CONCLUSION

- To mitigate risk and cope with crises, build knowledge about the effect of specific risks on businesses; provide risk intelligence to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); and conduct environmental scanning and scenario planning to map potential crises and responses.
- Close collaboration among private sector, trade promotion organizations and government agencies is useful in preparing stakeholders responses to risk.
- Building technical competence for people working in trade, including SME staff and policymakers, has a significant risk management impact.
- Enabling a high-risk tolerance in new markets is important to drive SME market diversification efforts.

QUOTES

Jacqueline Flood, President, Saint Lucia Trade Export Promotion Agency

- Risk is managed in the well-known hurricane season through an annual plan for a hurricane response.
- Facing other risks, such as political risk, is less clear. We remain neutral and negotiate our position with both main political parties during government changes.
- We developed a system to scan the markets relevant to exporters that achieves an early warning market intelligence system, and we work with producers to develop risk treatment plans. We also monitor factors that affect tourism, the economy’s key driver.

Arvind Radhakrishna, Chief Executive Officer, Enterprise Mauritius

- ‘The major risk for Mauritius today and of course for many other African countries is Brexit. Mauritius has already taken the lead in the region to initiate discussions with other countries so that with members of COMESA, SADC and other Commonwealth countries we can come in as a solid group when the time comes to negotiate with the UK which is the major market for Mauritius’ exports.’
- ‘AGOA could eventually be another risk given political changes in the United States, and changes in US Trade Policy which may be coming quite soon.’

Mafruha Sultana, Chief Executive Officer, Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh
• ‘Risk is an integral part of the export journey in Bangladesh and it is of many facets. Equally, internal or external to the country, it may be predictable or unpredictable; each facet of problems requires careful attention.’
• ‘A wide range of conditions are often incorporated under the banner of compliance, requiring strict adherence by companies that are willing to export in developed markets. Fulfilling these conditions pushes the exporters for extra investment, essentially that narrows down profit margins on the part of businesses from our country.’

Caroline Tompkins, President, Forum for International Trade Training, Canada

• ‘If you have trade-capable people, business risk can be reduced.’
• ‘When a company is looking at international trade as a growth strategy, why not go to an international trade professional who knows how to identify risk, and how to mitigate this risk, and has the industry credentials to prove it?’
• The Canadian government is defining the profession of trade experts. Training for Canadian SMEs incorporates competency standards. Professionals understand international trade businesses, monitor international markets and capture early warnings. The competency programme offered for companies allows them to understand risk and mitigate it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Risk management and mitigation must be an integral part of trade strategies.
- Trade and investment promotion organizations should take a lead in anticipating risks and alternative scenarios to prepare and support SMEs in change.
- People engaged in making trade deals must be up-to-date with the latest knowledge, standards and regulations for successful trade.