

U.S. Country Commercial Guides



United Nations

2017

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Doing Business in the United Nations

Market Overview

The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945 with one central mission: the maintenance of international peace and security. Today, the UN pursues this mission by working to prevent conflict; helping parties in conflict make peace; peacekeeping; and creating the conditions to allow peace to hold and flourish.

The UN is currently made up of 193 Member States, and its mandate is carried out through six main UN organs: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the UN Secretariat. The UN system also includes many affiliated programs, funds, and specialized agencies, all with their own membership, leadership, and budget. The programs and funds are financed through voluntary rather than assessed contributions. Specialized agencies are independent international organizations funded by both voluntary and assessed contributions.

The UN system spends more than \$17 billion annually for types of goods and services. In 2016, total UN procurement spending was \$17.7 billion, a one percent increase from 2015. Based on 2016 data, the six largest sectors for UN procurement are: 1) health; 2) consultancy, administration and operations; 3) transport; 4) food and farming; 5) construction and engineering; and 6) peace and security.

In 2016, the UN system procured goods and services from 221 different countries, with 122 countries having an annual procurement volume of more than \$10 million each. United States companies provided the largest share of UN procurement, capturing \$1.6 billion or almost 9 percent of total spending.

The United Nations publishes a comprehensive annual report on the status of UN Procurement detailing spend by country sector and organization. This report can be accessed via the UN's central procurement portal [United Nations Global Marketplace](#).

Market Challenges

There are three key challenges to keep in mind when considering United Nations procurement: 1) international competition; 2) conservative vendor selection; and 3) lengthy business development cycles.

International Competition

American companies will be competing with vendors from around the world. The UN system is committed to a diverse set of international vendors, and in many instances, there is an effort to ensure equitable geographic representation and participation of emerging economies while maintaining the principle of effective competition. The UN system places a particular emphasis on vendors from member states identified as “Developing Countries” and/or “Countries with Economies in Transition,” as part of the organization’s commitment to increasing business opportunities for suppliers in those countries.

Conservative Vendor Selection

As an international organization with a responsibility for managing public funds, the UN takes a conservative approach to vendor selection. Procurement teams are typically looking for suppliers who are able to demonstrate a track record of working on projects of similar size, scope and location (especially if it is an international project). This may make it more challenging for new suppliers with fewer years of operation to succeed in securing a UN contract, especially if the size of the contract is out of proportion with the suppliers’ previous revenues.

For many UN agencies and organizations, vendors interested in bidding on tenders are required to register with [United Nations Global Marketplace](#). For certain contracts, in particular those of large scale, high value, complexity and/or risk level, a higher level of UNGM registration is required. In order to be registered at a higher level, the vendors are requested to provide additional documents such as certificate of incorporation, three years of audited financial statements, and three reference letters.

Lengthy Business Development Cycles

The pursuit of UN Procurement is not recommended for companies focused on short-term results. Given the UN’s conservative approach to vendor selection, it is unusual for a vendor to win a contract following their first bid. Vendors are

encouraged to respond to any tenders to which they are invited and to establish a pattern of interest.

Market Opportunities

The United States was the number one supplier to the United Nations in 2016, supplying a total of \$1.6 billion in goods and services. Historically, U.S. companies have provided more services than goods, a split that is attributed to the fact that U.S. companies provide a large volume of local real-estate related services in connection with the UN's headquarter location in New York City.

The UN procures goods and services in an eleven key sectors, namely: health, transport, consultancy, administration and operations, construction and engineering, food and farming, humanitarian aid, peace and security, climate action, energy, education, and clean water and sanitation. The following table shows the distribution of UN procurement across these largest categories of goods and services.

2016 United Nations Procurement - by Sector

Sectors of Goods and Services	Total 2015 Procurement (in \$ millions)	% of Total
Health	3,964.4	22.38%
Consultancy, Administration and Operations	3,108.6	17.55%
Transport	3,047.6	17.21%
Other Goods and Services	2,393.4	13.51%
Food and Farming	2,061.1	11.64%
Construction and Engineering	1,997.6	11.28%
Peace and Security	584.9	3.30%
Humanitarian Aid	243.7	1.38%
Energy	121.0	0.68%
Education	84.2	0.48%

Sectors of Goods and Services	Total 2015 Procurement (in \$ millions)	% of Total
Climate Action	83.4	0.47%
Clean Water and Sanitation	22.6	0.13%
Grand Total	17,712.50	

Source: [2016 Annual Statistical Report on United Nations](#),

Health is the largest sector with a 22 percent share of procurement. The health sector includes purchases of pharmaceuticals, healthcare services, and medical and laboratory equipment. The consultancy, administration and operations category represents close to 18 percent and includes goods and services directly procured in relation to ongoing programmes and projects, or for administrative services or operations support to UN activities. Both health and consultancy, administration and operations are key to the UN's ability to fulfill its core peacekeeping and global humanitarian missions. Consequently, continued spending in these areas is expected.

In 2016, four other sectors had a share of roughly 10–17 percent of the UN's procurement volume, namely transport (transport services, such as air charter, and purchases of motor vehicles), other goods and services (fuel, computer equipment, outdoor/camping equipment), construction and engineering (construction supplies and services, engineering services), and food and farming (food, beverage, live plants, and animals, farming accessories and services).

For additional information about the breakdown of each sector, please see the section of this report on “Leading Sectors for US Exporters & Investments.”

Market Entry Strategy

There are three key recommendations for U.S. companies considering the United Nations procurement market: 1) develop family key UN procuring agencies/programmes/funds; 2) register with [United Nations Global Marketplace](#), and 3) check UNGM and local agency websites frequently to review posted expressions of interest and requests for proposals.

Develop Familiarity Key UN Procuring Agencies/Programs/Funds:

The UN system is made up of more than 35 different agencies, programmes, and funds, each of which has a different mission and handles procurement in different ways. It is important to keep in mind that each organization's procurement spending is driven by the organization's key mission/needs. We recommend, therefore, that you familiarize yourself with the missions of the top procuring agencies and also take advantage of United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGM) to review past tenders and contract awards for the products and/or services you provide in order to ensure that there is a match.

Below is a list of the top 10 (in dollars spent) procuring UN agencies in 2016, which accounted for almost 90% of total UN procurement spending. We have also included a link to each agency's website so that you may learn more about their respective missions.

2016 United Nations Procurement by Organization – Top 10 Based on Spend

Organization	Total 2016 Procurement (in US\$)	% of Total	Link
UNICEF	\$3,485,192,991.81	19.68%	UNICEF
UN SECRETARIAT	\$3,233,214,770.67	18.25%	UN Procurement Division
WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME	\$2,961,903,698.71	16.72%	World Food Programme
UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	\$1,697,466,048.20	9.58%	United Nations Development Programme
UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES	\$1,179,760,674.04	6.66%	The UN Refugee Agency
UN OFFICE FOR PROJECT SERVICES	\$900,178,546.30	5.08%	UNOPS

Organization	Total 2016 Procurement (in US\$)	% of Total	Link
PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION	\$789,674,324.54	4.46%	Pan American Health Organization
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION	\$756,939,901.03	4.27%	World Health Organization
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION	\$522,488,787.34	2.95%	International Organization for Migration
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION	\$317,003,293.45	1.79%	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
Others	\$1,868,707,586.09	10.55%	
GRAND TOTAL	\$17,575,297,947.77	100%	

Source: [United Nations Global Marketplace Annual Statistical Report on UN Procurement](#)

Also keep in mind that even though the UNGM is the main supplier database of 29 UN organizations, some organizations have their own supplier database. The UN agencies that do not directly support the UNGM are not selectable during the UNGM registration process. Therefore, it is crucial for potential suppliers to the UN agencies that do not participate in UNGM, to contact the agency directly.

Register with United Nations Global Marketplace

The United Nations Global Marketplace ([UNGM](#)) is the common procurement portal of the UN system of organizations. UNGM enables vendors from around the world to register for procurement opportunities across the UN system. In turn, multiple UN agencies can tap into the UNGM database of registered vendors in order to identify those that meet their procurement needs. The 29 UN organizations utilizing UNGM as a vendor database account for over 99 percent of total UN procurement dollars spent. UNGM, therefore, provides an excellent springboard for U.S. companies to introduce products and services to many UN organizations, countries, and regions by only completing one registration form.

Registering with UNGM is fairly straight forward. There are three levels of registration, and most UN organizations require vendors to only register at a “Basic” level. Registration is free, and “Basic” registration should take approximately 5-10 minutes. At this level, only minimal company information, such as contact name, address, phone number and email address are required.

During the registration process, suppliers will also be required to identify the class of good/service they wish to provide, using the UN’s Standard Product and Services Code (UNSPSC). After selecting one or more UNSPSC code(s), the UNGM system will automatically match suppliers with the UN organizations that purchase that category of good and/or service.

Once a vendor’s “Basic” registration has been submitted and accepted by at least one UN organization, the vendor’s profile will be visible to all UN personnel. It might take up to 10 working days before the profile becomes visible. Please note that registration does not imply pre-qualification, and the UN organizations reserve the right to further assess and evaluate companies.

In addition to the “Basic” level of registration, there is also the possibility to apply for “Level 1” and/or “Level 2” registration. These higher levels require more documentation, such as a certificate of incorporation, references and audited financial statements. “Level 1” and “Level 2” registration are mandated by certain UN organizations in order to be eligible for contracts with larger dollar values. The United Nations Secretariat, for example, requires “Level 1” registration for contracts greater than \$40,000 up to \$500,000 and “Level 2” registration for contracts with value of more than \$500,000.

Due to the high volume of registrations, requests for “Level 1” and “Level 2” registrations will most likely only be evaluated as part of a solicitation process. Companies may be approved for the “Basic” registration right away, but the status of “Level 1” and “Level 2” registrations will remain “Submitted” prior to that evaluation.

Check UNGM and Agency Websites to Review Expressions of Interest and Requests for Proposals

Simply registering on UNGM is not sufficient. In order to success in UN Procurement, your company needs to be proactive, which includes regular visits to

UNGM and local agency websites to review the latest tender opportunities. Assigning this task to a member of your business development team is a recommended best practice to ensure that you do not miss tenders to which you are able to respond.

UNGM also offers a paid program called the “Tender Alert System” which provides automated email notifications when tenders are posted in your specified category of interest. A \$250 fee is required for this optional service, which is available to vendors during the UNGM registration process. For pricing and additional information, please visit the [UNGM website](#).

Political Environment

Political Environment

The U.S. Mission to the United Nations (USUN) serves as the United States' delegation to the United Nations. USUN is responsible for carrying out the nation's participation in the world body. In 1947 the United States Mission was created by an act of Congress to assist the President and the Department of State in conducting United States policy at the United Nations. Since that time, USUN has served a vital role as the Department of State's UN branch. For additional information about the USUN, please visit the [USUN website](#).

Selling US Products & Services

Selling to the Government

The United Nations is a multilateral international organization financed by contributions from its 193 member states. The broader UN system, which includes many affiliated programmes, funds, and specialized agencies, is financed through voluntary rather than assessed contributions.

Buying within the UN system is carried out by procurement teams, who are responsible for all actions necessary for the acquisition, by purchase or lease, of property, including products and real property, and of services, including works.

The procurement rules and procedures of the various organizations reflect institutional differences as well as differences in size, activities and years of existence. However, common principles are applicable throughout the system of organizations. The one most significant common denominator for the UN system is that it operates with "public funds," requiring that equal opportunity to participate be given to potential suppliers from all member countries.

Distribution & Sales Channels

The United Nations has offices and missions around the world. UN solicitation documents will state the expected delivery terms, including the delivery date, the place of delivery, delivery terms for goods as per the appropriate Incoterms for delivery of goods, other delivery conditions, if any, and, to the extent possible, the preferred method of delivery for the required goods, services or works. American companies must be prepared to meet all the specified delivery requirements, which may also include the provision of an export license.

Selling Factors and Techniques

The United Nation's central procurement portal, [United Nations Global Marketplace](#), publishes a number of online resources to help suppliers familiarize themselves with UN procurement policies and procedures. We recommend familiarizing yourself with this website and the resources available.

Of particular note are the "General Conditions for the Procurement of Services" and the "General Conditions for the Procurement of Goods" both of which can be found by a search on [UNGM website](#). These guidelines ultimately play into the

contracting phase, so it's important to review them early on. You may also want to review the "Common Guidelines for Procurement by Organizations in the UN System," which can be found in Annex I of the "General Business Guide," also available on [UNGM website](#).

Finally, the following practical tips are recommended when preparing and submitting proposal documents:

- Keep in mind that the UN awards contracts based on value for money, not cheapest price
- Read through multiple procurement notices and contract awards, even outside your industry, to familiarize yourself with the language and requirements
- Always respond when invited to submit an offer in order to keep your organization relevant even if you should not be in a position to participate. Beginning with bids on smaller contracts, in order to establish a track record, is recommended.
- Study the documents carefully and ask for clarification if there is any uncertainty
- Ensure that your offer meets all the requirements (including quality certificates, financial statements, catalogues, submission forms etc.) in the requested format and language.
- Meet the submission deadline
- Attend bidders conference and public bid openings when invited
- Have patience -- the UN procurement process can be lengthy and several checks and balances are built into the approval and procurement process
- Request feedback -- if you participate in a high value solicitation (more than \$200,000) and you receive a letter of regret, you may request a debriefing. Requests must be made in writing within ten business days. Contact the U.S. Commercial Service New York office for assistance, if necessary.

Trade Promotion & Advertising

We recommend contacting the U.S. Commercial Service New York office to discuss your interest in trade promotion opportunities within the United Nations system. That office organizes UN procurement seminars during which attendees receive an introduction to UN procurement and have the opportunity to engage with UN procurement officials.

Additionally, there are a growing number of trade shows focused on humanitarian aid and development that have applicability in the UN context. For example, you may want to consider:

- [AIDEX](#) hosts three annual events in Brussels, Nairobi and Dhaka, and offers a platform for professionals in humanitarian aid and international development.
- [Global Disaster Relieve and Development Summit](#) hosts an annual event in Washington, D.C. and offers a platform of global expertise and cross-sector engagement for representatives from the UN, government agencies, development banks, national and international NGOs, civil societies, research institutes, the private sector and media.

Protecting Intellectual Property

In any foreign market companies should consider several general principles for effective management of their intellectual property. For background on these principles please see our article on [Protecting Intellectual Property](#) and also [Corruption](#).

Principle Business Associations

The U.S. Commercial Service New York City (U.S. Department of Commerce) and the U.S. Mission to the United Nations (U.S. Department of State) manage a joint program to assist U.S. companies with UN procurement. Together, the U.S. Commercial Service and the U.S. Mission to the UN provide American businesses with 1) greater access and exposure to the United Nations procurement market; 2) vendor counseling and access to UN Procurement Officials; 3) advocacy for the use of U.S. technology and products in UN operations; and 4) support for a fair and transparent UN bidding process. Please visit [Export.gov website](#) or contact the U.S. Commercial Service New York City office for additional information.

Additionally, the following associations focus more broadly on business issues, including the United Nations.

[The International Chamber of Commerce \(ICC\)](#) is a membership association focused on promoting international trade, responsible business conduct and a global approach to regulation. The ICC the only business organisation admitted as an Observer at the United Nations General Assembly.

[Business Council for International Understanding \(BCIU\)](#) is a nonpartisan, U.S.-based organization that works to expand international trade and commerce. It does this by helping its member companies engage internationally and by facilitating mutually beneficial relationships between business and government leaders worldwide.

[The United States Council for International Business \(USCIB\)](#) is a U.S.-based membership organization dedicated to advancing the global interests of American business.

Limitations on Selling US Products and Services

There are no limitations on selling U.S. products and services at the United Nations. In fact, American companies regularly capture the largest share of UN procurement (\$1.59 billion or 8.95 percent in 2016). However, U.S. companies should be aware that UN General Assembly Resolution 57/279 (2005) on procurement reform encourages UN organizations to increase opportunities for suppliers from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. In 2007, General Assembly Resolution 61/246, reiterated the request to consider procurement from developing countries. In response, UN organizations have placed more orders with suppliers from these countries.

Web Resources

[United Nations Global Marketplace](#)

[U.S. Commercial Service New York City](#)

[U.S. Mission to the United Nations](#)

Leading Sectors for US Exports & Investments

In 2016, the five-largest sectors of procurement accounted for 80 percent of total United Nations procurement spending. This section of the report will provide further details of each sector, analyzing main categories, major supplier countries and the largest procuring organizations within each sector.

Health

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

The top ten categories procured within the United Nations' nearly \$4.0 billion health sector are listed below in order of procurement volume in the table below. The table also provides information on the largest procuring organization and the share of that organization within that individual category. The United States was the third largest supplying country in this sector, with U.S. suppliers providing contracts valued at \$508 million. India and Belgium were the two largest suppliers.

2016 United Nations Procurement – Health Sector – Top 10 Subcategories

Categories	Total 2016 Procurement (in \$ millions)	Largest procuring organization	Largest organization 2016 procurement (in \$ millions)	Largest organization's % share of total 2016 procurement
Immunomodulation Drugs	612.1	PAHO	579.4	96.64%
Comprehensive Health Services	444.2	WHO	389.6	87.72%
Clinical Nutrition	151.1	UNICEF	151.0	99.98%

Amebicides and Trichomaniacides and Antiprotozoals	140.2	UNDP	115.0	82.04%
Contraceptives (including condoms, estrogen, progestins)	92.9	UNFPA	92.7	99.73%
Mobile Medical Services Products	76.3	UNDP	27.1	35.53%
Patient Care and Treatment Products and Supplies	49.6	UNDP	27.8	56.04%
Antiviral drugs	40.1	PAHO	40.0	99.91%
Hormones and Hormone antagonists	37.9	UNDP	30.2	79.74%
Medical Practice	23.5	UN Secretariat	16.4	69.82%
Top 10 Total	1,667.9		1,469.3	
Grand Total	3,964.4			

Source: [2016 Annual Statistical Report on United Nations](#)

Consultancy, Administration, and Operations

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

This category includes goods and services either directly procured in relation to ongoing programmes and projects, or for administrative services or operational support to UN activities. It is a \$3.1 billion sector on which all UN organizations are dependent to operate.

United States suppliers captured 16% of this category in 2016, or \$486.6 million.

2016 United Nations Procurement – Consultancy, Administration, and Operations Sector – Top 10 Subcategories

Categories	Total 2016 Procurement (in \$ millions)	Largest procuring organization	Largest organization 2016 procurement (in \$ millions)	Largest organization's % share of total 2016 procurement
Business Administration Services	551.3	UNDP	316.5	57.40%
Real Estate Services	342.9	UN Secretariat	125.5	36.63%
Computer Services	339.8	UN Secretariat	136.2	40.10%
Management Advisory Services	288.6	ILO	54.9	19.02%
Information Technology Service Delivery	145.1	UN Secretariat	62.4	43.02%
Vocational Training	104.2	UNDP	51.8	49.69%

Marketing and Distribution	103.0	UNHCR	77.8	75.57%
Utilities	88.0	UNDP	17.6	19.98%
Office Machines and their Supplies and Accessories	84.1	UN Secretariat	52.9	62.90%
Human Resources Services	78.9	UN-Women	33.8	42.84%
Top 10 Total	2,126.0		929.4	
Grand Total	3,108.6			

Source: [2016 Annual Statistical Report on United Nations](#)

Transport

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

The table below provides information on the top ten categories procured within the United Nations' \$3 billion transport sector, together with largest procuring organization, including the share of that organization within that category. The largest category within transport is mail and cargo transportation, with World Food Programme (WFP) responsible for 80 percent of all procurement in that category. The second-largest category within this sector is passenger transportation, with the United Nations Procurement Division responsible for 71 percent of total 2016 volume in that category. The third-largest transport category is motor vehicles, with United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) responsible for close to 29 percent of 2016 volume.

United States suppliers captured contacts valued at \$160.6 million, or 5% of total spend, making the U.S. the number 3 providing country in this category.

2016 United Nations Procurement – Transport Sector – Top 10 Subcategories

Categories	Total 2016 Procurement (in \$ millions)	Largest procuring organization	Largest organization 2016 procurement (in \$ millions)	Largest organization's % share of total 2016 procurement
Mail and Cargo Transport	1,009.7	WFP	810.4	80.26%
Passenger Transport	793.8	UN Secretariat	564.5	71.12%
Motor Vehicles	283.8	UNOPS	81.4	28.69%
Transport Services	257.5	WFP	107.0	41.55%
Hotels and Lodging and Meeting Facilities	132.5	UNDP	35.4	26.75%
Storage	77.2	WFP	53.3	69.06%
Travel Facilitation Transportation Components and Systems	55.1	UNDP	27.0	49.02%
Material Packing and Handling	43.1	PAHO	23.1	53.65%
Restaurants and Catering	37.9	UN Secretariat	14.6	38.55%

Transportation Repair or Maintenance Services	34.8	WFP	11.9	34.02%
Top 10 Total	2,725.4		1,728.7	
Grand Total	3,047.6			

Source: [2016 Annual Statistical Report on United Nations](#)

Construction and Engineering

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

In 2016, construction and engineering was an almost \$2 billion sector for the United Nations. The main category within this sector is professional engineering services with a total volume of \$345.9 million.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the largest procuring organization with 56 percent of total procurement in that category. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) procured 27 percent of all building and facility maintenance and repair services in 2016. UNOPS was the main procuring organization for nonresidential building construction services, the third largest category, with 55 percent of the total volume in this sub-category. UNOPS was also the largest organization for heavy construction services and permanent buildings and structures. UNHCR procured more than 90 percent of both structural materials and lamps and lightbulbs and lamp components.

The United States was the main supplier country for construction and engineering, with \$149.3 million of total spend in this category, or 7% of the total.

2016 United Nations Procurement – Construction and Engineering Sector – Top 10 Subcategories

Categories	Total 2016 Procurement (in \$ millions)	Largest procuring organization	Largest organization 2016 procurement (in \$ millions)	Largest organization's % share of total 2016 procurement
Professional Engineering Services	345.9	UNDP	192.4	55.63%
Building and Facility Maintenance and Repair Services	328.4	IOM	89.3	27.20%
Nonresidential Building Construction Services	313.7	UNOPS	172.4	54.97%
Specialized Trade Construction and Maintenance Services	133.4	UN Secretariat	89.3	66.94%
Prefabricated Buildings and Structures	131.4	UN Secretariat	96.8	73.67%
Heavy Construction Services	91.8	UNOPS	43.0	46.82%

Structural Materials	53.7	UNHCR	48.8	90.87%
Lamps and Lightbulbs and Lamp Components	33.5	UNHCR	30.3	90.50%
Electrical Equipment and Components and Supplies	31.8	UN Secretariat	12.2	38.31%
Permanent Buildings and Structures	28.8	UNOPS	26.7	92.81%
Top 10 Total	1,492.3		801.2	
Grand Total	1,997.6			

Source: [2016 Annual Statistical Report on United Nations](#)

Food and Farming

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

In 2016, the United Nations spent more than \$2 billion in the food and farming sector. Like the health sector, the food and farming sector has a strong connection to several UN organizations' core mandates. For example, the World Food Programme (WFP), provides food assistance to meet emergency needs and to support economic and social development. WFP is the primary buyer in this category. In 2016, WFP spent \$1.37 billion or 66% of the total spend in this category. Their key food and farming subcategories include wheat, rice, maize, and dry pulses, among others. If you are a supplier in these subcategories, we recommend visiting [WFP's website](#) for additional information about opportunities and vendor registration procedures at WFP.

The table below outlines the top 10 subcategories for 33% of the total spend in this category (unfortunately, due to variations in reporting techniques, WFP's 66% of the total spend is not included in the below table). As you will see, even without WFP, spending in each subcategory tends to be dominated by a single UN organization procuring between 90 and 100 percent of that category. For example, the UN Secretariat procured almost 95 percent of all prepared and preserved foods, while the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) procures most of the unprocessed foods and agricultural categories. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) procures almost a 100 percent of all cereals, dairy products, and edible oils and fats. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) procures 87 percent of all pest-control products.

2016 United Nations Procurement – Food and Farming – Top 10 Subcategories (Excluding World Food Programme)

Categories	Total 2016 Procurement (in \$ millions)	Largest procuring organization	Largest organization 2016 procurement (in \$ millions)	Largest organization's % share of total 2016 procurement
Edible Oils and Fats	443.4	UNRWA	420.8	98.42%
Fertilizers and Plant Nutrients and Herbicides	43.9	FAO	43.0	93.59%
Live Animals	33.9	FAO	19.6	78.24%
Dairy Products and Eggs	32.5	UNRWA	31.7	98.40%

Water Resources Development and Oversight	23.8	FAO	20.8	49.93%
Pest Control Products	16.8	PAHO	8.4	87.38%
Cereal and Pulse Products	13.2	UNRWA	13.0	97.51%
Agricultural and Forestry Machinery and Equipment	10.3	UNDP	8.0	57.66%
Seeds and Bulbs and Seedlings and Cuttings	9.6	FAO	9.0	98.01%
Prepared and Preserved Foods	8.6	UN Secretariat	8.5	94.90%
Top 10 Total	636			
Grand Total	2,061.1			

Source: [2016 Annual Statistical Report on United Nations](#)

Trade Regulations, Customs, & Standards

Import Tariffs

In general terms, the United Nations is exempt from customs duties on items imported or exported by the United Nations for its official use. This exemption was established by the “Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations,” which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1946. The mechanism for this exemption, however, varies from country to country. In some places the UN is fully exempt from the onset and in others the UN pays duty and get reimbursed by the government on a periodic basis. Companies should consult the terms of their tender or purchase confirm further whether or not the terms of sale include any reimbursable tariffs or value added taxes.

U.S. Export Controls

As with all U.S. exports, sales to the United Nations are subject to U.S. export regulations. U.S. companies are responsible for determining whether the shipment requires an export license from a U.S. government entity. Exporters should learn which federal department or agency has jurisdiction over the item they are planning to export in order to find out if a license is required. The granting of a license will be dependent on several factors including what item is being exported and to which country it is being exported. U.S. companies applying for an export license related to a UN sale may be asked to provide a letter from the UN confirming the terms of sale and specifying the end user. For additional information about U.S. export regulations, please visit the [Export.gov website](#).

Business Travel

Information on business travel related to United Nations projects is specific to the countries in which the projects are conducted, not to the United Nations itself. As such, many segments of a traditional Country Commercial Guide are not included here. To learn about these aspects of doing business in countries of interest to your firm see the “Business Travel” section of each country’s Country Commercial Guide.

Business Customs

Understanding ethical guidelines is essential to procurement within the United Nations system. All UN staff members make a written declaration that they will

“exercise in all loyalty, discretion and conscience the functions entrusted to the [staff member] as an international civil servant of the United Nations, to discharge these functions and regulate [their personal] conduct with the interest of the United Nations only in view, and not to seek or accept instructions in regard to the performance of [the staff member’s] duties from any Government or other source external to the organization.”

Of particular importance to suppliers wishing to do business with the UN is the prohibition on gifts. Staff members acting in an official procurement capacity must not be placed in a position where his/her actions may constitute or could be reasonably perceived as reflecting favorable treatment to an individual or entity by accepting gifts and hospitality or other similar considerations. No procurement officer or staff member involved in any aspect of procurement may accept any gift from any outside source that is soliciting business with the United Nations, regardless of the value. All staff members involved in procurement shall decline offers of gifts, including drinks, meals, tickets, hospitality, transportation, or any other form of benefits, even if it is in association with an “official working visit.”

Travel Advisory

If you are traveling to an overseas bidder’s conference or for other work related to a United Nations mission or tender, please consult the [U.S. Department of State](#) for any relevant travel warnings.

Currency

Bids, proposals and quotations submitted in different currencies will be converted into a single currency, usually U.S. dollars, using the United Nations operational rate of exchange in effect at the date specified in the solicitation document.

Language

Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are the six official languages of the United Nations. English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat and are used in day-to-day professional exchanges.

Most UN tenders published on United Nations Global Marketplace are published in English, although there are certainly exceptions, especially for solicitation documents issued directly by a country office. Companies bidding on tenders are expected to be able to conduct business in the local language.