qatari citizens. The shortage of private international schools is an issue that results in waitlists around Doha, but the education sector is striving to keep up with increasing market demands. Several new international schools are opening but more institutions are still needed. The Supreme Education Council is making great efforts to promote the establishment of top international institutions in Qatar.

The Government of Qatar provides every citizen free education at the primary and secondary level. The Government of Qatar's Higher Education Institute (HEI) scholarship awards full scholarships to Qatari nationals admitted into a variety of designated undergraduate and graduate schools in the United States (as well as other countries). The goal is to provide these Qataris with the appropriate mix of skills in key sectors in support of Qatarization.

As part of its Vision 2030, Qatar's senior leadership established a strategy to educate highly productive, skilled Qatari nationals to meet the demands of the labor market. This strategy is known as "Qatarization" and is designed to increase the number of Qatari nationals in all joint venture industries and government departments to assume key positions formerly occupied by expatriates. The target is 50% of the workforce in the industry and energy sectors.

For university education, to achieve its goal of creating the best-educated citizens in the Middle East, Qatar has imported not just the American model, but the U.S. universities themselves at Education City. Qatar Foundation (QF) is a major vehicle for the government's education agenda. QF's flagship project is the 2,500-acre Education City campus in Doha, which hosts six U.S. universities: Weill-Cornell Medical College (medicine); Carnegie Mellon University (computer science, business); Georgetown University School of Foreign Service (political science and international affairs); Virginia Commonwealth University (art and design); Texas A&M University (engineering); and Northwestern University (journalism).

Lastly, Qatar is looking to partner with U.S. institutions on science and technology. In January 2019, Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF) and Texas A&M University at Qatar launched an innovation laboratory to support outreach and academic enrichment initiatives in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) for K-12 students in Qatar.

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

- **Language:** ESL and TOEFL
- **Undergraduate:** Business Administration, Engineering, and Communication
- **STEM programs**
- **Post-Graduate:** Pharmacy, Dentistry, Business Administration

**Opportunities**

The education sector is open for new opportunities and innovative ideas, so long as they fit into the educational and economic goals of both the Qatar Foundation and national plans. The country is investing significant resources to train Qatari youth to enable them to become entrepreneurs and qualified professionals for the economy.

School operators are in high demand as the Qatar tries to cope with the growing education demand. Several new recently built housing and commercial areas, such as Lusail City, are looking for partners to establish new schools to cater to residents.

**Web Resources**

- [Qatar Foundation](#)
- [Ministry of Education and Higher Education \(MEHE\)](#)

Contact the [Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy](#).

## **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

### **Overview**

The Ministry of Transport and Communication (MOTC) is focused on modernizing Qatar via the Qatar Smart Nation program, also known as Tasmu, a five-year \$1.64 billion initiative launched in 2017 to develop Qatar's ICT infrastructure and transform Doha into one of most connected cities globally. ICT modernization is a central pillar of Vision 2030, which is Qatar's national plan for development and diversification, since it lays the technology needed to create high-paying jobs of the future and to attract international companies. 5G rollout is underway and slated to be completed by the end of 2020 in the country's most populated areas.

The Qatar Smart Nation Program, led by MOTC with input from numerous other Ministries, aims to harness technology and innovation to improve quality of life and help drive sustainable economic development across five priority sectors:

- Transportation
- Logistics
- Environment
- Healthcare
- Sports

At QITCOM 2019, Qatar's largest annual ICT convention and trade show, MOTC asserted publicly that Tasmu is expected to contribute at least \$11 billion of projected nominal gross domestic product to the Qatari economy.

Individual government agencies, including the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Municipality and Environment, continue their respective "digitization" strategies, as part of Qatar's E-government 2020 objective, creating several opportunities for U.S. companies.

In the past year, Qatar has made impressive strides and announcements aimed at achieving its Smart Nation goals, including the establishment of a \$1 billion Microsoft Azure Data Center, which is forecast for completion in 2021. Cloud services, ICT software and hardware, and IT services are all forecast to continue growing in the coming years.

### **Sub-Sector Best Prospects**

- Smart City Solutions
- Cyber Security
- E-commerce and
- Telemedicine
- Financial Technology

### **Opportunities & Major Trade Shows**

- Qatar IT Conference and Exhibition, [QITCOM](#)

### **Web Resources**

- [Ministry of Transport and Communications](#)
- [Ooredoo](#)
- [Vodafone](#)

Contact the [Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy](#).

## Medical Equipment and Services

### Overview

Healthcare continues to be a priority for the Qatari leadership. Even before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, healthcare was a national spending priority in the 2020 budget due to its important role in the National Vision 2030. The Qatari government is constantly upgrading the quality health services, drawing heavily on imported technology and equipment, as well as international expertise and knowledge. According to industry estimates, the market for medical equipment will grow over the next five years, and the market relies heavily on imports from Europe, Asia and the United States.

Qatar's strong interest in importing medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, healthcare technologies, and supplies from the U.S. is driven by two factors: (1) the rise of new construction projects for hospitals and health care centers, such as the Northwestern Medicine facility that opened in September 2020; and (2) Qatar's lack of local production capacity in this area. Healthcare in Qatar is free or heavily subsidized, and historically, Qataris needing advanced medical treatment have taken advantage of specialized treatment options overseas (including in the U.S.). However, under Vision 2030, Qatar has ambitious plans underway to expand its network of specialized care facilities in Qatar.

The Qatari government offers a range of incentives to prompt more local firms to break into this expanding market. Along with chemical, metallurgical, eco-friendly and high-tech industries, pharmaceuticals and health-related services have been identified as areas where there are significant investment opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, in mid-2020, Qatar began manufacturing artificial respiratory machines to meet domestic healthcare needs; production in excess of local demand will be exported.

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

- Medical Equipment
- Medical Supplies
- Specialized medical services, including for persons with special needs
- Healthcare technology, including but not limited to telemedicine
- Training

### Opportunities

- Under the Qatar Healthcare Facilities Master Plan, Qatar will be establishing 31 health centers between the years of 2016-2020 leading up to the 2022 World Cup. The full plan aims to deliver 48 new facilities that range from health centers, diagnostic and treatment centers, hospital expansions and the building of both general and specialized hospitals.
- Hamad Medical Cooperation has unveiled a new 15-year master plan that includes doubling the number of hospital beds and operating theaters in the country and tripling car parking provisions by 2030.
- The healthcare sector is witnessing reform initiatives. One of the reforms includes broadening public-private partnerships and giving the private sector a larger role in the provision of healthcare services.

### Web Resources

[Hamad Medical Corporation](#)

[Sidra Medicine](#)

Contact the [Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy](#).

## **Oil & Gas Field Machinery and Equipment**

### **Overview**

The State of Qatar is the largest global exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG), and the country's exports of LNG, crude oil, and petroleum products constitute the majority of government revenue. Despite the government's concerted diversification efforts under Vision 2030, Qatar's earnings from its hydrocarbons sector still account for more than 50% of the country's total government revenues. Significant opportunities exist in Qatar for U.S. companies offering products and services in the LNG production process, particularly since Qatar is currently undertaking a \$30 billion North Field Expansion in the LNG sector.

Qatar possesses the third largest known reserve of natural gas in the world after Russia and Iran. Qatar has existing reserves of approximately 25 billion barrels of crude oil and 23.7 trillion cubic meters of natural gas. It is also one of the world's major fertilizer producers and top 15 oil exporting countries. State-owned Qatar Petroleum (QP) oversees the oil, gas, fertilizer, petrochemicals and refining operations in the country and has multi-billion interests abroad. As a global leader in LNG extraction, Qatar's national oil and gas company, QP is an important player both in Qatar and globally. QP has developed the sector through key partnerships with international companies. Since the onset of the Gulf Rift, QP has inked several long-term supply agreements with companies in Bangladesh, China, Vietnam, Thailand, and Pakistan and announced a flurry of overseas acquisitions in hydrocarbon blocks in Brazil, Oman, Mexico, South Africa, Argentina, Cyprus, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Kenya, Guyana, and Cote d'Ivoire. Despite the ongoing land and air blockade imposed on Qatar in June 2017, Qatar has continued to supply LNG to the UAE, interrupted, through the Dolphin sub-sea pipeline, which provides 40% of UAE's power generation. In 2019, QP invested \$18 billion in the U.S. energy sector in the Golden Pass Terminal (\$10 billion) and a petrochemical plant on the Texas Gulf Coast (\$8 billion). Qatar's natural gas production costs are among the lowest in the world, enabling cost-effective LNG and GTL Gas-To-Liquid (GTL) technology. The Pearl GTL plant is the world's largest facility which produces 140,000 billion per day (b/d) and is notable as the first to integrate upstream natural gas production with a downstream conversion facility.

In May 2017, the 12-year moratorium on further developing LNG extraction from the North Field was lifted, allowing QP to proceed with the North Field LNG Expansion, which will increase LNG production in two phases. The first phase of North Field project is expected to increase capacity by 43% from 77 million tons per annum (mtpa) to 110 mtpa by 2025. The second phase, called the North Field South Project (NFS), will further increase the production capacity from 110 mtpa to 126 mtpa, a total 64% increase by 2027. This project includes the development of six LNG mega trains, creating significant opportunities for U.S. energy companies. QP is also planning to build a petrochemical complex that will have ethane capacity of 1.6 mtpa. Qatar's crude oil refining capacity is approximately 393.7 b/d and it is expected to increase to 484.7 b/d in the next three years.

### **Sub-Sector Best Prospects**

- Oil & Gas Field Machinery, Equipment and Supplies
- Oil & Gas Field Services

### **Opportunities**

Qatar is poised to dramatically increase its LNG capacity and diversify products, projecting high growth in the coming years, despite globally depressed hydrocarbon prices. QP's focus on major contracts for the North Field expansion, together with the upcoming development of the petrochemical complex and ethane cracker facility, are likely to be key drivers of business activities in the energy sector.

### **Web Resources**

Contact the [Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy](#)

## Safety & Security

### Overview

The safety and security sector offers opportunities to U.S. companies in Qatar and is poised to experience high levels of growth, particularly as related to cybersecurity and the security equipment and technology needed for the upcoming FIFA World Cup in 2022. U.S. exports continue to provide several technologies to the local market such as CCTV surveillance, fire panels, and communication systems. Numerous cyber-attacks over the last decade continue to drive the government's focus on boosting its offensive and defensive cyber-capabilities. The Ministry of Interior established a Cyber Security Committee to identify and determine the best technological and legal approach to ensure National Security and Cyber Defense. Established in 2006, Q-CERT (Qatar's Computer Emergency Response Team) is ranked as one of the leading centers of its kind in the region.

In September 2020, the Qatari Cabinet approved a proposal to establish a dedicated national agency for cybersecurity, underlining its importance. Qatar aims to improve its national cyber defense infrastructure in the face of a growing network warfare threat. This need has become more pressing with the hacking and spread of misinformation during and since the 2017 Gulf Rift, creating several opportunities for U.S. technology firms specialized in the field of cyberwarfare and cyber defense.

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

- CCTV Surveillance & Access control
- Asset tracking
- Chemical trace detection
- Cybersecurity
- Forgery/Fraud
- Integrated security systems, Building management systems
- Intrusion detection equipment
- Perimeter protection
- Protective barriers
- Sports safety and security
- Electronic safety and fire detection
- Communications systems
- Fire protection equipment and supplies

### Opportunities

- Cybersecurity
- FIFA World Cup 2022
- Hamad International Airport Expansion

### Web Resources

[Communications Regulatory Authority](#)

[Ministry of Interior](#), which includes the Internal Security Force (ISF)

[National Information Security Center](#), or Q-CERT

[Ministry of Transportation and Communications](#)

[Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy](#), the Qatari entity in charge of FIFA World Cup 2022

Contact the [Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy](#).



## **Qatari Business Tender List**

### [Ashghal](#)

The Qatar Public Works Authority, also known as Ashghal, was established in 2004 as an autonomous body to oversee all infrastructure related projects, as well as public amenities of the State, and is under the Ministry of Municipality and Environment.

### [Civil Aviation Authority](#)

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is the national aviation authority of Qatar. The CAA comprises five departments: Air Navigation, Air Safety, Air Transportation and Airport Affairs, Meteorology, and Joint Services in order to promote civil aviation and weather forecasts in terms of efficiency, accuracy and security.

### [Kahramaa](#)

Kahramaa, the Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation, was established in 2000 as the sole transmission and distribution system owner and operator for the electricity and water sector in Qatar.

### [New Hamad Port Project](#)

This project gained full operational readiness in 2018 (phase 1). Under phase 2 in 2020, the Port will eventually comprise three container terminals with a combined annual capacity in excess of six million containers.

### [Qatar Rail](#)

Qatar's Rail Company was established to design and implement an integrated world-class railway system in the Qatar. The company is an essential part of Qatar's urban infrastructure and aims to be recognized as one of the most successful, safe and environmentally friendly railway systems in the world. While the system is largely operational at this point, ongoing maintenance will be required.

Tenders are also published in some of the following publications:

### **International Publications**

- Estate Gazette
- MEED.com
- New Civil Engineer
- Building Design
- Building Magazine
- Digital Media
- Nce.co.uk
- Estesgazette.com
- Constructionweekonline.com
- Building.co.uk

### **Raw Material**

#### [QAFCO](#)

The country's first large-scale venture in the petrochemical sector, the Qatar Fertilizer Company (QAFCO) was established with a view to diversify the economy and utilize the nation's enormous gas reserve.

### [Q-Chem](#)

Company Ltd. (Q-Chem) is a Qatari company owned by Qatar Petroleum (QP) and Chevron Phillips Chemical International Qatar Holdings LLC (CPCIQ). The Q-Chem facility is an integrated petrochemical plant capable of producing high-density and medium-density polyethylene (HDPE & MDPE), 1-hexene and other products.

### [Qatar Steel](#)

Qatar Steel Company was formed in 1974 as the first integrated steel plant in the Arabian Gulf. Today, Qatar Steel is widely recognized as a foremost leader in the steel industry, extending its pioneering commitment from an expansive mill site located in the heart of the Mesaieed industrial area. The company also operates a UAE-based subsidiary, Qatar Steel Company FZE.

## **Education**

### [Qatar Foundation](#)

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) aims to support Qatar on its journey from a carbon economy to a knowledge-based economy by “unlocking human potential.” QF aims to bring world-class education, work experience and career opportunities to Qatar’s youth.

## **Government Agencies**

### [Central Planning Office](#)

The Qatar Central Planning Office coordinates all major infrastructure projects.

### [Ministry of Commerce and Industry](#)

Established in 2009, this Ministry executes policies related to the development of business and trade. Among other things, this includes monitoring business activities, as well as proposing and implementing policies and programs that aim to attract investments and develop exports.

### [Ministry of Education and Higher Education](#)

Established in November 2002, the Supreme Education Council (SEC) directs the nation’s education policy. It plays an integral role in the development and implementation of the education reform effort.

### [Ministry of Interior](#)

The Ministry of Interior’s functions and missions are to provide peace and security and organizing police forces guaranteeing the protection of national security and maintaining safety and security of nationals and expatriates as well as to prevent crime. Additionally, the MOI is charged with issuing travel documents, organizing expatriates’ entry to the country and housing, and organizing the prison.

### [Ministry of Municipality and Environment](#)

The Ministry of Municipality & Environment (MME) serves as the lead Qatari government authority on urban planning, environmental protection, and agriculture. MME focuses on inclusive and sustainable growth for future generations and plays a role in achieving Qatar’s national Vision 2030. It oversees the maintenance and beautification of public facilities and provides municipal services to citizens and residents across the various municipalities.

### [National Tourism Council \(NTC\)](#)

The National Tourism Council (NTC) promotes tourism and investment in the hospitality sector in Qatar. It leads strategic industry planning and policy development to attract tourists. In addition, NTC is responsible for the management of regulatory affairs in the hospitality sector, including the execution of all tourism licenses and similar services.

### [Ministry of Public Health](#)

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) aims to promote public health, encourage healthy lifestyles, and to provide community-based primary care with world class medical facilities. These facilities will not only provide quality care but also are expected to be research leaders on the frontiers of science.

### [Qatar Museum Authority \(QMA\)](#)

The QMA was founded in 2005 to manage the resources of all museums in the State of Qatar, to develop cultural institutions, such as museums and galleries, and to provide an effective system for collecting, protecting, preserving and interpreting historic sites, monuments and artifacts.

### [SIDRA Medicine](#)

With its inpatient hospital launching in January 2018, Sidra Medical and Research Center is an ultra-modern, all-digital academic medical center that offers specialty healthcare for women and children.

### [KATARA Hospitality](#)

Katara Hospitality, previously known as Qatar National Hotels Company, is a hotel and resort owner, manager and developer, aiming to become one of the leading hospitality organizations in the world.

## **Media**

### [Al Jazeera](#)

Al Jazeera is an independent broadcaster owned by the State of Qatar through the Qatar Media Corporation and headquartered in Doha.

## **Oil and Gas**

### [Qatar Petroleum](#)

Qatar Petroleum (QP), a state-owned corporation established in 1974, is responsible for all phases of the oil and gas industry in Qatar. The principal activities of QP and its subsidiaries and joint ventures cover exploration, drilling and production operations, transport, storage, marketing and sale of crude oil, natural gas liquids, liquefied natural gas, gas-to-liquids, refined products, petrochemicals and fertilizers, and helicopter and financial services.

### [Qatar Gas](#)

Qatar Gas established in 1984, pioneered the liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry in Qatar. Today, Qatargas is the largest LNG producer in the world, with an annual LNG production capacity of 77.1 million tons per annum (mtpa).

## **Real Estate and Development**

### [Msheireb](#)

Msheireb Properties is a real estate company and a subsidiary of Qatar Foundation. The company was established as a commercial venture to support the Foundation's aims of creating leading edge urban living concepts that build on traditional Arabian architecture and design and contribute to the social and cultural heritage of Doha.

### [Qatari Diar](#)

Qatari Diar Real Estate Company was established in 2005 by the Qatar Investment Authority, the sovereign wealth fund of the State of Qatar. Headquartered in Doha, Qatari Diar is entrusted to support Qatar's growing economy and to coordinate the country's real estate development priorities.

## **Sports**

### [Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy](#)

The 2022 FIFA World Cup, an international association football tournament, is scheduled to take place in Qatar in November-December 2022.

### [ASPIRE](#)

The Aspire Academy is a national sports academy for the development of Qatar's athletically talented youth. The Academy provides integrated sports development, sports science and academics in addition to providing an ambitious health and lifestyle program for the community that delivers over 25,000 education and classes per year.

### [Qatar Olympic Committee](#)

Qatar's National Olympic Committee's vision is to promote "Sport for Life," and to become "a leading nation in bringing the world together through sport."

## **Customs, Regulations & Standards**

### **Trade Barriers**

Qatar adheres to the WTO agreements for customs valuation and trade facilitation.

### **Import Tariffs**

In accordance with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Customs Union, outlined in Law No. 41/2002 and implemented as the GCC Unified Customs Law on January 1, 2003, Qatar imposes a 5% ad valorem tariff on the cost, insurance and freight (C.I.F.) invoice value of most imported products, including food products. The GCC has approved exemptions for approximately 400 goods (including basic food products, such as live animals, fresh fruit and vegetables, seafood, wheat, flour, rice, feed grains, spices, seeds for planting and powdered milk), diplomatic and consular imports, military and security products, civilian aviation, personal effects and used household items, passenger accompanied luggage and gifts, goods destined for charitable use, ships and other vessels for the transport of passengers and floating platforms, and products to be used for industrial projects. Qatar also has a 20% tariff on iron bars and rods, non-alloy hot-rolled steel and 12-millimeter steel bars as well as cement. Customs duties of 30% are levied on imports of urea and 15% on imports of records and musical instruments. The sale of pork and pork products is strictly regulated, only available at one store for non-Muslim residents of Qatar. Pork, pork products, tobacco products, and alcoholic beverages are subject to a 100% import duty. Projects funded by the Qatar Industrial Development Bank (QIDB) can be granted a customs duty waiver for the import of machinery, raw materials, and other industrial inputs.

### **Import Requirements & Documentation**

All importers are required by law to have an import license. Import licenses are issued only to Qatari nationals, or to the Qatari partner in a limited liability partnership and must be registered with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This regulation also applies to wholly foreign owned entities operating in Qatar.

Import Licenses: All imported meats, including beef and poultry products, require a health certificate issued by the country of export and a “Halal” slaughter certificate issued by an approved Islamic center in that country.

In order to clear goods from customs zones at ports or land boundaries in Qatar, importers must submit a variety of documents, including a detailed customs declaration, bill of lading, certificate of origin, pro forma invoice and import license. Information on specific requirements should be obtained from the Customs and Ports General Authority. Inspection of goods is generally conducted at the customs station, or as directed by the Director General, in the presence of the owner or his representative.

#### **Additional Import Regulations:**

Since April 1, 2011, Qatar Customs has required official invoices, an official certificate of origin (COO), and packing lists for shipments destined to Qatar (airport and seaport). Shipments without these documents will not be cleared under any circumstances and shall be returned back to origin.

It is mandatory to write the HS CODE of the commodity in the official invoices and COO, otherwise shipment will not be accepted for clearance.

‘COUNTRY OF ORIGIN’ OR ‘MADE IN’ fields are mandatory for each piece, on materials, and on cartons.

The ‘COUNTRY OF ORIGIN’ OR ‘MADE IN MARK’ details on the shipment should match the information on the official invoice, COO, and on the materials (Any discrepancies will cause the shipment to be returned to the origin).

For goods originating from Europe: mention clearly on the COO the country of origin. Example: ‘Country of Origin: European Community – UK’. If the products are made in two countries, the country of origin should be both countries in the COO, invoice, and on the materials. Example: ‘European Community – UK & POLAND.’”

### General Authority of Customs

P.O. Box 81, Doha, State of Qatar

Phone: +974 4441-1149

Fax: +974 4441-4959

In Qatar, the letter of credit (L/C) is the most common instrument for controlling exports and imports. When an L/C is opened, the supplier is required to provide a certificate of origin and a certificate from the captain of the ship or from the shipping agency stating that the ship is allowed to enter Arab ports. An Arab Embassy or Consulate or an Arab Chamber of Commerce should notarize both documents in the exporting country.

A letter of credit initiated in Qatar is usually endorsed with transshipment clauses. It is customary in Qatar for importers to build their L/C’s computations on “cost and freight (C&F)” basis, and not C.I.F. Qatari merchants prefer to have insurance coverage provided by local and international insurance companies, to cover damage in transit to the goods covered under the L/C.

### **U.S. Export Controls**

The U.S. Department of Commerce’s [Bureau of Industry and Security \(BIS\)](#) is responsible for implementing and enforcing the Export Administration Regulations (EAR), which regulate the export and re-export of some commercial items, including “production” and “development” technology.

The items that BIS regulates are often referred to as “dual use” since they have both commercial and military applications. The Commerce Control List categories include Nuclear & Miscellaneous, Chemicals, Microorganisms and Toxins, Electronics, Computers, Telecommunications, Information Security, Sensors and Lasers, Navigation and Avionics, Marine, and Aerospace and Propulsion.

BIS has [developed a list of "red flags,"](#) or warning signs, intended to discover possible violations of the EAR, as well as ["Know Your Customer" guidance.](#) Further information on export controls is available [here.](#)

If there is reason to believe a violation is taking place or has occurred, report it to the U.S. Department of Commerce by calling the 24-hour hotline at 1 (800) 424-2980, or via the [confidential lead page.](#)

The EAR does not control all goods, services, and technologies. Other U.S. government agencies regulate more specialized exports. For example, the U.S. Department of State has authority over defense articles and services. A list of other agencies involved in export control can be found on the BIS web.

In August 2009, the U.S. government launched the Export Control Reform Initiative (ECR Initiative), which is designed to enhance U.S. national security and strengthen the United States’ ability to counter threats such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. For additional information on ECR, click [here.](#)

BIS provides a variety of training sessions to U.S. exporters throughout the year. These sessions range from one- to two-day seminars and focus on the basics of exporting as well as more advanced topics. For a list of upcoming BIS seminars, click [here.](#)

## **Temporary Entry**

Some categories of goods may be temporarily admitted without collection of customs duties. These include: heavy machinery and equipment for project execution, semi-finished products, use in exhibitions and temporary events and machinery, equipment imported for repair, containers and materials for refilling, animals for grazing, and commercial samples.

## **Labeling/Marking Requirements**

Current laws and regulations of the Ministry of Municipality and Environment and the Ministry of Public Health require labeling and marking requirements to be honored, especially where the import of foodstuffs is concerned.

All imported meats require a health certificate issued by the country of export and a Halal slaughter certificate issued by an approved Islamic center in that country.

Qatar enforces GCC shelf-life standards through GS 150/2013 (previously GS 150/1993 and GS 150/2007), Part I and II. Part I lists products with mandatory shelf lives, while Part II lists products with recommended shelf lives. Copies of the standards may be purchased from the GSO webpage.

Production and expiry dates must be printed on the original label or container by the manufacturer. Dates cannot be added after the fact via a sticker. Products must arrive at destination with at least half the shelf-life duration remaining. The U.S. supplier should work closely with the importer to ensure compliance with local shelf-life requirements. Food labels must include product and brand names, production and expiry dates, country of origin, name and address of the manufacturer, net weight in metric units, and a list of the ingredients in descending order of importance. All fats and oils used as ingredients must be specifically identified on the label. Labels must be in Arabic only or in Arabic/English. Arabic stickers are accepted.

## **Prohibited & Restricted Imports**

The Qatar Distribution Company is the only source for the importation of alcohol, pork, and pork products. Military and security items are forbidden unless licensed by local authorities. Narcotics, flammable and radioactive products are also banned. Any products that violate trademarks are also banned.

## **Customs Regulations**

Qatar is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Customs Union which came into effect in 2003. In accordance with the GCC Customs Union, Qatar maintains a 5% tariff on a wide range of products. Basic food products such as wheat, flour, rice, feed grains and powdered milk are exempted from tariffs. The tariff on alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, pork, and pork products are 100%. Qatar also has a 20% tariff on iron bars and rods, non-alloy hot-rolled steel and 12-millimeter steel bars. Qatar maintains a 5% tariff on all textile imports. Projects funded by the Qatar Industrial Development Bank can be granted a customs duty waiver for the import of machinery, raw materials and other industrial inputs.

## **Standards for Trade**

### **Overview**

The Government of Qatar continues to develop its standards regime to meet internationally and regionally recognized norms and practices, such as the International Standardization Systems Organization (ISSO). The Qatar Laboratories and Standardization Affairs is in charge of developing and conformity assessment body for Qatar. However, Qatari government ministries such as the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Ministry of Municipality and Environment provide recommendations for standards. The Qatar Laboratories and Standardization Affairs continually develop new standards and criteria for various items and merchandise.

## **Standards**

The only standards organization in Qatar is the Qatar Laboratories and Standardization Affairs.

## **NIST Notify U.S. Service**

Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other member countries.

[Notify U.S.](#) is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that can affect your access to international markets.

## **Conformity Assessment**

Qatar has laboratories to test construction materials, food and calibration scales. The Qatar Laboratories and Standardization Affairs is charged with the task of developing laboratories and facilities to test electrical equipment and supplies, toys and oil fabrication equipment as well as other items and merchandize. The Departments of Central Laboratories, and Quality and Standards, which are under the supervision of the Qatar Laboratories and Standardization Affairs, are the primary testing facilities for Qatar. There are no conformity assessment bodies in Qatar.

## **Product Certification**

Qatar applies product certification according to ISSO standards 22 and 28. Product certification takes place by way of a conformity certificate from the manufacturer, self-declaration or tests reported by accredited laboratories from the exporting country.

## **Accreditation**

There are no accreditation organizations in Qatar.

## **Publication of technical regulations**

The name of the national gazette is the Government Official Gazette. Proposed regulations are currently not published but final regulations are published and are considered law once listed in the Official Gazette. The General Organization for Standards and Metrology has developed a website that lists all Qatari standards and allows for governments and the private sector to make comments on draft legislation for 60 days. More information can be found at: [Qatar Foundation](#).

## **Trade Agreements**

Qatar is a strong supporter of regional integration and has ties with several Arab League member states. Qatar has signed several bilateral agreements to ease trade and investment restrictions with Arab countries in the Gulf and North Africa. Over the past ten years, Qatar has signed bilateral investment protection agreements with several countries, including Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Croatia, Cuba, Finland, France, Germany, India, Iran, South Korea, Morocco, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sudan, Switzerland and Turkey.

As a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Qatar is a signatory to the GCC Free Trade Agreement. This agreement provides duty free access to all goods produced in the GCC States, provided that the goods meet the content requirements (at least 40 percent value added within GCC factories, which are at least 50 percent owned by GCC entities). In January 2003, the GCC implemented a unified customs tariff to facilitate regional trade.

## **Web Resources**

Contact the [Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy](#)



## **Selling U.S. Products & Services**

### **Distribution & Sales Channels**

The government procurement process is based on standard tender procedures. A foreign supplier wishing to participate in government tenders may appoint a local commercial agent; however, as noted previously, appointing a commercial agent in Qatar raises specific legal and commercial issues that should be carefully considered by a foreign company or supplier. An effective agent in Qatar will have extensive contacts in both the public and private sectors, enabling the collection of valuable information for the business.

Most Qatari trading entities represent a variety of foreign firms in the local market. To maximize their market penetration, U.S. firms planning to appoint a Qatari agent should ensure that the local agent does not represent any competitor.

A variety of distribution and sales channels exist in Qatar including:

- Private supermarkets account for most of the retail sales. The distribution channel is as follows: importer/agent sells to private supermarkets (60%), cooperatives (20%), institutional users (10%) and wholesalers and convenience stores (5%).
- Consumer cooperative societies account for 20% of the food retail sales in Qatar.
- Institutional users account for approximately 10% of food distributed.
- Wholesalers and small convenience stores account for the balance of 5% of food products marketed in Qatar. Wholesalers sell directly to consumers, to small supermarkets, and restaurants.
- Generic and brand supermarket promotions are common in Qatar and are commonly employed by both local and foreign companies.
- Newspaper advertisements and inserts are most commonly used for food and other products. TV advertising, while very effective, is expensive. For other products, social media is an important source of advertising.

### **Using an Agent to Sell U.S. Products and Services**

In certain circumstances, foreign companies doing business in Qatar may elect to have a local commercial agent. A commercial agent generally acts as the exclusive provider of services of the foreign principal or exclusive seller in Qatar for foreign produced goods. U.S. firms are strongly advised *to avoid* appointing one regional agent for a number of countries.

U.S. companies with agency agreements or planning agency agreements with Qatari firms are encouraged to review Law No. 8/2002 as amended by Law No. 2/2016 (the “Commercial Agents Law”). The law consists of 28 articles, enshrining two basic principles:

1. The business of commercial agents is exclusively restricted to Qatari nationals or to companies wholly owned by Qatari nationals, and they must be registered with the Qatari Commercial Agents Register to receive the benefits.
2. Any Qatari agency is to be considered as an exclusive agency.

It should be noted that the Commercial Agents Law mandates certain outcomes with respect to the expiration or termination of agency contracts and these provisions should be reviewed carefully when entering into an agency or distribution agreement.

When finally approved by both parties, the Arabic text of agency or representation agreements should be registered with the Commercial Affairs Department of the MoCI. Local agents usually follow up on the routine work required by MoCI registration regulations. Article 23 of the law states that courts of the State of Qatar shall be competent to

deal with any dispute arising between the principal and the agent for the execution of the agency contract, provided there is no agreement otherwise. In the event that the parties select arbitration, Article 24 of the law states that any arbitral award in the dispute arising out of the agency agreement shall be deemed final.

The Commercial Agents Law allows for the importation and sale of brand name products by other local entities; however, the commercial agent is permitted to request commission from the foreign principal in accordance with their commercial agency agreement where the products have been imported for the purpose of trading, as opposed to personal use or exportation, which are exempt from commission.

To find a reliable agent, U.S. companies are encouraged to take advantage of services offered by the Commercial Section at the [U.S. Embassy in Doha](#).

Other resources for finding a local agent include international auditing firms, accounting firms and law offices. Even in these cases a visit to the Commercial Section of the United States Embassy in Doha is encouraged for additional information and insight.

The Commercial Agency Law can be complex in its application and U.S. companies are encouraged to consult counsel prior to hiring an agent or selling goods or services into Qatar.

### **Establishing an Office**

In order to do business in Qatar and establish a local office, foreign and local companies as well as service agencies are required to obtain commercial registration from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI). Qatar enacted Law No. 25/2005 (the “Commercial Registry Law”) which states that no individual person or single entity may engage in commercial activity before registering in the Commercial Registry maintained by the MoCI. Any inquiries regarding the registration process should be directed to the Director of Commercial Affairs in the Commercial Registration and Licenses Department at the MoCI. Law No. 20/2014 amended certain provisions of the Commercial Registry Law to simplify and expedite the registration and appeals process.

In January 2019, Law No. 1/2019 regulating the investment of non-Qatari capital was signed by the Amir, repealing Law No. 13/2000 on the regulation of foreign investment. The new law permits foreign investors to invest up to 100% in nearly all sectors of the economy. Additionally, to enable more foreign real estate investment, the government enacted a new law (Law No. 16/2018) allowing foreign individuals, companies, and real estate developers freehold ownership of real estate in ten designated zones and usufructuary rights up to 99 years in 16 other zones. Foreign real estate investors and owners will also be granted residency in Qatar for as long as they own their property.

Important exceptions to the Foreign Investment Law are as follows:

- **100% Foreign Investment Law:** Excepted sectors include banking, insurance, and commercial agencies, where foreign capital investment remains limited at 49%, barring special dispensation from the Cabinet. Investors must obtain an exemption from Qatar’s Council of Ministers prior to investing in the banking and insurance sectors.
- **Article 68 Companies:** The Foreign Investment Law provides that it shall not apply to companies and individuals whom the government of Qatar entrusts with excavation, utilization or management of natural wealth resources under a concession or agreement, or to companies that are established by the government or public institutions or in which the government participates in partnership with foreign investors (so called “Article 68 Companies”). Special rules apply in these circumstances.

- **Representational trade office:** The decision of the MoCI No. 142/2006 provides that foreign firms may open representational offices without a local partner. Such offices may not conduct any financial transactions related to the company’s commercial activities in Qatar and are therefore not subject to taxation. However, the office must be registered with the tax authorities. Though the representational office may be registered in the Commercial Registry and employ staff in its own name, it is really a “shop window” to source business. A representational office may be converted into a joint venture company or 100% foreign ownership at a later date.
- **Branch registration:** The Foreign Investment Law contains provisions that, subject to an exemption from the MoCI, allow a branch of a foreign company to be registered in Qatar if that foreign company has a contract in Qatar that results in facilitating the rendering of a service or implies a public benefit. This has generally been interpreted to mean engaging in a contract with the Government of Qatar or a quasi-governmental entity. This registration does not allow the foreign company to conduct commercial activity that is not related to the subject of its registration. Foreign companies registered under this category do not need a sponsor or service agent. Currently, it is unclear whether the new law for 100% foreign investment will impact branch registration provisions.
- **Service agents or sponsorship:** In the past, this type of arrangement consisted of appointing a Qatari entity to act as a service agent for a foreign firm. Specific services would be determined by the two parties and could include handling administrative and business matters in Qatar, such as immigration procedures, import licenses, providing introductions to decision makers, etc. Although the service agent remains a common business practice in the region, it is no longer an appropriate business option in Qatar in light of Law No. 25/2004, commonly known as the “Proxy Law.” The Proxy Law was enacted in Qatar to address the practice of concealing non-Qataris doing business in violation of existing Qatari law. It prohibits natural or legal persons from concealing the business activities of non-Qataris, for example by allowing a non-Qatari to use the name, license or commercial registration of Qatari party. According to Law No. 25/2004, the service agent relationship is considered a form of proxy business and fines and imprisonment can be imposed on anyone who infringes the law.
- **QFC, QSTP, Manateq, and Free Zones:** The Qatari government offers business incubator and free economic zone platforms to attract foreign direct investment. The [Qatar Financial Centre \(QFC\)](#) and the [Qatar Science and Technology Park \(QSTP\)](#) provide environments for international companies and institutions to operate under certain free zone-type conditions. The criteria and limitations to operate in these environments are fairly stringent. Foreign investors interested in setting up in the QFC must carry out specific permitted activities. On the other hand, the QSTP is restricted to entities engaged in research and development activities in Qatar. Interested parties must submit applications for both the QFC and the QSTP for assessment of eligibility to establish a corporate presence. In addition, [Manateq](#), a national initiative encompassing special economic zones, industrial zones, logistics parks, and warehousing parks, aims to attract small, medium, and large enterprises with various infrastructure incentives. Recommended industries vary by zone, but generally include construction, building materials, metals, chemicals, plastics, petrochemicals, food manufacturing and storage. The [Qatar Free Zones Authority](#), established in 2018, is accepting investment applications in two free economic zones, which are co-located with Qatar’s primary airport and seaport. Recommended industries include logistics, consumer products, light manufacturing, ICT, pharmaceuticals, maritime industries, and plastics. Incentives include tax exemptions, zero customs duties, full repatriation of profits, and potential access to a \$3 billion government-backed fund for strategic investments in the free zones.

## **Franchising**

There is no specific franchising legislation enacted in Qatar. Franchise structuring options and any actual franchise operations are dictated by, and need to comply with, a loose collection of laws and regulations which structure general issues of commercial law and trade, commercial relationships, foreign investment, shareholder rights, and obligations. One of the keys to success in franchise operations in Qatar is to use a local franchisee versus a regional master franchisee expanding to Qatar. Qataris are sensitive to businesses owned or operated in Qatar by neighboring countries' companies or nationals.

U.S. fast food and casual dining restaurants are popular in Qatar, particularly with the younger generation with many major U.S. fast food franchises already established in Qatar. High per capita income, a rather young population, a high number of unaccompanied expatriate workers, and the lack of alternative entertainment venues encourage out-of-home dining, with recent demand for healthier food concepts on the rise.

In addition to the success of food franchises, there are many non-food franchises in Qatar, such as fitness centers, car rentals, computer learning centers, apparel shops, real estate brokerage, and language learning centers. The potential of growth in non-food franchises is significant, and some Qatari entities have a strong interest in investing in this business, given the ease of ready-made business plans offered by franchises.

## **Direct Marketing**

Foreign companies are generally not allowed to market their products and services directly. A local agent is needed to do so, unless the foreign company has an appropriately registered entity in Qatar. However, in cases where the foreign company is working on a major public project, direct marketing to the contractor is possible. Direct marketing is also possible through the representational office.

## **Joint Ventures/Licensing**

The Commercial Companies Law, Law No. 5/2002 (replacing Law No. 11/1981), controls the establishment of all private business concerns in Qatar. The updated law allows corporate mergers, corporate bonds, and the conversion of corporate partnerships into joint stock companies.

As mentioned above, joint ventures involving foreign partners primarily take the form of limited liability companies. Generally, foreign investors may own up to 49% and the Qatari partners no less than 51% of a limited liability concern (see information about Law 1/2019 on foreign ownership). Foreign partners in partnerships organized as limited liability partnerships must pay the full amount of their contribution to authorized financial institutions in cash or in kind prior to the start of operations. These firms are normally required to set aside 10% of their profits each year in a statutory reserve, until it equals 50% of the venture's authorized capital.

## **Express Delivery**

Postal services within Qatar are provided by Q-Post, the government monopoly. Reliable express delivery services are available throughout the country from such providers as FedEx, UPS, DHL, and Aramex.

## **Due Diligence**

The [Embassy's Commercial Section](#) offers U.S. companies the International Company Profile (ICP) as a due diligence tool to help firms make assessments of potential local business partners. A description of the ICP service is available at: <https://www.export.gov/International-Company-Profile>

## **eCommerce**

Qatar boasts one of the highest Internet penetration rates in the world, exceeding 95%. A 2018 study conducted by Northwestern University in Qatar found that social media penetration was among the highest in the world, with 93% of Qatari nationals using WhatsApp, 70% using Instagram, and 64% using Snapchat. As of November 2018,

approximately two-thirds of the population is within the 15-44 age group and has a great interest in online shopping. Before Covid-19, it was estimated that only about 14% of the population actually made online purchases; however, this has increased significantly since the onset of Covid-19, but no reliable statistics are available at this date. In Qatar, 87% of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) accept credit cards, which are widely used in Qatar.

The country's Electronic Commerce and Transactions Law was enacted in 2010, providing legislation in areas such as e-signatures, e-documents, and authentication. Qatar Central Bank is primarily responsible for regulating electronic banking activities and electronic financial transactions. The Government of Qatar is encouraging greater use of modern technology in government transactions and service delivery. Since 2014, Qatar continues to implement its [e-Government 2020 strategy](#), which aims to enhance people's everyday lives through technology. This includes providing e-Government services to individuals and businesses, as well as delivering administrative efficiency and increasing government openness. Several government services and transactions are now possible through the Internet and the goal of putting 100% of key government services online is targeted to be completed by the end of 2020. The private sector, however, has taken slow steps in developing its B2B and B2C portals. E-commerce is expected to flourish given the government's interest in enhancing this service throughout Qatar, as well as the necessity for alternatives to in-person shopping that Covid-19 presents.

eCommerce guidelines can be found [here](#).

### **Selling Factors & Techniques**

U.S. suppliers should emphasize the competitive price, high quality and, if applicable, the new-to-market status of their products. Initial face-to-face contact with importers will significantly increase a company's business prospects. Qatari companies distributing foreign products usually request marketing and advertising assistance from the principals to introduce a new product to the market or to improve sales of existing products.

### **Trade Promotion & Advertising**

Many advertising practices and strategies used by U.S. companies are familiar to Qatari firms. The most common forms of advertising are media announcements, billboards, and flyers. Local distributors generally develop advertising strategies in coordination with their principals. Several private advertising firms are equipped to handle promotional activities.

Most newspapers in Qatar, including five Arabic and three English dailies, have a large readership. These include the following:

#### **Arabic:**

##### [Al-Sharq](#)

P.O. Box 3488, Doha, State of Qatar

Tel: (+974) 44557780

Fax: (+974) 44557864

Email: [adv@al-sharq.com](mailto:adv@al-sharq.com)

##### [Al-Watan](#)

P.O. Box 22345, Doha, State of Qatar,

Tel: (+974) 40002121

Fax: (+974) 40002230

Email: [alwatan@qatar.net.qa](mailto:alwatan@qatar.net.qa)

##### [Al-Raya](#)

P.O. Box 533, Doha, State of Qatar, Office of the Editorial President

Tel: (+974) 44466566 or 4437 1353  
Fax: (+974) 4435 0476  
Email: [Editor@raya.com](mailto:Editor@raya.com)

#### [Al-Arab](#)

P.O. Box 22612, Doha, State of Qatar  
Tel: (+974) 4499 7333  
Email: [alarab@alarab.qa](mailto:alarab@alarab.qa)

#### [Lusail](#)

P.O. Box 559, Doha, State of Qatar  
Tel: (+974) 44627575  
Fax: (+974) 44627576  
Email: [lusail@lusailnews.qa](mailto:lusail@lusailnews.qa)

#### **English:**

##### [Gulf Times](#)

P.O. Box 533, Doha, State of Qatar  
Tel: (+974) 4435 0478(News) 4446 6404(Sports)  
4446 6609(Advertising) 4 44411300(Home delivery)  
Fax: (+974) 4435 0474(Editorial) 44418811(Advertising)  
Email: [editor@gulf-times.com](mailto:editor@gulf-times.com),

##### [The Peninsula](#)

P.O. Box 3488, D-Ring Road Doha, State of Qatar

##### *Editorial:*

Tel: (+974) 4455 7739/41/47/48  
Fax: (+974) 4455 7746  
E-mail: [editor@pen.com.qa](mailto:editor@pen.com.qa)

##### *Advertising:*

Tel: (+974) 4455 7837 or (+974) 4455 7852 or (+974) 4455 7780  
Fax: (+974) 4455 7870 or (+974) 4455 7898  
E-mail: [adv@pen.com.qa](mailto:adv@pen.com.qa)

##### *PenMag:*

Tel: (+974) 4455 7837 or (+974) 4455 7780  
Fax: (+974) 4455 7870 or (+974) 4455 7898  
E-mail: [penmag@pen.com.qa](mailto:penmag@pen.com.qa)

##### *Classifieds:*

Tel: (+974) 4455 7857  
E-mail: [adv@pen.com.qa](mailto:adv@pen.com.qa)

##### *Subscriptions / Home Delivery*

Tel: (+974) 4455 7809/810  
Fax: (+974) 4455 7819  
E-mail: [distribution@pen.com.qa](mailto:distribution@pen.com.qa) / [distribution@al-sharq.com](mailto:distribution@al-sharq.com)

### *Public Relations*

Tel: (+974) 4455 7728/52

Fax: (+974) 4455 7758

E-mail: [pr@pen.com.qa](mailto:pr@pen.com.qa)

### Qatar Tribune

P.O. Box 23493, Doha, State of Qatar

Tel: (+974) 4442 2077/4466 6810/ 4455 4333

Fax: (+974) 4441 6790

Email: [editor@qatar-tribune.com](mailto:editor@qatar-tribune.com)

Al Rayyan Satellite Channel is a diversified channel operated by Al Rayyan Media and Marketing. The channel targets the Qatari audience. Al Rayyan is as a familiar news service at the national and regional levels.

General Enquiries: +974 44240515

Advertising and Marketing: +974 44240271 / +974 44243160

Fax Nos.: +974 44413311 / +974 44245794

Email: [advertising.marketing@alrayyan.qa](mailto:advertising.marketing@alrayyan.qa)

### **Qatar Broadcasting Service (QBS) / Qatar News Agency**

P.O. Box 1414, Doha, State of Qatar,

Tel: (+974) 4489 4444, Fax: (+974) 4487 0712

The state-owned Qatar Radio and Television Corporation operates Qatar Television (QTV) and the radio station Qatar Broadcasting Service (QBS). QTV, comprising Arabic and English channels, broadcasts pre-recorded commercials. QBS also carries advertisements.

Aljazeera Network encompasses Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel with a number of operational channels: Al-Jazeera

Live, Al-Jazeera, and Al-Jazeera Documentary,

P.O. Box 23123, Doha, Tel: (+974) 40158585

Email: [advertising@aljazeera.net](mailto:advertising@aljazeera.net)

The locally operated pan-Arab satellite channel Al-Jazeera receives some public funding but is independently owned and operated. It also broadcasts advertising for local and regional companies and products. The Al-Jazeera network of channels is carried by Qatar's satellites, Es'hailSat 1 and 2.

Al-Jazeera is an excellent means of promotion and advertising, as it broadcasts to more than 310 million households in more than 100 countries, with extensive coverage across the Middle East and North Africa, especially.

Aljazeera.net is the most visited website in the Arab world and one of top 200 most visited websites in the world.

### **Pricing**

There is a large variety of local and foreign products in the Qatari market. Local consumers are very price conscious and actively seek out sales and promotions. Local distributors of international products often engage in promotions in order to attract consumers and gain market share. U.S. firms should work closely with their local distributor in order to determine appropriate pricing strategies.

There is currently no value-added tax (VAT) or sales tax in Qatar. However, the government is considering introducing a 5% VAT at some point in the next 2-3 years.

The average importer markup on food products is 10-15%. Retail food prices are generally 25-30% above import prices.

### **Sales Service/Customer Support**

Post-sales service and customer support is considered the responsibility of the local distributor or agent. Since a Qatari entity must obtain a license for all imports, local firms generally maintain a supply of spare parts for distributed products. Local distributors may also establish workshops for after-sales support, as appropriate. Foreign principals often provide regional and international training for technical support staff.

### **Local Professional Services**

#### **Auditing Firms**

- Deloitte
- Ernst & Young
- KPMG
- PricewaterhouseCoopers

### **Banking**

A total of 108 banks operate in Qatar, including 101 Qatari institutions and seven foreign bank branches. Out of the 101 Qatari banks, seven are commercial institutions (Ahlibank, Al Khaliji Bank, Commercial Bank of Qatar, Doha Bank, International Bank of Qatar, Qatar Development Bank, and Qatar National Bank); the other four are Islamic banking institutions (Masraf Al Rayan, Qatar International Islamic Bank, Qatar Islamic Bank, and Barwa Bank). In 2019, International Bank of Qatar merged with Barwa Bank in the country's first bank consolidation. The seven foreign banks regulated by Qatar Central Bank include: Arab Bank, Bank Saderat Iran, BNP Paribas, HSBC, Mashreq Bank, Standard Chartered and United Bank. Qatar National Bank represents 50% of the local banking market. It should be noted that while there is no restriction on the flow of capital, tightened liquidity within the local banking market exists. Bank loans are based on market terms with priority given to local organizations for the purpose of public development projects.

#### **Qatari Banks**

- Al Ahli Bank of Qatar
- Al Khaliji Bank
- Barwa Bank
- Commercial Bank of Qatar
- Doha Bank
- Masraf Al Rayan
- Qatar Development Bank
- Qatar International Islamic Bank
- Qatar Islamic Bank
- Qatar National Bank

#### **Foreign Banks with Branches**

- Arab Bank
- Bank Saderat Iran
- B.N.P. Paribas
- HSBC
- Mashreq Bank
- Standard Chartered Bank
- United Bank



### **Freight Forwarding and Courier Services**

- Aramex
- DHL
- Federal Express
- TNT Express
- UPS
- Skynet

### **Hotels**

#### **Major Hotel Chains in Qatar:**

- Crowne Plaza
- Four Seasons Hotel Doha
- Hilton Hotel
- Grand Hyatt Doha
- Park Hyatt Doha
- InterContinental Doha
- Kempinski Residences and Suites Doha
- Kempinski Marsa Malaz at the Pearl
- La Cigale Hotel
- M Doha Hotel
- Mandarin Oriental
- Marriott Marquis City Center Hotel
- JW Marriott Hotel
- Doha Marriott Hotel (Closed for renovations until 2021)
- Millennium Hotel
- Mondrian Hotel
- Movenpick Tower Doha
- Oryx Rotana Doha
- Radisson Blu Hotel Doha
- The Ritz Carlton Doha
- The St Regis Doha
- Sealine Beach Resort
- Sharq Village & Spa Doha
- Sheraton Doha Resort & Convention Hotel
- The Torch Doha
- W Doha
- Westin Doha Hotel & Spa
- Wyndham Grand Regency Doha

### **Insurance Companies**

- Al-Khaleej Insurance Company
- Al Koot Insurance and Reinsurance Co
- Allianz Takaful QFC
- Arabia Insurance Co
- AXA Insurance (Gulf) BSC (C)
- Capital Insurance Brokers LLC

- Ceylinco Insurance
- Doha Bank Assurance Company LLC
- Doha Insurance Co (QSC)
- General Takaful
- Libano-Suisse Insurance Company
- Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) International
- Qatar General Insurance and Re-Insurance Company
- Qatar Insurance Company
- Qatar Islamic Insurance Company
- SEIB Insurance & Reinsurance Co LLC
- Tazur Company BSC
- Metlife

### **Local Attorney List**

Please refer to the U.S. Embassy in Doha for a list of local attorneys.

### **Telecommunications**

- Ooredoo
- Vodafone

### **Principal Business Associations**

[The American Chamber of Commerce in Qatar](#) is the first legally established foreign Chamber of Commerce in Qatar. AmCham Qatar was first launched February 2010 and is registered as a private institution for public benefit. AmCham Qatar is a non-profit, non-governmental, and non-political organization dedicated to fostering cooperation and understanding between Qatar and the United States through trade, commerce, and investment. Its main objectives are to:

- Promote the expansion of trade and investment between the United States and Qatar
- Serve as a forum in which American businesspeople in Qatar can identify, discuss and pursue common commercial interests
- Work with organizations in Qatar and internationally on matters of mutual interest
- Serve as a conduit of information to the governments and publics of the United States and Qatar concerning the improvement of business conditions
- Maintain relations with chambers of commerce in the United States and other chambers of commerce or commercial organizations
- Contribute to the development of a vibrant private sector in Qatar and uphold the highest standards of corporate and commercial practice.

[The Qatari Businessmen Association](#) is a prominent local business organization, formed in 2010, that leads to connect the State of Qatar's strategic plans with the Qatari private sector leaders and activities.

The [Qatar Chamber](#) is one of the oldest chambers in the GCC countries, established in 1963. Its main role is to organize business interests and represent the Qatari private sector locally and globally, as well as support the country's economic actors and productivity.

[The US-Qatar Business Council](#) is a bilaterally focused entity that develops, supports, and advances the bilateral relationship between the United States and Qatar, with an interest in political, business, cultural, and security relations.

Contact the [Commercial Section of the U.S. Embassy](#).

## **Selling to the Public Sector**

The Qatari government is the biggest end user of a wide range of products and services. In November 2015, the Amir issued a new procurement law No. 24/2015, which was enacted in June 2016. The law disbanded the Central Tendering Committee (which was the mechanism used under Law No. 26/2005) and created a Government Procurement Department within the Ministry of Finance which has oversight of most government tenders. The new department also created a website to consolidate all tenders and provide relevant information to interested bidders, facilitating the process for overseas investors. The law aimed to promote a fair, transparent, simple, and speedy tendering process, permitting each regulated government entity to create its own tender committee, whose members must include representatives from the Ministry of Finance and the Diwan Audit Bureau.

Bid and performance bonds are required in the form of unconditional bank guarantees with a local bank or certified local bank checks. The standard bid bond is 5% and performance bond is 10% of the contract. However, the above rate can be larger for certain projects. Foreign architectural, contracting, and engineering firms are not required to have a local presence for the bid process. However, by the time a contract is ready to be signed, participating foreign firms may need to have satisfied local establishment requirements. It is important to note that the government ministry requesting the bid has the right, during the contract period, to increase or decrease the required services, materials, or deliverables, after the committee's approval.

Government contracts may include arbitration clauses. Unless stated otherwise in the contract, disputes emanating from government contracts will be subject to arbitration in Qatar. U.S. firms are advised, whenever possible, to reserve the right to appeal local arbitration decisions abroad.

Foreign and local contractors are usually paid 20% of the contract awarded to them against unconditional bank guarantees. Further payments are made according to a standard payment schedule based on the progress of the project. It should be noted that the payment schedule almost always authorizes the government to retain portions of payments due until after the completion and acceptance of the project. Foreign and local contractors may experience delayed payments, which do not accrue interest, usually due to bureaucratic red tape.

Arabic is the official language in Qatar, though English is widely used. Bids should be in Arabic unless the tender document specifically indicates that English is required or accepted. Specifications generally conform with British/European and, in recent years, U.S. standards.

### *Advocacy*

U.S. companies bidding on Government tenders may also qualify for U.S. Government advocacy. A unit of the U.S. Commerce Department's International Trade Administration, the Advocacy Center, coordinates U.S. Government interagency advocacy efforts on behalf of U.S. exporters bidding on public sector contracts with international governments and government agencies.

[The Advocacy Center](#) works closely with our network of the U.S. Commercial Service worldwide and inter-agency partners to ensure that exporters of U.S. products and services have the best possible chance of winning government contracts. Advocacy assistance can take many forms but often involves the U.S. Embassy or other U.S. Government agencies expressing support for the U.S. bidders directly to the foreign government.

### *Multilateral Development Banks and Financing Government Sales*

Price, payment terms, and financing can be a significant factor in winning a government contract. Many governments finance public works projects through borrowing from the Multilateral Development Banks (MDB). Please refer to the Project Financing Section in Trade and Project Financing for more information. A helpful guide for working with the MDBs is the [Guide to Doing Business with the Multilateral Development Banks](#).

The U.S. Department of Commerce's (USDOC) International Trade Administration (ITA) has a Foreign Commercial Service Officer stationed at each of the five different Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs): the African Development Bank; the Asian Development Bank; the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; the Inter-American Development Bank; and the World Bank.

## **Investment Climate Statement**

The U.S. Department of State Investment Climate Statements provide information on the business climates of more than 170 economies and are prepared by economic officers stationed in embassies and posts around the world. They analyze a variety of economies that are or could be markets for U.S. businesses.

Topics include Openness to Investment, Legal and Regulatory systems, Dispute Resolution, Intellectual Property Rights, Transparency, Performance Requirements, State-Owned Enterprises, Responsible Business Conduct, and Corruption.

These statements highlight persistent barriers to further U.S. investment. Addressing these barriers would expand high-quality, private sector-led investment in infrastructure, further women's economic empowerment, and facilitate a healthy business environment for the digital economy. The 2020 Qatar ICS is found [here](#).

## **Political and Economic Environment**

For background information on the political and economic environment of the country, please click on the link below to the [U.S. Department of State website](#).

