



U.S. Country Commercial Guides



2017

Qatar

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Doing Business in Qatar

Market Overview

Throughout 2016, the U.S.-Qatar political, commercial, economic and security relationship grew even stronger than before. Qatar continues to be a resilient and diverse market despite regional unrest and some uncertainty in the global market, including the decline in energy prices. With U.S. exports to Qatar growing to nearly \$5 billion in 2016, U.S. companies performed well in the market with major awards in aviation, defense and infrastructure.

Regional Political Disagreements. On June 5, 2017, the governments of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and the Maldives all ceased diplomatic relations with the State of Qatar and severed most contacts. Thus far, the impact has primarily been on regional travel, with Qatar Airways suspending flights to those countries and airlines from those countries (such as Emirates, Etihad, Saudia, Gulf Air) suspending flights to/from Qatar. The movement of goods across land and sea borders has also been impacted. Qatar has moved quickly to establish other sources of imports and continues that effort, which might present new opportunities for American suppliers.

The U.S. Embassy in Doha and the U.S. Commercial Service are closely monitoring the situation and continue to provide guidance and support to U.S. companies wishing to enter the market as well as those already doing business in the country. 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. For the most up-to-date information related to this situation, please reach out to the Commercial Service in Doha.

Economic Growth. In 2016, Qatar's economy continued to grow, with a real GDP growth rate of 3.7% over the previous year despite fluctuating oil prices, regional unrest, and a growing budget deficit, estimated at 5.4% of GDP. The economy is expected to see similar growth in 2017, with an eventual decrease in budget deficit in 2018. Total government spending stood at \$35 billion, with a majority of the awarded projects still focused on infrastructure and port development.

Inflation: In October 2016, inflation reached 2.2%, due to the increase in domestic energy costs. Inflation rate in January 2017 was 1.2%, the lowest it has been since January the previous year. The inflation rate is forecasted to reach 3.7% in the fourth quarter of 2017, culminating in 3.43% in 2020. There is a risk however, that higher domestic demand could cause supply bottlenecks, pushing domestic inflation higher than baseline forecasts.

With an economy still largely depending on hydrocarbons, Qatar's 2016 economic performance has been significantly affected by stagnant oil prices and a self-imposed moratorium on additional output from the giant North Field that was lifted in April 2017. This has also led to a shift from an account balance surplus of \$13.8 billion in 2015 to a deficit of \$8.3 billion in 2016 for the first time since 1998.

The government has undertaken several key measures, such as lifting on the moratorium on the North Gas field in April 2017, issuing a record \$9 billion Eurobond sale in the regional and international debt markets, and tighter monetary conditions aimed to control inflations. Oil and Gas continues to constitute the largest sector contributor to GDP at 30.3%, followed by Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate which increased to 17.3%, Construction at 11.9%, Whole and Retail Trade at 10%, Manufacturing at 9%, Transport and Communications at 5%, and remaining 16.4% from other sectors.

- **Diversifying from Oil and Gas.** The government has continued its focus on initiatives and efforts to diversify the economy and reduce spending on non-essential areas, under the plan known as Qatar National Vision for 2030. Qatar's infrastructure and transportation sector has been a key focus of spending, with focus on projects such as expanding Hamad International Airport, completing the first phase of the new Hamad Sea Port (April 2016), rolling out several roads and highways projects, and advancing works on phase 1 of the Doha Metro and Lusail Light Rail transit projects.
- **Public Private Partnerships.** Qatar will host the 2022 soccer World Cup. With one stadium left to be awarded (Ras Abu Aboud, currently being reviewed for a PPP model), the remaining stadiums have all been awarded, and Khalifa International Stadium completed in May 2017. The draft law for the Public Private Partnership (PPP) is expected to be finalized and passed in 2017, to help facilitate further investment in Qatar. The Ministry of Economy and Commerce has led the efforts on the PPP law, along with a group of government agencies representing the different key sectors in the country.
- **Robust Trade and Investment with the U.S.** The U.S. and Qatar's trade and investment relationship remained robust in 2016 with total trade standing at \$6 billion, and U.S. exports to Qatar totaling almost \$5 billion. 2016 witnessed the second meeting of the government-to-government Economic and Investment Dialogue in Qatar, an annual forum for key decision makers to identify concrete steps to bolster U.S. and Qatari commercial and economic relations.
- At the last meeting of the Dialogue, the Qatar Investment Authority announced an additional commitment to invest \$10 billion in the United States in infrastructure. This was in addition to its existing commitment to allocate \$35 billion in capital investments in the United States.
- U.S. has a trade surplus with Qatar, recorded at \$3.8 billion in 2016, an increase of \$900 million from 2015. U.S. goods exports to Qatar in 2016 reached \$4.9billion, an increase of 16.7% from the previous year. Corresponding U.S. imports from Qatar, mostly oil and gas, stood at \$1.2billion, a decrease of 14.2% over 2015.

Market Challenges

- **Open to Foreign Investment:** Qatar generally encourages investment by foreigners. A law passed in Oct 2016 allows Non-Qataris to invest up to 100% of the project capital in all

sectors as long as they have a Qatari agent. With certain exceptions, Qatar's foreign investment law limits foreign ownership of local entities to 49% of the entity's capital. However, foreign investors may own 100% of an entity's capital in sectors like agriculture, industry, health care, education, tourism, and the exploitation and development of natural resources subject to approval by the Government of Qatar ("GoQ"). The law further states that, when approving majority foreign ownership in a project, preference should be given to: 1) those using locally available raw materials, manufacturing products for export, producing new product or using advanced technology; and 2) those facilitating the transfer of technology and know-how to Qatar, thus further promoting the development of national human resources.

- **Foreign investors** must receive permission from the GoQ to invest in the banking and insurance sectors. Foreign investment is not allowed in commercial agencies and real estate, although there are limited opportunities for foreigners to own interest (and have rights in land use) in select residential real estate projects for a term of 99 years renewable upon government approval; such projects include the Pearl, West Bay Lagoon, Lusail, and the Al-Khor resort project.
- **Banking:** A total of 18 banks operate in Qatar, including 11 Qatari institutions and seven foreign branch banks. Out of the 11 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). The seven foreign banks 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.
- **Commercial Agents:** The Commercial Agents law requires all agency agreements to be exclusive arrangements.
- **Government Procurement:** There are concerns about transparency in procurement by Qatari government entities, particularly regarding the following: 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% and goods from other countries in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) receive a 5% discount. Participation in tenders with a value of QAR 5,000,000 (US \$1.3million) or less is limited to locally registered contractors, suppliers and merchants.

- A new Procurement Law went into effect on June 13, 2016. The new law aims to promote a fair, transparent, simple and speedy tendering process. The new 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 calls for the forming of committees for tender disputes resolution, allowing two-stage tendering, and providing performance bond waivers for SMEs.
- The Government Procurement department has created a website, [Monagasat](#), which consolidates all tenders and provides relevant information to interested bidders, facilitating the process for overseas investors. Qatar is not a signatory to the WTO Agreement on Government procurement.
- **Import Duties:** The import duty for most processed food products is a flat 5% ad valorem. There is no import duty 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 in order to ease trade between the 6 member countries. This includes the imposition of a 5% tariff on the cost, insurance and freight values of products such as textiles, apparel, and travel goods.
- **Import Restrictions:** Qatar has no import quotas, however, non-tariff barriers arise occasionally. For instance, unlicensed military and security items are not allowed. Furthermore, a ban on pork was maintained until late 2011 but was lifted in 2012. The sale of pork remains heavily regulated and sales are restricted to only one distribution point managed by the Qatar Distribution Company (QDC).
- **Standards and Labeling:** As part of the GCC Customs Union, the six Member States are working toward unifying their standards and conformity assessment regimes. However, each Member State applies its own existing standards until a uniform GCC standard can be set. Labeling and marking requirements are compulsory for any products exported to Qatar. Labels must be either be in Arabic only, or bilingual with Arabic as the second language. Labels must be applied prior to transportation.
- **Corruption:** Qatar continued to hold its rank at 31 on Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index, with a score of 61/100 (with 100 being very transparent).
- **Food Labeling and Packaging:** Labels must be either be in Arabic only, or bilingual with Arabic as the second language. Production and expiration dates are required to be on all "original" food labels.
- **Travel Advisories:** Americans visiting Qatar are advised to check the [Embassy's website](#) for the latest information on travel to Qatar.

Market Opportunities

- The best market opportunities for American companies are in sectors such as infrastructure, ICT, food products, healthcare and aviation and defense.
- Government spending will continue to support the long-term strategic goals set forth under the Qatar National Vision for 2030 and FIFA World Cup 2022. The national vision targets include developing a knowledge-based economy and expanding economic sectors not related to hydrocarbons to become a more significant contributor to gross domestic product.
- The Government of Qatar's expected expenditure is projected to be \$54.5 billion, reflecting the government's commitment to provide high quality services. Expected spending on healthcare (12.3%), education (10.4%) and infrastructure (21.2%) collectively account for 44% of total expenditure. The 2017 budget reflects the Government of Qatar's commitment to invest in economic diversification and developing key sectors to support its 2030 vision.
- The government is expected to sign contracts worth \$12.83 billion for new projects in 2017. The projects include plans for infrastructure and transportation, health and education projects, and World Cup 2022 facilities.
- **Infrastructure:** Nearer term market opportunities still revolve around major infrastructure projects, new ports development, and Qatar hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2022. More than \$200 billion has been allocated by the government for construction, infrastructure development, public transportation, and logistics projects to meet and serve the demands of the country's growing population and projected event spectators.
- **ICT:** The Information, Communications, and Technology sector (ICT) has also been a key focus of the government with Qatar's Smart Nation program announced during QITCOM (March 2017), a program allocating more than \$1.5 billion for ICT solutions aimed at transforming Doha into one of the most digitally connected cities in the world. The Ministry of Transportation and Communications has taken the lead on this program, outlining opportunities in sectors such as Transportation, Logistics, Environment, Healthcare, and Sports.
- **Food Products:** Local food production accounts for only 7% of Qatar's domestic consumption. Qatar imports over 90% of its food. Major food suppliers to Qatar include the EU, Australia and Saudi Arabia. Most of Qatar's food product imports transit through the United Arab Emirates.
- **Healthcare:** The country has grown tremendously over the last decade and this has led to the increase in lifestyle-related diseases. The Government of Qatar is expected to double its healthcare spending to \$8.8 billion by 2020 due to the expected increase in demand for hospital care, which is predicted to grow at 2.9% compound annual growth rate in the

coming 4 years. \$6.73 billion has been allocated for healthcare in the 2017 budget (12.3% of total expenditure), reflecting a 17% increase from the healthcare budget allocation in 2016. The nation's healthcare facilities are expected to double by 2022. The country's healthcare budget is believed to have increased by 12% from 2014 to 2015 (\$4.3billion).

- **Aviation and Defense:** Opportunities will likely continue to gain momentum with the U.S. –Qatar military strategic partnership strengthening over the last decade with more than \$20 billion announced in major deals between the countries in 2016. This is driven by the Qatar's continued global expansion plan for the national carrier Qatar Airways, Hamad International Airport, and military modernization initiatives. Opportunities continue to revolve around Air Defense equipment and technology, ground vehicle fleets and support technology, and especially training and capacity building programs across all branches of the Qatar Armed Forces.

Market Entry Strategy

- If you are a new-to-exporting company, first contact your local Export Assistance Center for free export counseling and a balanced assessment of your company's chances for success in Qatar. To find your local export assistance center, please visit [U.S. Commercial Service](#).
- **Come visit:** Qatar is like many Middle Eastern countries in that personal contact with potential agents and partners is key to successfully conducting business.
- **Get a lawyer:** Acquiring good legal representation is an important first step to entering the market. This helps establish and maintain good business relationships with Qatari partners. Hiring a lawyer is especially important before concluding commercial agreements. Occasionally, American firms report difficulties with their local business partners once their company starts making a profit. A good business lawyer can help address such issues. The U.S. Embassy can provide you with 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 prospective Qatari business partners and determine with which Qatari companies it would be best to work. 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. However, U.S. firms advise not to rely too much on your local partner for all market intelligence and contacts affecting your business. For example, in the case of expatriate labor visa issues, these should be negotiated with sponsors, agents, and partners in the early stages of contract negotiation.
- **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.

Political and Economic Environment

Political Environment

For background information on the political and economic environment of the country, please visit the [U.S State Department](#).

Selling US Products & Services

Using an Agent to Sell US 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 (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 Ministry of Economy and Commerce (MEC). Local agents usually follow up on the routine work required by MEC registration regulations. Disputes between parties in relation to an agency agreement are filed at the MEC prior to referral to arbitration if appropriate. Local civil courts are the final course of action if the dispute cannot be resolved.

The Commercial Agents Law allows for the importation and sale of brand name products by other local entities, upon payment of a commission not to exceed 5% to the appointed local agent, unless otherwise agreed upon between the parties in a written agency agreement.

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 Economy and Commerce (MEC). 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 MEC. Any inquiries regarding the registration process should be directed to the Director of Commercial Affairs at the MEC. A proposed draft “Commercial Companies Law”, which is expected to streamline and simplify the registration process with the MEC, is still under deliberation.

A new draft law approved by the cabinet in October 2016 replaces law No. 13/2000 which restricted non-Qatari capital from full investment. Under the new law, non-Qataris are allowed to invest up to 100% of capital across all sectors if they have a Qatari agent.

Joint venture companies with Qatari partners are allowed in all sectors of the economy excluding commercial agencies and real estate. Establishing a joint venture in the banking and insurance sectors is possible with an approval from the Cabinet of Ministers.

Important exceptions to the Foreign Investment Law are as follows:

- **100% Foreign Investment:** The law stipulates that non-Qatari investors are allowed to own up to 49% of shared capital after the ministry approves the suggested shares. Subject to special government approval, the Foreign Investment Law allows foreign firms ownership exceeding the percentage specified above of the shared capital of companies developing projects in the fields of agriculture, industry, health, education and tourism sectors, as well as projects involved in the development and exploitation of natural resources or energy or mining, pending approval from the government. Each application is reviewed on a case-by-case basis and foreign firms working in sectors not specifically mentioned in these laws may be granted 100% ownership on a case-by-case basis, upon special government approval. Although there is paperwork to be filed, approvals to be obtained and registration fees assessed during this process, this mode of registration offers the opportunity for foreign companies to operate independently. However, it should be noted that only a small number of foreign companies have received the necessary Ministerial resolution to operate as a 100% wholly owned subsidiary.
- **Article 68 Companies:** The Foreign Investment Law provides that it shall not apply to companies and individuals whom the Government of Qatar (GoQ) 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 in which the government participates (so called “Article 68 Companies”). Special rules apply in these circumstances.
- **Representational office:** The decision of the MEC 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. 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 could 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 MEC, 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 GoQ 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.
- **Service agents or sponsorship:** In the past this type of agency 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 may include handling administrative and business matters in Qatar, including 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 penalties can be imposed on whoever infringes the law.
- **QFC, QSTP, and Free Zones:** The GoQ has established the Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) and the Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP). Both 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. The QFC is restricted to financial services and ancillary services companies (excluding retail banking) and 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. Qatar is also developing additional free zones to attract investment in the industrial, agricultural, technical and tourism fields and other fields to be decided upon by the Cabinet of Ministers. These additional free zones are still in the developmental stage and it is not clear what rules and regulations will apply. More information on these economic zones can be found here: Manateq.qa

Franchising

There are many franchises in Qatar besides fast food or casual dining. Franchises such as fitness centers, car rentals, and computer learning centers, apparel shops, real estate brokerage, and language learning centers exist. The potential of growth in non-food franchises is significant. Some Qatari entities have a strong interest in investing in this business, given the ease of readymade business plans offered by franchises. A local sponsor is required to establish a franchise business.

- 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.
- Most major U.S. fast food franchises are established in Qatar, with new ones opening regularly. A local sponsor is required to establish a franchise business.
- High per capita income, a rather young population, a high rate of unaccompanied expatriate population and the lack of alternate entertainment venues encourage out of home dining.

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 and so forth.

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.

Direct marketing is possible in the food processing sector, particularly in vegetable oils, including corn oil, soybean and sunflower-seed oils, beverage bases, dried pulses and a variety of food ingredients, particularly for the snack food and bakery industries.

Additionally, the growing HRI sector, particularly hotel and U.S. fast food and casual dining restaurant sectors provide opportunities for direct marketing.

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. 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.

Selling to the Government

The Qatari government is the biggest end-user of a wide range of products and services. Previously, all government procurement contracts were previously administered under provisions of bidding and tender regulations included in Law No. 26/2005. The Central Tenders Committee (CTC) of the Ministry of Finance was responsible for processing the majority of public sector tenders that are in excess of QR 1 million. The CTC applied standard tendering procedures and adhered to established performance practices and established standards that regulated bidding procedures.

In November 2015, the Emir issued a new procurement law which has been in effect since June 2016. The law has done away with the Central Tendering Committee and has created a Government Procurement Department within the Ministry of Finance which has oversight responsibility over the majority of government tenders. The new department also aims to create a website which will consolidate all tenders and provide relevant information to interested bidders, facilitating the process for overseas investors. The new law aims 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 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, American standards.

Distribution & Sales Channels

The Government of Qatar is the biggest end user of a wide range of products and services. 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 in the beginning of this chapter, 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.

- Private supermarkets account for the vast majority of retail sales, and this sector is expanding.
- Consumer cooperative societies account for 20% of the food retail sales in Qatar.
- Institutional users account for 10% of food distributed.
- Wholesalers and small convenience stores account for the balance of 5 % of food products marketed in Qatar.
- The distribution channel is as follows: importer/agent sells to private supermarkets (60%), cooperatives (20 %), institutional users (10%) and wholesalers and convenience stores (5%).
- 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.
- Food product margins typically run 20-25% for distributors, 5% for wholesalers, when applicable, and 10-15% for retailers. Qatar does not apply a VAT.

However, as part of its economic update on 18th June 2016, the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics publically confirmed for the first time that Qatar will introduce a 5% VAT in 2018 as part of the GCC-wide agreement.

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, TNT and Aramex.

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.

eCommerce

With an 85% penetration of internet usage, smart phones and other technology is readily available for use by tech-savvy Qataris. Approximately two-thirds of the population is within the 15-44 age group and has a great interest in on-line shopping. It is believed that only about 14% of the population, however, actually makes online purchases. The main reason appears to be that credit card penetration rates are still rather low at 14%, with debit cards being prevalent (and not always acceptable for online shopping). Many transactions are still conducted as cash-on-delivery.

The country's Electronic Commerce and Transactions Law was enacted in 2010, providing legislation in areas such as e-signatures, e-documents, and authentication. However, just 28% of companies in Qatar report awareness of the law, according to Qatar Information Communication Technology Landscape Report 2016. Of those business establishments aware of the law, 75% said it reduces the risk of cyber fraud, 53% cite ensuring product quality, and 46% stated it ensures faster delivery. The highest awareness rates are found among larger establishments, as well as in the industry segments education (82%), banking and financial services (73%), and information and communications(51%) . Qatar Central Bank is primarily responsible for regulating electronic banking activities and electronic financial transactions. The Government of Qatar (GoQ) is encouraging greater use of modern technology in government transactions. Additionally, the GoQ is promoting and enhancing E-Commerce through the creation of the E-Government Committee and the Supreme Council for Telecommunications and Information Technology. 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 2020. The private sector however, has taken slow steps in developing its B2B and B2C portals. E-Commerce is expected to flourish given GoQ interest in enhancing this service throughout Qatar.

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 four 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) 4455-7777,
Fax: (+974) 4455-7760,
Email: alsharq1@qatar.net.qa;

[Al-Watan](#)

P.O. Box 22345, Doha, State of Qatar,
Tel: (+974) 4465 2244
Fax: (+974) 4664 4482,
Email: alwatan3@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

[Al-Arab](#)

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

[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

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

PenMag:

Tel: (+974) 4455 7837 or (+974) 4455 7780

Fax: (+974) 4455 7870 or (+974) 4455 7898

E-mail: penmag@pen.com.qa

Classifieds:

Tel: (+974) 4455 7857

E-mail: adv@pen.com.qa

Subscriptions / Home Delivery

Tel: (+974) 4455 7809/810

Fax: (+974) 4455 7819

E-mail: distribution@pen.com.qa / distribution@al-sharq.com

Public Relations

Tel: (+974) 4455 7728/52

Fax: (+974) 4455 7758

E-mail: 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: letters@qatar-tribune.com / editor@qatar-tribune.com

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. 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 now carried by Qatar's new satellite Es'hailSat. There are no private radio stations.

[Al Rayyan Satellite Channel](#) is a diversified channel operated by Al Rayyan Media and Marketing. The channel targets the Qatari society, appealing to the national identity and aspirations of its audience. In one year, Al Rayyan established itself as a familiar news service on the national and regional levels. It is the first Qatari channel to show various Qatari skills, talents and competencies interacting with the societal issues.

General Enquiries: +974 44240515
Advertising and Marketing: +974 44240271 / +974 44243160
Fax Nos.: +974 44413311 / +974 44245794
Email: 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.

Qatar Television

P.O. Box 1944, Doha, State of Qatar,
Tel: (+974) 4486 4575, Fax: (+974) 4486 5411.
Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel with a number of operational channels: Al-Jazeera Live, Al-Jazeera, Al-Jazeera English, Al-Jazeera America and Al-Jazeera Documentary,
P.O. Box 23123, Doha, Tel: (+974) 40158585
Email: advertising@aljazeera.net

Al-Jazeera is an excellent means of promotion and advertising, as millions of people in the region watch its channels.

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 VAT or sales tax in Qatar. However, as part of its economic update, the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics publically confirmed that Qatar will introduce a 5% VAT in 2018.

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. As 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.

Due Diligence

The [Embassy's Commercial Section](#) offers U.S. companies the International Company Profile (ICP) as one due diligence tool to help firms make assessments of potential local business partners. A description of the ICP service is provided at the hyperlink below:

Local Professional Services

Auditing Firms

- [Deloitte & Touche](#)
- [Ernst & Young](#)
- [KPMG](#)
- [PricewaterhouseCoopers](#)

Banking

Qatari Banks:

- [Al Ahli Bank of Qatar](#)
- [Al Khaliji Bank](#)
- [Barwa Bank](#)
- [Commercial Bank of Qatar](#)
- [Doha Bank](#)
- [International Bank of Qatar](#)
- [Masraf Al Rayan](#)
- [Qatar Development Bank](#)
- [Qatar International Islamic Bank](#)
- [Qatar Islamic Bank](#)
- [Qatar National Bank](#)

Foreign Banks' 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:

- [The Ritz Carlton Doha](#)
- [W Doha](#)
- [Grand Hyatt Doha](#)
- [The St Regis Doha](#)
- [InterContinental Doha](#)
- [Kempinski Residences and Suites Doha](#)
- [Four Seasons Hotel Doha](#)
- [The Torch Doha](#)
- [Movenpick Tower Doha](#)
- [Sharq Village & Spa Doha](#)
- [Kempinski at the Pearl](#)
- [Marriott City Center](#)
- [Al-Bustan Hotel](#)
- [Al Ghariya Resorts](#)
- [Al Liwan Suites](#)
- [Al Muntazah Plaza Hotel](#)
- [Doha Grand Hotel](#)
- [Doha Seef Hotel](#)
- [Doha Marriott Hotel](#)
- [Doha Palace](#)
- [Gulf Horizon Hotel](#)
- [Gulf Paradise Hotel](#)
- [Hotel Souq Waqif](#)
- [La Cigale Hotel](#)
- [Mercure Grand Hotel](#)
- [Merweb Hotel](#)
- [Millennium Hotel](#)
- [New Capital Hotel](#)
- [Ramada Plaza Hotel](#)
- [Retaj Al Rayyan Hotel](#)
- [Sealine Beach Resort](#)
- [Sheraton Doha Resort & Convention Hotel](#)
- [Somerset West Bay, Doha](#)
- [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](#)
- [The American Life Insurance Company](#)

Local Attorney List

Please see [U.S. Embassy Doha's list of local attorney's](#).

Media

- [Al-Jazeera Satellite TV Station](#)
- [Al-Watan](#)
- [Al-Rayah](#)
- [AL-Sharq](#)
- [Gulf Times](#)
- [The Peninsula](#)
- [Qatar News Agency](#)

Telecommunications

- [Qatar Telecom](#)
- [Vodafone](#)

Principle 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 mutual 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 business people 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

For additional information, please see the [AmCham's website](#).

Limitations on Selling US Products and Services

With certain exceptions, Qatar's foreign investment law limits foreign ownership of local entities to 49% of the entity's capital. Foreign investors may own 100% of an entity's capital in sectors like agriculture, industry, health care, education, tourism, and the exploitation and development of natural resources subject to approval by the Government of Qatar ("GoQ"). The law further states that, when approving majority foreign ownership in a project, preference should be given to those using locally available raw materials, manufacturing products for export, producing new product or using advanced technology.

Web Resources

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

Leading Sectors for US Exports & Investments

Aviation & Defense

Overview

Aviation

Due primarily to Qatar Airways' continued global growth strategy, especially with adding more routes to the United States (10 as of February 2017), Aviation is an active industry in Qatar for U.S. suppliers. Boeing and Gulf Stream dominate the market as 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 list and processes in Qatar.

Defense

The U.S. and Qatar's political and military relationship continues to grow with increasing foreign military and direct commercial sales. Major purchases since 2014 include Apache helicopters, Javelin missiles, Early Warning Radar, and PAC 3 Patriot systems. The Qatari government is also sponsoring an initiative to create a vast network of Military training facilities and programs. Foundation Training, Program Training, Training Management and schoolhouse training are some of the required fields by the Qatari Armed Forces. Facilities for all these programs are also required. There is also a vision to build an Air Force training academy that is integrated into this vast military training network and an Aerial display team as well.

Major Purchases:

Purchase/Project	Entity	US Supplier	Sale Amount & Date
100 Aircraft Order 30 787-9, 10 777-300ER LOI for 60 additional aircrafts	Qatar Airways	Boeing	\$18.6 Billion, October 2016
F-15 Fighter Jet (36)	Ministry of Defense, Qatar Emiri Air Forces	Boeing (Prime)	\$11 billion, (Pending final confirmation)
Early Warning Radar System	Ministry of Defense, Qatar Emiri Air Forces	Raytheon	\$775, September 2016
Apache Helicopters (24)	Ministry of Defense, Qatar Emiri Air Forces	Boeing	\$2.4 Billion, March 2014
Javelin Missiles	Ministry of Defense, Qatar Emiri Air Forces	Lockheed Martin	\$1.2billion, 2014
PAC 3 Patriot Systems	Ministry of Defense, Qatar Emiri Air Forces	Raytheon	

The U.S. Military strategic partnership in Qatar has made great strides since 1992 and become more robust since 9/11. The U.S. military commitment and relationship to Qatar is strong (i.e., U.S. Central Command's Forward Headquarters and the Combined Air Operations Center).

During Defense Secretary Hagel's visit to Qatar in 2013, defense cooperation between the United States and Qatar was renewed for 10 years through a signing ceremony.

Qatar maintains a modest military force of about 12,000 men total, including an army, navy and air force. The country has a public security force of about 10,000 men, including police, a coast guard, national firefighting force, air wing, marine police, and an internal security force. Qatar also has signed defense pacts with the United States, U.K. and France. Qatar plays an active role in the collective defense efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC – the regional organization of the Arab states in the Gulf; the other five members are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the U.A.E., and Oman). Qatari forces played an important role in the first Gulf War and the 2011 revolution in Libya, and Qatar has supported U.S. military operations critical to the success of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Qatar hosts CENTCOM Forward Headquarters.

The Qatari government is sponsoring an initiative to create a vast network of military training facilities and programs. Foundation Training, Program Training, Training Management and schoolhouse training are some of the required fields by the Qatari Armed Forces. Facilities for all these programs are required. There is a vision to build an Air Force training academy that is integrated into this vast military training network and an Aerial display team as well.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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

- Training and capacity building programs
- Small arms and ammunition
- Anti-tank weapons systems
- Integrated air and missile defense systems
- Navy & Marine defense systems

Web Resources

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

Architecture Engineering & Construction

Overview

The Architecture, Engineering, and Construction sector continue to experience a slow-down, despite the government's continued plan for the Qatar National Vision 2030 and World Cup 2022 development. 2016 marked the lowest level of project awards since 2011, with \$13 billion awarded in construction, infrastructure, and transport projects. Stagnant low oil prices have affected the budget cuts across all government agencies, in addition to new Emir's focus on austerity measures.

Opportunities with Major Government Agencies

- Ministry of Municipalities and Urban Planning
- Public Works Authority (Ashghal)
 - Ministry of Transportation and Communications
 - Qatar Railways Company
 - Hamad International Airport & City
 - New Port Project
- 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 area of architectural, construction and engineering services where there are a number of opportunities in this sector for U.S. firms. U.S. firms are largely present in the design, project, and construction management/supervision services field.

Current Largest Projects

Project	Total Value of Project Billion USD	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	2018	Ashgal Expressways
New Airport – Terminal 2 Expansion	15.5	2017	Hamad International Airport
Local Roads	14.6	2018	Ashgal roads and drainage
Barwa Al Khor	10.0	2025	Mixed-use development
Barwa City	8.3	2015	Mixed-use development
Education City	7.5	2014	Universities and colleges
New Doha Port	7.4	2020	New port south of Doha
Msheireb Properties	5.5	2016	Mixed-use development
Sharq Crossing (Currently on hold)	5.0	2021	Crossing for Doha bay

2022 World Cup Stadiums

Stadium	Status	Contractor	Seat Capacity
Khalifa Stadium Renovation	Commissioned	MIDMAC-Six Construct JV	40,000
Al Wakrah	Commissioned	MIDMAC/Porr/Six Construct JV	45,000

Al Bayt	Commissioned	Salini Impregilo/Galfar Engineering/Cimolai	60,000
Al Rayyan	Earth Works completed/Tendering	Al Balagh – Larsen & Toubrou	40,000
Qatar Foundation	Earth Works	J&P Qatar, Conspel, and J&P Avax	40,000
Lusail City	Commissioned	HBK Contracting – China Railway Constuction 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 Program Management Services
- Specialized contractors and service providers for Education, Healthcare, and Sports facilities

Trade Shows

- Tenders published by the different governmental institutions (comprehensive list provided in Qatar Business Tenders List section)
- [Project Qatar 2017](#)

Web Resources

- Comprehensive list provided in Qatar Business Tenders List section

Automotive

Overview

The Automotive industry experienced a slowdown in 2016, with a sharp decline in sales estimated at 52% on average across all automotive brands.

While Japanese brands as Toyota, Nissan and Hyundai enjoy the largest market share (54% in 2016), American brands follow with an approximate market share of 11%. GMC, Chevrolet and Ford are among the most popular brands. Much of the population adopts motor vehicles for transportation. To that end the demand for spare parts has increased significantly in the past few years for all major players 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, wiper and belts continue to prevail in 2016 because of the overall economic cycle. Demand for spare parts tends to increase substantially during the summer period in Qatar as many people tend to go on vacation using their vehicles preferring road trips to neighboring countries. As such, people purchase spare parts in sets and carry out the necessary vehicle

checks and repairs before they leave for the summer. The reliance and demand for spare parts for motor vehicles is set to remain for the coming few years.

Demand for trucks and utility vehicles decreased in 2016 given the slowdown in construction activity. A majority of the local agencies focused on the “lease-to-own” model, catering to local companies’ limited capital expenditure capabilities. European brands continue to enjoy the highest market share with brands such as Mercedes Benz with the Actros model dominating the market, followed by MAN, IVECO and Renault. Nevertheless, aftermarket parts manufactured in the U.S. for European models are a major opportunity for U.S. suppliers. The demand for spare parts, car care products and accessories has likewise increased as the number of used vehicles has reached around 600,000 units. The number of medium and heavy duty trucks is in the neighborhood of 250,000 units.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

- Sports Utility Vehicles
- Trucks, Vans and Buses
- All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV), Utility Vehicles (UTVs)
- Specialized trucks and vehicles
- 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

Overview

(Services statistics are not available from the GOQ.)

Qatar is using its hydrocarbon-fueled wealth, in part, to invest in educational reform. The Government of Qatar (GOQ) recognizes that it must develop a diversified, knowledge-based economy to ensure the country continues to thrive over the long-term. Seeing the failure of educational systems throughout the Arab world, Qatar is overhauling its primary and secondary schools along the U.S. model of competitive charter schools. For university education, they have imported not just the American model, but the U.S. universities themselves – six – with the goal of creating the best-educated citizens in the Middle East, fully prepared to participate in the global economy.

Qatar Foundation (QF) is a major vehicle for the GOQ’s education agenda. Qatar Foundation’s flagship project is a 2,500 acre campus in Doha which hosts six U.S. universities including: 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 (design); Texas A&M University (engineering);

and Northwestern University (journalism). The Supreme Education Council, through the Outstanding Schools Initiative, has imported one U.S. high school and plans to import more.

Qatar has almost 250 independent schools which function like charter schools in the United States. While the Government of Qatar (GOQ) requires all independent schools to comply with national curriculum standards in all core subjects, the GOQ is gradually modifying its educational curriculum to match international baccalaureate standards. The GOQ is looking to expand the number of primary and secondary private schools, particularly high-quality ones, to cater to the growing population of foreign professionals working in Qatar, and provide options to its citizens. With the country growing at a fast pace the shortage of private international schools is becoming an issue that directly affects the families of the foreigners joining the work force. The waiting lists are extensive and the options are limited.

The arrival of foreign professionals will continue to increase in an effort to meet the deadlines of projects set by the National Vision 2030 and most recently, the new infrastructure projects to be executed under the umbrella of the World Cup 2022.

The Education sector is striving to keep up with the increasing market demands. Several new international schools are opening doors but with the demand growing at a faster pace, more institutions are needed. The Government is aware of the situation and the Supreme Education Council is making great efforts to promote the establishment of top international institutions in Qatar. In 2007 Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Misnad launched “Qatar’s Outstanding Schools Program.” The main goal is to have a growing collection of exceptional schools from around the world establishing branches in Qatar, to serve both Qatari and expatriate students.

The first two schools established under the Outstanding Schools Initiative, the Michael E. DeBakey High School for Health Professions from Houston, Texas, USA and The International School of London from the UK opened their Qatar branches in fall 2008. The third Outstanding School, Sherborne School from Dorset, UK, opened its Qatar branch in fall 2009.

The Sherborne School, of British Curriculum is developing a new project that will eventually cater for approximately 1500 pupils. The developer of the new facility will invest 38 million \$. The Spanish School SEK is also joining the group of reputable schools. Initially, the SEK School in Qatar will be limited to the primary stage in its first year and starting from pre-kindergarten up to the sixth primary class. The school will start by enrolling 180 students and gradually expand to enroll a total number of 460 students in academic year 2014-2015. This number of students will increase to be not less than 600 students in academic year 2016-2017.

The Government of Qatar recognizes the demand pressure on the education sector and is in the process of expanding the educational infrastructure of the country. In an interview with the Minister of Education and Higher Education of Qatar Mohammed Abdul Wahed Ali Al Hammadi, it was stated that the aim for 2017 was to increase the number of public schools by

33%. Private school operators and investors also saw the approval for 75 new schools in 2014, representing an increase of 31%.

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.

Qatar's senior leadership, as part of the vision 2030, established a strategy, which seeks 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 sector.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

- **Language:** ESL and TOEFL
- **Undergraduate:** Business Administration, Engineering and Communication
- **Certificate Programs: English as a second Language,** Firefighting, Law Enforcement Forensics, Security Training, Ongoing Professional Development at Qatari state-owned enterprises
- **Post-Graduate:** Pharmacy, Dentistry, MBAs

Opportunities

This sector is open for new opportunities but must fit into the educational and economic goals of the Qatar Foundation and the GOQ. Qatar Foundation continues to look for U.S. universities to join Education City. The GOQ 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 country tries to cope with the growing education need. Several projects such as Lusail City are contemplating to build schools to cater their residents. [Register for tender opportunities.](#)

Law No. 13-2000 allows 100 percent foreign ownership in the education sector pending approval from the government.

Web Resources

- [Qatar Foundation](#)
- [Ministry of Education](#)
- [Supreme Education Council](#)
- [Qatar Petroleum](#)

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

Information, and Communication Technology

Overview

2016 saw the merger of ictQatar with the Ministry of Transportation to form the second largest ministry in Qatar, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MOTC).

MOTC's largest focus for 2016 was the Qatar Smart Nation program, a 5 year USD1.64 billion initiative launched to develop Qatar's ICT infrastructure, and transform Doha into one of most connected cities globally.

The Qatar Smart Nation Program aims to harness technology and innovation to improve quality of life and help drive sustainable economic development across 5 priority sectors:

- **Transportation**
Objectives: Seamless mobility, Searchable city, Universal Access, and Safe Journeys
- **Logistics**
Objectives: Connected logistics, digital workplace, Dynamic delivery, and Empowered Recipients
- **Environment**
Objectives: Sustainable resources, Digital urbanization, Environment stewardship, and Connected farming
- **Healthcare**
Objectives: Healthcare on-demand, Extended care, seamless hospitals, and connected wellness
- **Sports**
Objectives: Active nation, Augmented game experience, Competitive athletes, and Connected fans

The program was announced during the fourth edition of the [QITCOM](#) exhibition on March 6, 2017, and MOTC will be leading a government task force with other stakeholders to manage the program's objectives.

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

Total ICT spending in Qatar stood at USD 1.9 billion in 2016, with expected growth of 10% in 2017, largely due to the government's increasing requirement for ICT services.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

- Smart City Solutions
- Cyber Security
- E-commerce
- E-Education
- E-Health
- Financial Technology
- E-Government Solutions

Opportunities & Major Trade Shows

- Tenders published by the different governmental institutions (comprehensive list available in Qatar Business Tenders List section)
- Partnering with local distributors
- [QITCOM](#)
- Arab Future Cities Summit, www.arabfuturecities.com

Web Resources

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

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

Medical Equipment and Services

Overview

Health care is a priority concern for the Qatari leadership. The Qatari Government is constantly upgrading the quality health services using technology, international expertise and knowledge. In Qatar, healthcare services are either free or highly subsidized. According to industry estimates, the market for medical equipment will grow over the next five years. The market relies on imports from Europe, Asia and the United States. In fact, the U.S. is one of the leading exporters of medical equipment, medical supplies, medicines and pharmaceuticals to Qatar. Qatar's strong interest in importing medical equipment, healthcare technology and supplies from the U.S. is driven by two factors: (1) the rise of new construction projects for hospitals and health care centers; and (2) Qatar's lack of local production capacity in this area.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

- Medical Equipment
- Medical Supplies
- Equipment and supplies for persons with special needs
- Specialized medical services
- Healthcare technology
- Books and publications
- Training

Opportunities

- Hamad Medical City, owned and funded by Hamad Medical Corporation, is a \$ 900 million integrated medical complex consisting of several specialty hospitals. Work is underway to build an associated medical complex that will consist of the following: a 338 bed-Pediatric Hospital, a 200-bed Orthopedic Hospital, a 230-bed Physical Medicine and Physiotherapy Hospital, a 40-bed Day Care Surgery Center, and a 228-room Home Care Center for the elderly.

- 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 a General Hospital and a Specialized Hospital.
- 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 Supreme Council of Health has given the go-ahead for the private sector to proceed with hospital projects and the new national insurance plan Seha. Qatar has encouraged more patients to visit private facilities, adding to revenues. Seha provides health insurance to all Qatari citizens and requires the companies that hire expat workers to pay their health insurance premiums.

Web Resources

[Hamad Medical Corporation](#)

[Sidra Foundation](#)

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

Oil & Gas Field Machinery and Equipment

Overview

The state of Qatar is the largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the world, and the country's exports of LNG, crude oil, and petroleum products provide the major portion of government revenues. Qatar's earnings from its hydrocarbons sector accounted for more than 50% of the country's total government revenues.

Qatar holds the third largest proven reserve of natural gas in the world after Russia and Iran, and the state company Qatar Petroleum (QP) manages all the processes. QP oversees the oil, gas, fertilizer, petrochemicals and refining operations in country and has interests abroad. QP has developed the sector through key partnerships with international companies, promoting the transfer of knowledge as many foreign companies have invested in Qatar's oil and gas sector specifically to purchase the natural gas or oil developed from these projects.

Qatar currently has reserves of approximately 14.6 billion barrels of crude oil and 910 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. These reserves are estimated to be 13.7% of the world's total and are enough to sustain the country for the next 200 years.

Qatar is shifting its strategy to increase its output of Gas-To-Liquid (GTL) products, specifically Naphtha. The Government of Qatar aims to increase exports of Naphtha by 3 million metric tons a year. Qatar has the capacity to do so thanks to its Pearl GTL plant which produces 140,000 b/d, the biggest plant of its kind in the world.

The state of Qatar has the world's third largest conventional gas reserve after Russia and Iran. It is also one of the world's major fertilizer producers and top 15 oil exporting countries. Qatar has both liquefied natural gas (LNG) and gas to liquids (GTL) capacities which diversify its gas sales globally. It is the industry leader for GTL technologies with low gas costs, making it the world's largest producer of LNG.

Qatar's current LNG production is 77 million tons per year and the country intends to increase production by 30% by 2024. Qatar's crude oil refining capacity is approximately 393.7 billion per day (b/d) and it is expected to increase to 484.7 b/d in the next 3 years.

QP, a state-owned company, manages the oil and gas sector through its partnerships with international companies. It oversees the oil, gas, fertilizer, petrochemicals and refining operations in country and abroad.

In Q4 2016, QP began to integrate its subsidiaries with the goal of expanding its international portfolio and trimming its domestic operations costs. The two consolidations are RasGas to QatarGas in Q4 2016 and Qatar Vinyl (QVC) to Qatar Petrochemical Company in Q1 2017.

In May 2017, the 12-year moratorium on further developing the North Field was lifted. The project is expected to be completed within 5-7 years and is estimated to increase capacity by 10% to two billion cubic feet per day (cf/d); it will add 4,000,000 barrels of oil to overall Qatar's production. The country encourages foreign investments as well as private sector job opportunities.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

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

Opportunities

Law No. 13-2000 permits foreigners, upon approval, to own up to 100% of any investment made in the energy and mining sectors.

Demand in Qatar is centered on processing Naphtha and other GTL products. Investment companies with strong ties to Asian markets would also make suitable business partners for Qatar as QIA pursues its 5-year investment plan in Asia.

Web Resources

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

Safety & Security

Overview

The safety and security sector, despite the slow-down the sector has experienced due of delays in majority of construction and infrastructure project, is still set to experience high levels of growth with the upcoming security requirements for the World Cup in 2022. U.S. Exports continue to provide several technologies to the local market such as CCTV surveillance, fire

panels, Communication systems, and recent cyber-attacks (Qatar National Bank 2016, Qatar Foundation Social Media Accounts 2013, and RasGas 2012) 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. Q-CERT (Qatar's Computer Emergency Response Team) since its establishment in 2006 is ranked as one of the leading centers of its kind in the region, most recently hosting the fifth regional Cyber Drill for Arab Countries, organized by the ITU-Arab Regional Cybersecurity Center (ARCC).

Like many other countries, Qatar wants to improve its national cyber defense infrastructure in the face of a growing network warfare threat. This creates 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
- Cyber Security
- 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

- Ministry of Interior
- Internal Security Forces
- Civil Defense Authority
- Communications Regulatory Authority
- Ministry of Transportation and Communications
- International Center for Sports Security

Web Resources

Ministry of Interior

[Q-CERT](#)

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

Travel and Tourism

Overview

The U.S. Department of Commerce projects a sustained growth of international travel to the United States through 2018. In 2016, 75.6 million international visitors spent \$244 billion on travel spending in the United States.

According to this forecast, the U.S. would experience visitor growth rates of up to 4.2% from 2013–2018. All the world regions are forecasted to grow and the Middle East is not an exception with a possible 67% increase during this period.

Qatar's \$153 Million U.S.-bound market holds enormous potential for the domestic U.S. travel industry. In order to increase market share, U.S. travel entities are encouraged to promote their products and services directly to Qatar's consumers and travel agents. Doha's strategic location, coupled with the new massive international airport will definitely make Qatar a major transit point for people in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. The flag carrier, Qatar Airways, already flies directly to ten destinations in America: Washington, DC, New York, Houston, Chicago, Miami, Dallas, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Boston and Atlanta.

In addition to Qatar Airways, Emirates, Etihad, Royal Jordanian, Egypt Air and Turkish Airlines fly directly to several U.S. destinations, including New York, Houston, Los Angeles and Chicago from the Gulf Region. As of November 2017, British Airways also carries passenger to and from Qatar through a stop-over in London, leveraging their network and daily flights to the region. However, due to the ongoing blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain, air travel between Qatar and these countries has been suspended since June 5, 2017. As direct flights are no longer available, travel from Qatar to the blockading countries is now normally done through airports in Oman, and Kuwait.

During 2015, over 30,000 Qataris visited the United States, the average Qatari tourist spends approximately \$ 5,300 per day in the United States including accommodations, meals, and shopping (excluding airfare). Industry experts report over \$153 million in expenditures per year by inbound travelers from Qatar within the United States on travel-related services, excluding airfare.

Best Products/Services

Over 70 travel agents and 12 tour operators work in the Qatari outbound travel market. This market is fast-paced and competitive. Operators and airlines advertise special packages and seasonal deals on an almost daily basis, especially during summer vacation between July and August and Qatar's holidays in the months of September and December. Tour operators specialize in market segments rather than in specific destinations and most operators are conservative when selecting new travel products.

U.S. passenger service companies, travel attractions, restaurants, outlet shopping and family travel destinations may find opportunities in Qatar, especially by offering new travel packages and a high level of services. Medical tourism is on the rise and could benefit from the

increasing number of Qataris receiving medical treatment overseas. Elective surgery represents a large portion of the expenditure abroad and special premium packages could be tailored to attract locals.

Opportunities

Qatar attracted 2.93 million visitors in 2015, up 3.2 % over the previous year. Qatar Tourism Authority reported the nationality grouped by region visits by GCC nationals increased by 16% in 2015 from 2014. Increases were also registered in arrivals of nationals from non-Arab African countries (+5%), Europe (+4%), and the Americas (+1%). The data shows drops in the number of arrivals of nationals from Other Arab countries (-14%) and Other Asian countries, including Oceania (-6%) an increase in the number of Chinese visitors (+15%) and French visitors (+9%), while arrivals of nationals of other primary markets either remained stable or dropped. Qatar's top visitors are GCC nationals (44%), Indian (13%), British (4.6%), American (3.1%), Egyptian (3.1%) and Pakistani visitors (3 %). The Hotel average occupancy rate stood at 71 % despite an increase of 20 newly opened hotels 2015.

Qatari Business Tender List

[Ashghal](#)

Public Works Authority "Ashghal" was established in 2004, as an autonomous body to oversee all infrastructure related projects as well as public amenities of the State is under the Minister of Municipality and Urban Planning.

[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.

[Doha Port](#)

Preparing to gain operational readiness by 2016, the Port will 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 state of Qatar. The company is aiming to be an essential part of Qatar's urban infrastructure and to be recognized as one of the most successful, safe and environmentally-friendly railway systems in the world. This system is expected to meet the demands of Qatar's dynamic growing population.

[Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy](#)

The 2022 FIFA World Cup, an international association football tournament is scheduled to take place in Qatar in 2022. The tournament will involve 32 national teams, including that of the host nation.

Companies can submit their profiles to supplychainregistration@sc-pmc.qa.

Tenders are also published in some of the following publications:

International Publications

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

Basic 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 progressive Mesaieed Industrial. 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 Culture, Arts, and Heritage](#)

Established in 2008, the Ministry strives to make Doha, Qatar the “capital of Arab culture.”

[Ministry of Economy and Commerce](#)

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 the Environment](#)

The Ministry of Environment is striving to achieve several goals, most importantly, protecting the environment through inclusive and sustainable growth for future generations to achieve the vision of 2030.

[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 tends to the care of nationality related affairs, issuing travel documents, organizing expatriates’ entry to the country and their residence and organizing the prison.

[Qatar Tourism Authority](#)

Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA)’s role is to organize, enable, and supervise the tourism industry development in Qatar, as well as to represent and promote Qatar as a quality tourism destination for leisure, business, education, and sport.

[Ministry of Municipality & Urban Planning](#)

The Ministry of Municipality & Urban Planning serves the public in all issues related to urban planning. It oversees the maintenance and beautification of public facilities, and provides municipal services to citizens and residents across the various municipalities.

[Supreme Council of Health](#)

The Supreme Council of Health (SCH) 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 Central Tender Committee](#)

The Qatar CTC’s function is releasing and receiving tenders, opening envelopes and awarding tenders, and auctions for government's entities.

[Qatar Museum Authority](#)

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.

Healthcare

[SIDRA Foundation](#)

Expected to open in 4Q15/1Q16, Sidra Medical and Research Center will be an ultra-modern, all-digital academic medical center that plans to offer specialty healthcare for women and children.

Hospitality

[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, Qatar.

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 Qatar Petroleum 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](#)

Qatargas 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 42 million tonnes per annum (mta).

[RasGas](#)

RasGas Company Limited (RasGas) is a Qatari joint stock company established in 2001 by Qatar Petroleum and ExxonMobil. RASGAS oversees and manages all the operations associated with seven LNG trains, two sales gas production facilities, helium production facilities, as well as major shipping contracts and global commercial partnerships.

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.

Sporting

[ASPIRE](#)

The Aspire Academy is a national sports academy for the development of Qatar's athletically talented boys. 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](#)

The Qatar Olympic Committee is the National Olympic Committee representing Qatar. The 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. Pork and pork products are illegal under Qatari law. 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 Economy and Commerce. 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:

Effective April 1, 2011, Qatar Customs imposed the following new rules & regulations for imported shipments heading to Qatar and entering through Doha’s airport and Seaport:

Qatar Customs will only accept official invoices, official Certificate of Origin (COO) & packing lists; these are now mandatory. Shipment without these documents will not be cleared under any circumstances and shall be returned back to origin.

It is now 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: Please mention clearly on the COO the country of origin. Example: 'Country of Origin: European Community – UK'. If the Products are made in 2 different countries, the Country of Origin should be both countries in the COO, Invoice, and on the materials. Example: 'European Community – UK & POLAND'."

Customs and Ports General Authority

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

Phone: (974) 4441-1149

Fax: (974) 4441-4959

Contact: Sheikh Hassan Bin Nasser Bin Jassim Al-Thani, Director General

Mr. Essa Jassim Mohammed, Office Director

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. Most goods imported into Qatar from the U.S. and elsewhere come via the nearby ports of Dubai and Sharjah, both in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). Transshipment clauses serve the purpose of advancing those goods from the U.A.E. to Qatar by land (by truck) and/or sea (by barge). 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

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

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

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.

It is important to note that in August 2009, the 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.

The Administration is implementing the reform in three phases. Phases I and II reconcile various definitions, regulations, and policies for export controls, all the while building toward Phase III, which will create a single control list, single licensing agency, unified information technology system, and enforcement coordination center.

For additional information on ECR see [U.S. Commercial Services](#).

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 further details about the Bureau of Industry and Security and its programs, please visit the [BIS website](#).

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

Pork, pork products, and pornographic material are illegal in Qatar. The Qatar Distribution Company monopolizes the importation of alcohol. 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. Qatar participates in the primary aspects of the Israel boycott.

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 and tobacco products is 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 is currently developing 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 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 merchandize.

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 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](#).

Contact Information

Qatar's primary point of contact for matters related to standards is the following:

Dr. Mohammed Bin Saif Al-Kuwari
Assistant Under Secretary
Qatar Laboratories and Standardization Affairs

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. The GCC aims to adopt a common currency.

Web Resources

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

Investment Climate Statement

Executive Summary

The State of Qatar is the world's leading exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and has the highest per capita income in the world. In recent years, Qatar has had one of the fastest growing economies in the world, though lower energy prices have produced a relative decline in growth. The World Bank estimates a gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 3.6 percent in 2017. Due to lower hydrocarbon prices, Qatar is expecting its second budget deficit in fifteen years in 2017, partly due to the Government of Qatar's decision to maintain high levels of government spending in pursuit of its 2030 National Vision. To offset the deficit, the government raised debt internationally and sold \$9 billion of Eurobonds in 2016. In contrast to other oil/gas-dependent economies, Qatar's LNG supply contracts and relatively low production costs have largely shielded Qatar from the impact of depressed energy prices.

The government remains the dominant actor in Qatar's economy, though it encourages private investment in many sectors and continues to take steps to encourage more foreign investment. In 2016, the government streamlined its procurement processes and created an online portal for all government tenders in an effort to improve transparency. The government also created a regulatory regime to curb corruption and anti-competitive practices. It is also in the process of introducing reforms to its foreign investment laws to allow 100 percent foreign ownership of businesses in more economic sectors. These measures promise an attractive environment for foreign investors. In adherence to the country's 2030 National Vision, Qatar aims to modernize infrastructure and establish an advanced knowledge-based and diversified economy which will no longer be reliant on the hydrocarbon sector.

As Qatar plans to spend \$200 billion in the lead up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup and in implementation of its long term National Vision, there are significant opportunities for foreign investment in infrastructure, healthcare, education, tourism, and financial services, and other sectors. Qatar's 2017 budgetary spending is focused, in particular, on infrastructure, health, and education. By value of inward foreign direct investment (FDI) stock, oil and gas downstream manufacturing, transportation and marketing remain the primary sectors that attract most foreign investment to Qatar.

Qatar provides various incentives to local and foreign investors. Qatar was ranked first globally by the World Bank's 2017 Doing Business Report for its taxation regime. The corporate tax rate is 10 percent and there is no personal income tax. A value-added tax (VAT) will be introduced for the first time in 2018, as part of a GCC-wide initiative, and taxes on luxury items and products harmful to human health and the environment – such as tobacco, alcohol, soft drinks, and energy drinks – will be applied starting in mid-2017.

In recent years, Qatar has begun to invest heavily in the United States through its sovereign wealth fund, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), and its subsidiaries, notably Qatari Diar. QIA's current strategy for the United States includes at least \$45 billion in intended investments in various sectors over five years. QIA opened an office in New York City in September 2015 to help facilitate these investments.

The U.S. and Qatar launched the Economic and Investment Dialogue (EID) in October 2015 in Washington, DC to further strengthen the bilateral economic relationship and help address obstacles to investment and trade. The second EID took place in Doha in December 2016, and the third round of talks will take place in Washington, D.C. in the fall of 2017.

Table 1

Measure	Year	Index/Rank	Website Address
TI Corruption Perceptions Index	2016	31 of 176	Transparency International
World Bank's Doing Business Report "Ease of Doing Business"	2017	83 of 190	Doing Business
Global Innovation Index	2016	50 of 128	Global Innovation Index
U.S. FDI in partner country (\$M USD, stock positions)	2015	\$8.463 billion	BEA
World Bank GNI per capita	2015	\$83,990	World Bank

Openness To, and Restrictions Upon, Foreign Investment Policies Toward Foreign Direct Investment

Qatar is undergoing an approximately \$200 billion infrastructure development plan in pursuit of its 2030 National Vision and by way of preparation for the FIFA World Cup, which Qatar will host in 2022. The government also plans to invest between \$20 billion to \$25 billion in tourism infrastructure development. The largest, single planned development project is the \$29 billion metro and rail project, which will be implemented in three phases with completion scheduled for 2022. These economic activities and policies have created, and will continue to create, significant business opportunities for foreign investors.

The dominant driver of Qatar's economy remains the oil and gas sector, and particularly developments associated with the North Field in the Persian Gulf, the largest non-associated natural gas field in the world. Qatar's liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry has attracted tens of billions of dollars in foreign investment and made Qatar the world's largest exporter of LNG. Qatar imposed a moratorium on increasing natural gas production from the North Field in

2012. The moratorium on further development remains in effect. Significant investment in the downstream sector is likely to continue. Nonetheless, diversification of economic revenue sources is a priority and a focus in the 2030 Qatar National Vision.

The government is actively looking for ways to incentivize foreign and private sector investments and encourage small and medium enterprise participation in the economy. Qatar's investment liberalization policies are proceeding on a gradual basis, partly based on a desire to protect local companies from competition. The country's main investment oversight bodies are the Cabinet, the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Ministry of Economy and Commerce's Business Development and Investment Promotion Department is the main entity responsible for setting policies on attracting foreign investment and raising awareness of investment opportunities.

As part of new legislation (Law 24/2015) governing government procurement promulgated in June 2016, procurement processes were streamlined and a new online procurement portal was launched by the [Ministry of Finance](#) to consolidate information on all government tenders, in an effort to increase transparency of available investment opportunities.

When competing for government contracts, preferential treatment is given to suppliers that use local content in their bids. In accordance with GCC common procurement law (Qatar Law 6/1987), goods with Qatari content receive a 10 percent price preference while goods from other GCC countries receive a five percent price preference. As a rule, participation in tenders with a value of QR 5 million or less (\$1.37 million) is confined to local contractors, suppliers and merchants registered by the Qatar Chamber of Commerce. Tenders with a higher value do not require any local commercial registration to participate, but in practice certain exceptions exist.

Qatar maintains ongoing dialogue with the United States in both official and private sector tracks, e.g., through the annual Economic and Investment Dialogue and official trade missions undertaken in cooperation with chambers of commerce. Qatari officials have stated a desire to increase both American investments in Qatar and Qatari investments in the United States.

Limits on Foreign Control and Right to Private Ownership and Establishment

Current legislation (Law 13/2000) stipulates that foreign investors in most sectors can operate in Qatar only in partnership with a Qatari entity owning at least 51 percent of the enterprise in question. Certain exceptions can be made, pending approval from the Cabinet, in the following sectors: agriculture, industry, health, education, tourism, development and exploitation of natural resources, energy and mining, consulting, cultural, sport and entertainment services, and distribution services. Necessary investment approvals may be required from the Ministry of Health, Qatar Tourism Authority, Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning, Ministry of Economy and Commerce, Supreme Education Council, and Ministry of Environment.

Non-Qatari investors are, for the most part, prohibited from investing in the financial services and real estate sectors. However, many foreign financial services firms are active in Qatar through the onshore business platform offered by the Qatar Financial Center (QFC), which permits 100% foreign ownership.

The government is currently in the process of approving reforms to the current foreign capital investment legal framework. These new reforms promise to allow 100 percent foreign capital investment in all sectors provided that the foreign investor hires a Qatari service provider, in order to increase foreign direct investments (FDI). The Ministry of Economy and Commerce is also drafting a Public Private Partnership law, to ease direct foreign investment in national procurement for infrastructure development. There are other FDI incentives in the country including QFC and the Qatar Science and Technology Park, which both allow 100 percent foreign ownership. Moreover, the Cabinet approved a draft law to establish free economic zones, titled Manateq, which will also allow 100 percent foreign ownership in multiple industrial sectors, in an effort to diversify economic revenue (see below).

Other Investment Policy Reviews

Qatar underwent World Trade Organization (WTO) policy reviews in [April 2014](#).

Business Facilitation

In 2016, the Ministry of Economy and Commerce took steps to streamline the commercial registration process and other business processes, by increasing the number of online services and through the establishment of a “one stop shop” in the ministry for new companies, including foreign companies looking to establish in Qatar. The World Bank’s “Doing Business Report” estimates that registering a small-size Limited Liability Company in Qatar takes about eight days, an improvement made possible by the one stop shop. For detailed information on business registration procedures, visit the [World Bank](#).

Qatar Development Bank provides services to local small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), including incubation and financing of startups. SMEs need to be locally established i.e., a foreign SME would have to partner with a local SME to receive these support services. The new Ministry of Finance Procurement law (Law 24/2015) allows SMEs to request exemption from providing performance bonds and payment guarantees.

Outward Investment

Qatar does not restrict domestic investors from investing abroad. According to latest data from the Ministry of Decampment, Planning and Statistics, Qatar’s outward FDI stock has increased over the years and reach \$28.3 billion in 2015. The industries that accounted for most Qatar outward FDI were finance and insurance, transportation, storage, information and communication, and wholesale and retail industries.

Bilateral Investment Agreements and Taxation Treaties

Qatar has [53 bilateral international investment agreements](#) according to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Twenty-Two have been ratified including

those signed with Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, China, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Egypt, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Republic of Korea, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Switzerland and Turkey. The most recent bilateral investment agreement, signed in November 2016, was with Argentina.

In addition to formal treaties, Qatar has entered into technical investment and trade agreements with over 39 countries. While Qatar has not entered into a bilateral investment or trade treaty with the United States yet, it signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) in April 2004. Qatar additionally launched an Economic and Investment Dialogue with the United States in October 2015, which calls for annual high-level talks on matters related to economic cooperation. The Second Annual Economic and Investment Dialogue was held in Doha in December of 2016, in which senior officials from both governments committed to advance discussions on a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and other objectives.

Qatar does not have a double taxation treaty with the United States. In January 2015, however, Qatar became the first Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country to sign a Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) intergovernmental agreement with the United States. In total, Qatar has over 46 Agreements for the Avoidance of Double Taxation, including, most recently, with Turkey (December 2016) and Nigeria (Feb 2016).

As part of GCC-wide fiscal reform efforts, Qatar recently signed a GCC VAT Framework Agreement, and it plans to roll out 5 percent VATs starting January 2018 on selective good and services – likely excluding basic foods, and services such as education and health. Moreover, Qatar and other GCC countries will enforce, in mid-2017, a selective tax on products considered harmful to human health and the environment, including tobacco, soft drinks and energy drinks, in addition to luxury goods produced domestically or imported.

Legal Regime

The World Trade Organization recognizes Qatar's legal framework as conducive to private investment and entrepreneurship and enabling of the development of an independent judiciary system. Qatar is an advocate of the free market economy and has taken measures to protect competition and ensure a free and efficient economy.

Law 19/2006 for the Protection of Competition and Prevention of Monopolistic Practice mandates the formation of the Competition Protection and Antimonopoly Committee which is in charge of receiving complaints about anti-competition violations. The committee's values include impartiality, confidentiality, transparency, and competence, which it must carry in its judgments, according to the legislation. This law, however, exempts state institutions and government-owned companies. There are also regulatory authorities for most sectors in the economy that are mandated to monitor economic activity and ensure fair practices.

According to the World Bank's Global Indicators of Regulatory Governance, Qatar does not have a transparent system of rulemaking, as ministries and regulatory agencies do not share

regulatory plans or publish draft laws for public consideration. Draft bills are not made public and an official public consultation process does not exist in Qatar. Following Cabinet meetings, plans of potential draft legislation are made public, but few details are provided. Nonetheless, the Shura Council (which statutorily is comprised of two-thirds elected officials and one-third appointees from the Emir, but in practice are all appointees of the Emir) consults and reviews legislation. The Cabinet passes draft laws to the Shura Council for consultation, comments, and recommendations. The Shura Council votes and members must reach a consensus to pass a draft legislation, which is then returned to the Cabinet for further review and approval. Final approval is granted by the Emir. Laws and regulations are developed and drafted by concerned ministries and entities.

The text of all legislation is published online and in local newspapers upon approval by the Emir. All Qatari Laws (except for those issued by the Qatar Financial Centre) are issued in Arabic and eventually translated into English. Qatar-based legal firms provide translations of Qatari legislation to their clients. Qatar's official legal portal is [Al Meezan](#) and QFC regulations are listed [on QFCRA](#).

Each approved law explicitly mandates one or more government entities with the responsibility to carry out and enforce legislation. These entities are clearly defined in the text of law. In some cases, the law also sets up regulatory and oversight committees made of representatives of concerned government entities to safeguard enforcement.

The main commercial regulator is the Ministry of Economy and Commerce. Commercial Companies' Law 11/2015 necessitates that public shareholding companies submit financial statements, in compliance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and International Accounting Standards (IAS), to the Ministry of Economy and Commerce. Publicly listed companies should also publish financial statements 15 days before its Annual General Meeting, in two local newspapers (in Arabic and English) and on the company's website. All companies are required to keep accounting records (including Private Shareholding Companies, Limited Liability Companies, and Limited Partnership Companies), prepared according to standards promulgated by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB).

The Qatar Central Bank is the main financial regulator that oversees all financial institutions in Qatar, as set in Law 13/2012. This law aims to promote financial stability and enhance regulation coordination through the Financial Stability and Risk Committee, which is headed by the Central Bank Governor. The Qatar Central Bank also oversees financial markets within the Qatar Financial Center.

International Regulatory Considerations

Qatar is part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a political and economic regional union. One of the GCC's main objectives is to formulate common regulations in finance, trade, customs, and tourism. A common GCC regulation, such as the upcoming shared excise taxes of 2017 on products harmful to health, is handled separately by each government, as each has sovereign leverage in how to implement common regulations domestically. Laws based on GCC

regulation have to go through the legislative process and are reviewed by the Cabinet and the Shura Council.

Legal System and Judicial Independence

Qatar's legal system is based on a combination of civil and Sharia law. The constitution takes precedence over all laws, followed by legislation and decrees, and finally ministerial resolutions. While the constitution mandates an independent judiciary system, all judges are appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council, under Law 10/2003. The Supreme Judicial Council oversees Qatari courts.

Qatari courts determine civil and commercial disputes in accordance with legislation. International agreements have the same status as Qatari laws; the Constitution ensures that international pacts, treaties and agreements, to which Qatar is party, are respected and taken into account. Qatar does not currently have a specialized commercial court; domestic commercial disputes are generally settled at the Civil Court and the civil division within the Court of Appeal.

Companies registered with the Ministry of Economy and Commerce are subject to Qatari courts and laws, mainly the Commercial Companies' Law 11/2015, while companies set up through the Qatar Financial Center (QFC) are regulated by commercial laws based on English Common Law and the courts of the Qatar Financial Center Regulatory Authority, as established in Law 7/2005. The QFC legal regime is separate from Qatari legal system – with the exception of criminal law – and it is only applicable to companies licensed by the QFC.

Laws and Regulations on Foreign Direct Investment

Investment Law 13/2000 is the primary legislation governing foreign investment, and generally limits foreign ownership to 49 percent of the capital for most business activities, with a Qatari partner(s) holding at least 51 percent. However, the law allows, upon obtaining special government approval, up to 100 percent ownership by foreign investors in certain sectors, including: agriculture, industry, health, education, tourism, development and exploitation of natural resources, energy, or mining. Qatar amended the law in 2004 to allow foreign investment in the banking and insurance sectors upon obtaining approval of the Cabinet. Moreover, foreign financial services firms are allowed 100 percent ownership if they register at the Qatar Financial Center (QFC).

When approving majority foreign ownership in a project, the law states that the project in question should be in line with the country's national development plans. It adds that preference should be given to projects that use raw materials available in the local market, manufacture products for export, produce a new product or use advanced technology, facilitate the transfer of technology and know-how to Qataris, and/or promote the development of Qatari human resources.

In an effort to attract more foreign direct investment, the government is currently reviewing a draft law that introduces amendments to the existing foreign capital investment law and

allows 100 percent foreign capital investment in all sectors provided that the foreign investor hires a Qatari service provider.

Commercial Companies Law 11/2015, Qatar's main and updated commercial law, simplifies company registration and sets up the "one stop shop" at the Ministry to facilitate company licensing. The law lowers requirements for setting up a business and reduces wait times for commercial registration and other related processes.

The procurement law of November 2015 (Law 24/2015), is designed to promote a fair, transparent, simple and expeditious tendering process. It abolishes the Central Tendering Committee and establishes a Procurement Department within the Ministry of Finance which will have oversight responsibility over the majority of government tenders. The new department has also created an [online portal](#) which consolidates all government tenders and provides relevant information to interested bidders, including facilitating the process for foreign investors.

A Public Finance Law (Law 2/2015) was enacted in 2015 to optimize the use of public funds and institute international best practices and standards in Qatar's financial regulatory framework. The legislation is trying to help Qatar develop a long-term investment strategy by setting up a macroeconomic unit within the Ministry of Finance to monitor overall economic management and planning, including a public investment program established to identify the State's major projects and ways in which to prioritize them. The law also amended Qatar's fiscal year, such that it ends December 31, rather than March 31.

Competition and Anti-Trust Laws

Certain sectors are not open for domestic or foreign competition, including public transportation, electricity and water, steel, cement, and fuel distribution and marketing. In these sectors, a single semi-public company has complete or predominant control.

Qatar has begun to liberalize its telecommunications sector to permit outside private investment, starting with the issuance in December 2007 of a second mobile license to a consortium including Vodafone and the Qatar Foundation. The same consortium was awarded the country's second fixed-line license in September 2008. There is a minimum requirement of QR 200,000 in initial capital for any telecommunication business, which creates a barrier to entry for small entrepreneurs.

International law firms with 15 years of continuous experience in their countries of origin are allowed to set up operations in Qatar, but the license will be granted only if authorities in Qatar deem that the field in which the applying firm specializes is of use to Qatar. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Justice, the Cabinet may reduce the number of required years' experience or fully waive the condition. Cabinet Decision Number 57/2010 states that the Doha office of an international law firm is allowed to practice in Qatar only if their main office in the country of origin remains open for business. In April 2015, the QFC stopped issuing

new licenses to foreign law firms in response to complaints leveled by local Qatari firms, alleging unfair competition.

Expropriation and Compensation

Under existing legislation (Law 13/1988 and its subsequent amendments governing expropriation of real property), the government may divest an owner of title to private property and redistribute it for public use only if the owner receives fair compensation in return. Expropriation has been undertaken more frequently in recent years due to the increased number of major infrastructure projects undertaken in preparation for the hosting of the FIFA World Cup in 2022. Since 2010, the Official Gazette of the State of Qatar has reported 118 decisions to expropriate private property and distribute it for public use. However, such expropriation is unlikely to occur in any of the investment zones where non-Qataris may purchase or obtain a right of property, although the law does not restrict the power to expropriate in these areas.

Dispute Settlement

ICSID Convention and New York Convention

Qatar has been party to the 1958 New York Convention since 2011, and a member of the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) since 2002. Qatar enforces foreign arbitral decisions concluded in states that are party to the New York Convention.

Investor-State Dispute Settlement

If investment disputes occur, Qatar accepts binding international arbitration. However, Qatari courts will not enforce judgments or awards from other courts in disputes emanating from investment agreements made under the jurisdiction of other nations.

International Commercial Arbitration and Foreign Courts

The Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) civil and commercial courts, and the regulatory tribunal, make up its Judiciary and the legal infrastructure. In addition, the court also features an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) center. Although primarily concerned with hearing commercial matters arising from within the QFC itself, the QFC intends to expand the courts' jurisdiction to enable it to accept other disputes at its discretion. The Qatar International Court and Dispute Resolution Center adjudicates disputes of firms associated with the QFC based on the British common law system.

In March 2017, Qatar passed an arbitration law (Law 2/2017) based on the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) that gives Qatar International Court and Dispute Resolution Centre the jurisdiction to oversee arbitration cases in the state of Qatar in line with recent local and international developments. The purpose of this new law is to simulate and strengthen the investment and business environment in Qatar.

There is no set duration for dispute resolution and the time to obtain a resolution depends on the case. The [Qatar International Court and Dispute Resolution Centre](#) publishes past judgments.

In order to protect their interests, U.S. firms are advised to consult with a Qatari or foreign-based law firm when executing contracts with local parties.

Bankruptcy Regulations

In Qatar, there are two concurrent bankruptcy regimes. The first is the local regime, the provisions of which are set out in Commercial Law 27/2006. However, the bankruptcy law is largely untested. The bankruptcy of a Qatari citizen or a Qatari-owned company is rarely announced and the government sometimes plays the role of guarantor to keep a bankrupt business running and to safeguard creditors' rights.

The second bankruptcy regime is found in the QFC Insolvency Regulations of 2005 and applies to corporate bodies and branches registered in the QFC. There are currently two firms in the U.K. offering full dissolution bankruptcy services to QFC-registered companies.

Industrial Policies

Investment Incentives

Qatar's ambitious infrastructure development plans in the lead up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup and in implementation of the 2030 National Vision provide significant opportunities for foreign investment in various sectors associated with this boom. In an effort to incentivize increased foreign capital investment, the Ministry of Economy and Commerce drafted a law to allow 100 percent foreign owned investment in all sectors, with the condition that the investor has a Qatari service provider. Currently, full foreign ownership is permitted in certain priority sectors, including information technology, sports and leisure services, agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare, education, and tourism – following the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers.

Additionally, the government offers a variety of incentives to foreign investors, which may include tax exemptions, property grants, energy subsidies, and low-cost financing. The following is a list of potential incentives offered to foreign investors, which are similar to the incentives offered to Qatari investors.

- Subsidized or nominal rates for gas and electricity.
- No customs duties on imports of machinery, equipment and spare parts.
- No quantitative quotas on imports.
- No export duties or taxes on corporate profits for pre-determined periods.
- Exemption from corporate tax for 10 years, and no income taxes
- Low cost financing through Qatar Development Bank (QDB)
- Liberal immigration and employment rules to aid the import of labor.

The Ministry of Energy and Industry determines the amount of foreign equity and the extent of incentives for industrial projects. Industrial projects can be established only in designated industrial zones.

Foreign Trade Zones/Free Ports/Trade Facilitation

Qatar has several economic free zone and business facilitation options:

Qatar Science and Technology Park

As part of the plans to achieve the National Vision 2030 and develop a knowledge-based economy, the government created the Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP), designed, in part, to be a hub for foreign technology companies to undertake research and development and in so doing transfer of expertise and technology to inform and improve Qatari human resources. The hub offers grants and incubators to foreign and local innovators. Companies operating at the QSTP can import goods and services duty free. Foreign entities wishing to invest in the QSTP apply for a license with the Park's managing board. No other licensing rules prevalent in the country will apply to the above businesses, although individuals, contracts and agreements are subject to the criminal and civil laws of the state. Licensed foreign companies can enjoy 100 percent ownership and full capital and income repatriation benefits. Microsoft, ExxonMobil, GE, Shell, Tata, Total, and ConocoPhillips are among QSTP member companies.

Businesses in the QSTP are exempt from all taxes, including income tax. The property of such a business is not to be seized under any circumstance, but capital and other cash can be seized on the orders of a local court. Equipment, machinery, or any other goods being imported for use by an entity doing business in QSTP are exempt from customs duty, and goods produced in the Park are not subject to export tax.

Goods being sold within Qatar, but outside the QSTP, are subject to the normal customs duty applicable to imported products. Flammable and radioactive materials, drugs, weapons, and explosives are banned from import by any of the licensed entities, unless the licensed entity obtains the necessary permit from the competent governmental authority and a written approval from the QSTP Board.

Manateq (Free Economic Zones)

In addition to the QSTP, Qatar established Manateq (formerly known as the Economic Zones Company), affiliated with the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, to manage and develop economic zones. Manateq has started work on three economic zones in and around Doha, and anticipates the first phase of the first zone to be operational by 2017. Priority at the zones will be given to Qatari SMEs and nationals. A recent draft law was approved by the Country's Cabinet in February 2016 allowing foreign companies 100 percent ownership of businesses in the zones. The law still requires Emiri approval.

Qatar Financial Center

QFC is an onshore business platform that allows international financial institutions, and companies providing professional services that would serve the World Cup 2022, to establish an office in Qatar with 100 percent foreign ownership. QFC permits 100% repatriation of profits, though locally sourced profits are subject to 10% corporate tax. The QFC has its own independent regulatory regime based on English common law. The QFC Regulatory Authority

(QFCRA) acts as the regulator for financial services firms operating in the QFC. The QFC Regulatory Tribunal and Qatar International Court (QIC) hear and adjudicate cases, though these bodies' judgments are only of any value if they are, as a matter of practice, enforced by the courts of the State of Qatar against persons and assets in Qatar.

Performance and Data Localization Requirements

Performance requirements for foreign investment in Qatar do not exist. Disclosure of financial and employment data is required, but proprietary information is not. Qatar also does not follow a "forced localization" policy in which foreign investors must use domestic content.

When competing for government contracts, preferential treatment is given to suppliers that use local content in bids and goods with Qatari content given a 10 percent price preference, while goods from other GCC countries receive a 5 percent price preference. As a rule, participation in government tenders with a value of QR 5,000,000 or less (equivalent to \$1,373,249) are confined to local contractors, suppliers and merchants registered by the Qatar Chamber of Commerce, and tenders with a value of more than this amount do not require any local commercial registration to participate, but in practice certain exceptions exist.

There are no known formalized requirements for foreign IT providers to turn over source code or provide access to surveillance. Information and communications technology (ICT) is regulated by Qatar's Communications Regulatory Authority, established as an independent body by Emiri Decree No. 42/2014, under the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Protection of Property Rights

Real Property

The State of Qatar has a collection of laws, ministerial decrees and resolutions that make up the country's jurisprudence on property rights and ownership. As a general rule, only Qatari and 100 percent Qatari-owned companies can have absolute ownership of land and estates as set forth in Law 5/1963. Nonetheless, with booming infrastructure development, the state has eased foreign property ownership restrictions in order to facilitate investment in the real estate sector while strengthening regulation. Different laws apply to foreign entities and Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) entities.

Under current legislation (Law 17/2004), foreign individuals may fully own land, buildings and construction in the following designated real estate projects: Pearl-Qatar, West Bay Lagoon, and Al Khor Resort Project, while GCC nationals may own real estate in the following projects: Lusail, Fox Hills, and Al Khuraj. Foreign individuals are also granted long-term leasehold rights in 18 specified investment areas and the right to occupy or lease the property for a renewable period of up to 99 years. As part of a drive to attract foreign investment, real estate visas can now be granted to buyers, permitting foreign owners to reside in the country without work sponsorship.

Property ownership rights of non-Qatari public companies are more restricted. Generally, foreign companies are not permitted to invest or trade in real estate, but as per Law 6/2014,

non-Qatari companies with at least 10 years of experience and headquarters in Qatar may carry out real estate development activities within selected locations. Public companies with non-Qatari shareholders may also be able to own or lease real estate for their business operations, but in certain areas and for a limited period.

Property leasehold rights are enforced. Qatar's Rent Law 4/2008 protects the lessee and regulates the lessor. These are a number of enforceable rights granted to the lessee including protection from hikes in rent during the lease period, and enforcement of the terms of the lease contract should the lessor transfers ownership to a new owner. A Leasing Dispute Settlement Committee has been established to enforce these regulations. The committee hears and issues binding decisions with respect to disputes between a lessor and lessee, and all lessors are required by law to register their lease agreements with this committee.

The Ministry of Municipality and Environment oversees the preparation of all records related to the selling, leasing, waiver and bequeathing of real estate. Some selected records and documents must bear the approval of the Real Estate and Residences Registration Office to be considered valid. A reliable electronic database exists for checking for encumbrances, including liens, mortgages, and restrictions. In addition, all titles and deed records are kept in a fully digital computerized format.

Qatar is ranked 26th globally in 2017 for ease of registering property by the World Bank's [Doing Business Report](#).

Intellectual Property Rights

Qatar's intellectual property legal regime, albeit still developing in capacity, is strong and wide-ranging in terms of the number of laws protecting different types of intellectual property rights. Although Qatar has signed many international intellectual property treaties, within Qatar, local laws take precedence over regional and international laws, therefore, owners of trademarks, copyrights and patents depend mainly on Qatari laws and regulations for protection. These consist of the Trademark and Copyright law introduced in 2002, the Protection of Trade Secrets and Protection of Layout Design law passed in 2005, and a Patent Law introduced in 2006. These laws grant foreign applicants the same rights as Qataris, provided that they are nationals of a state that grants Qatar reciprocal treatment.

Intellectual property owners can register at the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, which has been mandated (by Law 20/2014) to enforce IP laws and regulations. Within the ministry, an Intellectual Property (IP) Protection department has been set up with offices focusing on Trademarks, Copyrights, Neighboring Rights, Patents, Industrial Property and Innovations. The following are the periods of validity for the different types of registered intellectual property:

- *Patents*: valid for 20 years.
 - With regards to pharmaceutical products, the Ministry of Health requires registration of all products imported into the country and will not register unauthenticated copies of products patented in other countries. However, Qatar

will recognize products with GCC regional patent. To obtain patent protection in the GCC, the pharmaceutical company must apply for a GCC patent at the GCC Patent Office. Once granted, protection would extend to all the GCC countries.

- *Copyrights*: protected for 50 years after an owner's death.
 - As per Qatari law, failure to register at the Ministry of Economy and Commerce will not affect the protection of the copyright. While the law does not protect unpublished works and does not criminalize end-user piracy, Qatar is party to the Berne and Paris Conventions and abides by their mandates concerning unpublished works. The Copyright Office works with law enforcement authorities to prosecute resellers of unlicensed video and software.
- *Trademarks*: valid for 10 years but can be renewed indefinitely, while trademarks unused for five consecutive years are subject to cancellation.
 - As part of the GCC Customs Union – inaugurated in 2015 – the GCC approved a common trademark law and Qatar is taking steps to enact it.

The law on International Property Boarder Protection (Law 17/2011) forbids the entrance of any products that infringe any intellectual property rights protected in Qatar and obliges the General Customs Authority to take measures to prevent the entrance of infringing products into the country. The law also permits IP right holders to stop the release of imported products that constitute infringement of their rights, given sufficient evidence. The General Directorate of Customs and the Consumer Protection and IP Departments at the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, conduct surveys, raid shops and seize and destroy counterfeit products. In 2016, the Ministry conducted raids and destroyed thousands of counterfeit electrical appliances, auto spare parts, and CDs.

In February 2017, the General Customs Authority launched an electronic system to detect counterfeit goods coming into the country. The system is accredited by the World Customs Organization and has been introduced due to an increase in imports of counterfeit goods.

The existing Penal Code stipulates hefty fines on those dealing in counterfeit products and imprisonment for offenders convicted of counterfeiting, imitating, fraudulently affixing, selling products, offering services of a registered trademark, or other intellectual property violations. However, the level of awareness about intellectual property rights and enforcements is low among the general public but the IP Department in the Ministry of Economy and Commerce has taken the lead in promoting awareness through workshops and seminars.

In March 2017, the Cabinet approved a draft law on the protection of industrial designs in an attempt to modernize existing laws on trademarks, commercial data, trade names, geographical indications, and industrial designs and models.

Qatar is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and is a signatory to the following WIPO treaties:

- WIPO Convention, since September 1976

- Nairobi Treaty (Olympic Symbol), since July 1983
- Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement, since January 1996
- Paris Convention (Industrial Property), since July 2000
- Berne Convention (Literary and Artistic Works), since July 2000
- WCT (WIPO Copyright Treaty), since October 2005
- WPPT (WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty), since October 2005
- Budapest Treaty on the International Recognition of the Deposit of Microorganisms for the Purposes of Patent Procedure, since March, 2014

For additional information about national laws and points of contact at local IP offices, please see WIPO's [country profiles](#).

Financial Sector

Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment

Foreign portfolio investment has been permitted since 2005. There is no restriction on the flow of capital in Qatar. The Qatar Central Bank (QCB) adheres to conservative policies aimed at maintaining steady economic growth and a stable banking sector. Loans are allocated on market terms, and foreign companies are essentially treated the same as local companies.

Currently, foreign ownership is limited to 49 percent of Qatari companies listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange, but there are plans to allow foreign investors to obtain more than 49 percent, subject to approval from the Cabinet. Legislation is in the final stages of the approval process to encourage further foreign capital investment, and when passed will allow 100 percent foreign project capital investment in all sectors provided the foreign investor hires a Qatari services provider. Foreign portfolio investment in national oil and gas companies or companies with the right of exploration of national resources cannot exceed 49 percent.

Almost all import transactions are controlled by standard letters of credit processed by local banks and their correspondent banks in the exporting countries. Credit facilities are provided to local and foreign investors within the framework of standard international banking practices. Foreign investors are usually required to have a guarantee from their local sponsor/local equity partner. However, in accordance with QCB guidelines, banks operating in Qatar give priority to Qataris and to public development projects in their financing operations. Additionally, single customers may not be extended credit facilities by a bank exceeding 20 percent of the bank's capital and reserves. QCB does not allow cross-sharing arrangements among banks. QCB requires banks to maintain a maximum credit ratio of 90 percent.

Qatar's economic freedom score is 73.1, and Qatar ranks 29th in the 2016 Index of Economic Freedom. Its score has increased by 2.4 point since last year, according to the Heritage Foundation. Qatar is ranked second out of 15 countries in the Middle East/North Africa region, and its overall score is above the world average.

Money and Banking System

There are 18 licensed banks in Qatar, 11 of which are Qatari institutions including four Islamic banks and seven commercial banks, and seven are foreign institutions. Qatar also has 20 exchange houses, three investment companies and three commercial finance companies. In addition, the government-owned and financed Qatar Development Bank acts as a lender and financier of small and medium enterprises to encourage entrepreneurship and develop the private sector within Qatar.

Total banking assets reached \$313.4 billion in the first quarter of 2016, an increase from total assets at the end of 2015. Qatar National Bank (QNB), 50 percent state-owned via the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), is the largest bank in the country, controlling around half of all local assets, and one of the largest lenders in the region with more than \$180 billion in total assets. Between the years 2010 and 2014, Qatar's banking sector was the fastest growing in the region. The IMF estimated in 2015, that 1.6 percent of Qatar's bank loans were nonperforming.

Qatar's banking sector remains strong despite tightening liquidity amid declining public-sector deposits due to falling hydrocarbon sector revenues. The Qatar Central Bank, in its role as the sole financial regulator, continues to introduce incentives for local banks to ensure a strong financial sector that is resilient during economic volatility. Qatari regulations for local and foreign banks are the same. Licenses for new financial institutions are available through application to the Qatar Central Bank and financial institutions may also alternatively set up with the Qatar Financial Center and maintain full foreign ownership.

- [Qatar Central Bank License requirements](#)
- [Qatar Financial Center License application](#)

Foreign Exchange and Remittances

Foreign Exchange

Due to minimal demand for the Qatari riyal outside Qatar and the national economy's dependence on oil and gas revenues, which are priced in dollars, the government has pegged the riyal to the U.S. dollar. The official peg is QR 1.00 per \$0.27 or \$1.00 per QR 3.64, as set by the government in June 1980 and reaffirmed by an Emiri decree issued July 9, 2001.

There are no restrictions on foreign exchange in Qatar, and travelers can move currencies in and out without restriction as currency declaration is not required. Residents of Qatar may also move cash easily and in any form.

Remittance Policies

Qatar neither delays remittance of foreign investment returns nor restricts transfer of funds associated with an investment, such as return on dividends, return of capital, interest and principal payments on private foreign debt, lease payments, royalties, management fees, amounts generated from sale or liquidation, amounts garnered from settlements and disputes, and compensation from expropriation to financial institutions outside Qatar.

Qatar has become an increasingly important banking and financial services center in the Gulf region. Despite the growth of the banking sector and increasing options for financial services,

Qatar still has a largely cash economy. The expansion of the financial and trade sectors, the large number of expatriate laborers who send remittances to their home countries, the liberalization and growth in the real estate sector, uneven corporate oversight, and the potential exploitation of unregulated currency exchanges pose money laundering and terrorism financing vulnerabilities in Qatar.

To detect money laundering/terrorist financing and other financial offences, the Government of Qatar issued an Anti-Money Laundering/Counter-Terrorism Finance Law (AML/CFT) in 2010, which introduced a suspicious transaction reporting regime and requirements for consumer due diligence and record-keeping. The law addressed many of the deficiencies identified by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and makes money laundering and terrorist financing punishable offenses in line with FATF international standards. Qatar is a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), a FATF-style regional body.

In accordance with the Qatar Central Bank instructions on AML/CFT, the financial institutions must apply due diligence prior to establishing business relationships. Certain originator information should be secured where a wire transfer exceeds QR 4,000 (\$1,098). Similarly, due diligence should be made when a customer is carrying out occasional transactions in a single or several linked operations of an amount exceeding QR 55,000 (\$15,109) or equivalent in foreign currencies per the provisions of Article 23 of Law 4/2010.

Sovereign Wealth Funds

The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, was established by Emiri Decree 22/2005. QIA is overseen by the Supreme Council for Economic Affairs and Investment, chaired by the Emir. QIA does not disclose its assets, but independent analysts estimate QIA's holdings at around \$300 billion. QIA pursues direct investments and favors luxury brands, prime real estate, and banks. This is in addition to real estate developments led by the fund's subsidiary, Qatari Diar, and investments in agriculture led by another subsidiary, Hassad Food. In March 2017, media reported that QIA was transferring ownership of its domestic portfolio which accounts for \$100 billion (including Ooredoo and Qatar Airways) to the Ministry of Finance.

In September 2015, QIA opened an office in New York City to facilitate over \$45 billion committed to investments in the U.S. over the course of five years. In March 2017, QIA announced it intended to open an office in San Francisco, CA. QIA's real estate subsidiary Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company, has operated an office in Washington, D.C. since 2014. At the second U.S.-Qatar Economic and Investment Dialogue, QIA announced it would invest at least \$10 billion in U.S. infrastructure revitalization.

QIA was one of the early supporters of the Santiago Principles and among the few members which drafted the initial and final versions of the Santiago principles. Qatar has remained a proactive supporter of its implementation. QIA was also one of the founding members of the IMF-hosted International Working Group of Sovereign Wealth Funds.

Similarly, QIA fully supported the establishment of the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds (IFSWF) and helped create the Forum's constitution. In November 2014, QIA hosted IFSWF 6th annual meeting, which resulted in the Doha Agreement, adopting a three-year strategic plan to ensure free flow of long-term global capital and strong real returns; with great emphasis on transparency.

State-Owned Enterprises

The State Audit Bureau oversees state-owned enterprises (SOEs), several of which operate as monopolies or with exclusive rights in most economic sectors. Despite the dominant role of SOEs in Qatar's economy, the government has affirmed support for Qatar's local private sector and encourages small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development as part of its 2030 National Vision. The Qatari private sector is favored in bids for local contracts and generally receives favorable terms for financing at local banks. The following are Qatar's major state-owned enterprises:

Energy:

- Qatar Petroleum (QP), its subsidiaries, and partners operate all oil and gas activities in the country. QP is wholly owned by the government and oversees production from the North Gas Field in addition to onshore and offshore oil. QP owns a network of subsidiaries, with the most prominent being Qatargas and RasGas, which are expected to complete a merger into the world's largest LNG company by the end of 2017
- Kahramaa (Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation) operates all water and electricity activities and is 90 percent owned by Qatari shareholders. The government owns 43 percent of the capital, but has indicated that it may privatize segments of the water and electricity sectors. A first step in this direction occurred when the Ras Laffan Power Company, which is 55 percent owned by a U.S. company, was established in 2001.

Transportation:

- Qatar Airways is the country's designated National Carrier and is wholly owned by the state. Airline executives state the government plans to take the company public within the next decade.

Services:

- Q-Post (Qatar General Postal Corporation) is the state-owned postal company. Several other delivery companies are allowed to compete in the courier market: Aramex, DHL Express, and FedEx Express.
- Ooredoo was introduced by Qatar Telecom in 2013 to replace Qtel, the former operating name. Ooredoo is a dominant player in the Qatari telecoms market and is 76 percent owned by QIA and other Qatari investors. Its revenues from outside Qatar currently constitute more than 75 percent of its total revenue. In 2007, the mobile products and services sector was opened to competition. In 2008, the fixed line telecoms market was also liberalized. Vodafone was selected to compete in both mobile and fixed line against Ooredoo, and is 96 percent-owned by Qatari shareholders. Both companies are listed

on the Qatar Stock Exchange. Prior to 2007, both the mobile and fixed line telecoms markets in Qatar were dominated by Ooredoo.

Qatar SOEs may adhere to their own corporate governance codes and are not required to follow the OECD Guidelines on Corporate Governance. Some SOEs publish online corporate governance reports to encourage transparency, but there is no general framework for corporate governance across all Qatari SOEs. When an SOE is involved in an investment dispute, the case is reviewed by the appropriate sector regulator. In 2010, for example, the Supreme Council for Information and Communications Technology ruled against SOE Q-Tel (now Ooredoo) when Vodaphone Qatar lodged a complaint against the former for misleading advertisement.

Privatization Program

There is no ongoing official privatization program for major SOEs. Qatar Airline executives state the government plans to take the company public within the next decade.

Responsible Business Conduct

There is a general awareness of responsible business conduct principles. The Ministry of Economy and Commerce is planning to introduce a corporate social responsibility index for companies listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange in order to measure their “social commitment.” Many companies in Qatar already publicize their policies regarding corporate social responsibility.

The government is likely to continue emphasizing sustainable business practices in its upcoming Qatar Development Strategy 2017 – 2022 (to be released in the first half of 2017), as sustainability is an important goal in Qatar National Vision 2030.

Law 30/2002 is the main legislation on protecting the environment. It prohibits the use of polluting equipment, machineries, or vehicles, and restricts the dumping and treatment of liquid, solid wastes to certain designated areas. The law also limits emissions of harmful vapors, gases, and smoke for those operating in energy generating industry. This applies to all companies working in exploration and production of crude oil.

The Ministry of Economy and Commerce has a dedicated department for Consumer Protection and Combating Commercial Fraud, and it has intensified its efforts in the past few years by increasing monitoring of records and inspection of stores and factories that sell or manufacture counterfeit goods. The Ministry convicts violators when business misconduct is detected or reported, and announces these violations publicly.

The Government of Qatar considers money laundering and terrorist financing offences in line with international standards, and it has introduced a reporting regime for suspicious transaction and requirements for consumer due diligence and record-keeping.

As an economy dependent on extractive industries, Qatar participates in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and has hosted the fourth global EITI conference in 2009. Nonetheless, the Qatari government has not improved transparency regarding its management of the petroleum industry, as no regulatory body oversees resources extraction or revenue management. Moreover, Qatar has no freedom of information law.

With regards to labor and human rights, Qatari law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor and reserves two percent of jobs in government agencies and public institutions for persons with disabilities. The law also prohibits employment of children under 16 years old. The Ministry of Administrative Development Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, and the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) conducts training sessions for migrant laborers to educate them on their rights in the country. However, full compliance has not been achieved as enforcement efforts are insufficient. International media and human rights organizations continue to allege numerous abuses against foreign workers, including forced or compulsory labor, withheld wages, unsafe working conditions, and poor living accommodations.

Some NGOs in Qatar focus on labor rights and often work in conjunction with the government. Researchers from other NGOs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch continued to visit and report on the country with limited interference from authorities. International labor NGOs were able to send researchers into the country under the sponsorship of academic institutions and quasi-governmental organizations such as the NHRC.

Corruption

Corruption in Qatar does not generally affect business although the power of personal connections plays a major role in business culture. Qatar is one of the least corrupt countries in the Middle East and North Africa, according to Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index. Qatar was ranked 31 of 176 globally with a score of 61 out of 100.

Qatari law imposes criminal penalties to combat corruption by public official, and the government practices these laws. In the past three years, corruption and misuse of public money has been a focus of the executive office. In 2015, the Emir issued a new decree (Emiri Decree 6/2015) restructuring the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA). The Authority has juridical responsibility and its own budget and is directly affiliated with the Emir's office. The Chairman has the authority to report directly to the Emir to combat any forms of corruption. The objectives of the Authority are to help prevent official corruption and ensure that the various ministries, state agencies and their arms as well as their officials operate with transparency. The authority is charged with investigating alleged crimes against public property or finances perpetrated by public officials.

Additional, in November 2015, the Emir issued a law increasing penalties for corrupt officials, and in 2016 issued another legislation giving the State Audit Bureau more financial authority and independence, allowing it to publish parts of its findings, provided that confidential information is removed, something it was not previously empowered to do before.

Those convicted of embezzlement and damage to the public treasury are subject to terms of imprisonment of no less than five and up to ten years. The penalty is extended to a minimum term of seven and a maximum term of fifteen years if the perpetrator is a public official in charge of collecting taxes or exercising fiduciary responsibilities over public funds. Investigations into allegations of corruption are handled by the Qatar State Security Bureau and Public Prosecution. Final judgments are made by the Criminal Court.

Bribery is also a crime in Qatar and the law imposes penalties on public officials convicted of taking action in return for monetary or personal gain, or for other parties who take actions to influence or attempt to influence a public official through monetary or personal gains. The current Penal Code (Law 11/2004) governs corruption law and stipulates that individuals convicted of bribery may receive up to ten years imprisonment and a fine equal to the amount of the bribe but not less than \$1,374.

By Emiri Decree No. 17/2007, Qatar ratified the UN Convention for Combating Corruption, and Emiri Decree No. 84/2007 established a National Committee for Integrity and Transparency. The permanent committee is headed by the chairman of the State Audit Bureau and is tasked with combating corruption in Qatar and reports directly to him.

Qatar is not a party to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials. Qatar opened the Anti-Corruption and Rule of Law Center on November 25, 2012 in Doha in partnership with the United Nations.

U.S. investors and Qatari nationals, if they are agents of U.S. firms, are subject to the provisions of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

Political and Security Environment

Qatar is a politically stable country with low crime rates. There are no political parties or labor unions, or any known organized domestic political opposition. The U.S. government believes the potential exists for acts of transnational terrorism to occur in Qatar. Potential investors and U.S. citizens are encouraged to stay in close contact with the State Department and U.S. Embassy in Doha for up-to-date threat information.

Labor Policies and Practices

According to the World Bank's *Migration & Remittances Fact Book 2016*, Qatar has the world's highest level of migrant workers, relative to population, with foreigners making up 91 percent of the country's population. Qatar's labor force consists primarily of expatriate workers, and in the private sector foreigners make up over 99% of the labor force. Qatar's current population is estimated at around 2.67 million as of February 2017, more than doubling in the last decade. Qatari citizens are estimated to number approximately 250,000 – approximately, one-tenth of the total population. The largest group of foreign workers comes from the Indian sub-continent. Males make up more than 75 percent of the population, while unskilled labor makes up around 60 percent of the population.

Unemployment rates in Qatar are the lowest in the region, with 0.1 percent unemployment rate for males, and 0.8 percent unemployment rate for females. The Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Administrative Development Labor and Social Affairs (MADLSA) regulate recruitment of expatriate labor.

Localization policy (Qatarization) is a main focus of the country's national vision. The aim is to increase national participation in both public and private sector, and reach 50 percent localization in the energy and industry sectors, and 90 percent localization in the government sector by 2026. There are no laws that obligate the private sector to hire nationals, but the public sector and institutions working closely with the government on projects and joint ventures are required to hire nationals – these include energy companies operating in Qatar. In hiring, qualified Qataris are given the priority in the public sector.

According to Law 14/2004, the current law that largely governs employment in Qatar, employment may be terminated with or without any reason being given by the terminating party. The effect of termination will be for the employer to pay the employee his wages and other benefits due to him in full, provided that the employee performs work, as usual, during the notice period, which varies depending on years of employment. Companies registered with the onshore platform Qatar Financial Center (QFC) are governed by the English Common Law, and labor issues are administered by QFC's Regulation 10/2006. Employers are allocated visa slots for the hiring of specific nationalities and such positions are non-transferable without approval of the MADLSA. Employees may not transfer to new employers prior to the end of existing contracts unless with the consent of the employer and the MADLSA. Purchasing unemployment insurance is required by foreign workers from select countries as a matter of policy though it is not always enforced.

The 2004 labor law and subsequent regulations grant Qatari citizens the right to form workers' committees in private enterprises with more than 100 Qatari citizen workers. Qatari citizens employed in the private sector also have the right to strike, but the restrictive conditions imposed by the law make the likelihood of an approved strike remote. There are no labor unions in the country. Non-citizens are not eligible to form worker committees or strike. Those working in the government sector, regardless of nationality, are prohibited from joining unions. Around three-quarters of Qatari citizens are employed by the government.

Employers set wages without government involvement and there is no minimum wage. Local courts handle disputes between workers and employers though the process is widely regarded as inefficient. Recently, in an effort to speed up the process of resolving labor disputes, the government approved the formation of new Labor Disputes Committees headed by a judge and representatives from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Administrative Development Labor and Social Affairs. Such committees will operate outside of the traditional Supreme Judicial Committee structure and are required to address any complaints within three weeks.

In efforts to eliminate forced labor, the government issued in 2015, reforms to the sponsorship system, which allows employees to switch employers at the end of their contract, which can

be up to five years, without the permission of their employer. The new reforms also allow employees to leave the country through a simplified process which includes a government panel which can review any blocked exit permits within three days' time. The law prohibits the practice of employers withholding workers' passports, and increases penalties for employers who continue this practice.

To combat the problem of late and unpaid wages, in February 2015, the government issued a law on Wage Protection mandating electronic payment to all employees subject to the labor law (it does not cover domestic workers). By November 2015, the government required all employers to open bank accounts for their employees and pay wages electronically through a system subject to audits by a new inspection division at the Ministry of Administrative Development Labor and Social Affairs. Employers who failed to pay their workers faced penalties of \$550- \$1,650 per case and possible prison sentences. The system currently covers over two million workers.

To protect workers from fraudulent employment contracts, in December 2016, the Ministry of Administrative Development Labor and Social Affairs signed an agreement with an international Swiss company to facilitate recruitment of expat workers from certain countries abroad, including monitoring of medical check-ups, verifying certificates, and signing work contracts in cooperation with the Ministry.

Qatar is a member of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and claims that its labor law meets ILO minimum requirements though in a March decision of this year the ILO raised several concerns including weakness in the inspection regime, a lack of protections for domestic workers, and concerns over the recruitment system. Qatar has until November to address these concerns.

OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs

The Overseas Private Investment Cooperation (OPIC) suspended its operations in Qatar in 1995 due to concerns over labor practices. However, Qatar is working to improve its labor standards in order to reinstate OPIC coverage. Qatar is a member of the World Bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

Foreign Direct Investment and Foreign Portfolio Investment Statistics

Table 2: Key Macroeconomic Data, U.S. FDI in Host Country/Economy

Economic Data	Host Country Statistical source*		USG or international statistical source		USG or International Source of Data: BEA; IMF; Eurostat; UNCTAD, Other
	Year	Amount	Year	Amount	
Host Country Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (\$M USD)	2015	\$164,190	2015	\$164,641	World Bank

Foreign Direct Investment	Host Country Statistical source*		USG or international statistical source		USG or international Source of data: BEA; IMF; Eurostat; UNCTAD, Other
	2015	\$9,040	2015	\$8,463	
U.S. FDI in partner country (\$M USD, stock positions)	2015	\$9,040	2015	\$8,463	BEA
Host country's FDI in the United States (\$M USD, stock positions)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	BEA
Total inbound stock of FDI as percent host GDP	2015	22.9%	2015	22.8%	Total inbound stock of FDI from all countries to Qatar, as percent of Qatar GDP (Total inbound FDI= \$37.68 billion)

*Official local economic data are collected and shared by the Ministry of Development and Statistics. Yearend data for 2016 will be released during the first half of 2017. For more national statistics visit [government portal](#).

Table 3: Sources and Destination of FDI

Direct Investment from/in Counterpart Economy Data					
From Top Five Sources/To Top Five Destinations (US Dollars, Billions)					
Inward Direct Investment			Outward Direct Investment		
Total Inward	Amount	100 %	Total Outward	Amount	100 %
Other American Countries	\$13.9 M	36 %	Gulf Cooperation Council	\$8.4 M	30 %
European Union	\$12.4 M	32 %	European Union	\$8 M	29 %
United States of America	\$8.9 M	23 %	Other	\$4.5 M	16 %
Gulf Cooperation Council	\$1.9 M	5 %	Other Arab Countries	\$4 M	14 %
Other	\$1.5 M	4 %	Asia	\$3 M	11 %

"0" reflects amounts rounded to +/- USD 500,000.

Source: Qatar's Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics

Table 4: Sources of Portfolio Investment

Portfolio Investment Assets								
Top Five Partners (Millions, US Dollars)								
Total			Equity Securities			Total Debt Securities		
All Countries	N/A	100 %	All Countries	N/A	100 %	All Countries	N/A	100 %
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

N/A								
N/A								

Contact for More Information

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Telecommunications

[Ooredoo Group](#)

The Ooredoo Group is a leading international communications company, with a significant presence in the MENA region and Southeast Asia, and having a consolidated customer base of 83 million as of December 2011. It operates a portfolio of brands including Ooredoo, Indosat, Asiacell, Wataniya, Nawras, Nedjma and Tunisiana.

[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 is envisioned to become a major international gateway to the region.

[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 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](#)

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Trade Assistance and Promotion Office (TAPO)

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

U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Country Trade or Industry Associations in Key Sectors

[American Chamber of Commerce Qatar](#)

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

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[Country Government Offices Relating to Key Sectors and/or Significant Trade Related Activities](#)

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Market Research

To view market research reports produced by the U.S. Commercial Service please go to [U.S. Commercial Services](#) 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 visit [U.S. Commercial Services](#) for information on upcoming trade events.

Guide to Our Services

The President's National Export Initiative aims to double exports over five years by marshaling Federal agencies to prepare U.S. companies to export successfully, connect them with trade opportunities and support them once they do have exporting opportunities.

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 [U.S. Commercial Services](#).

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

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).

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