



Media Release

For Immediate Release

Overseas Accounts for Over 40% of Total Revenue for 1 in 2 Businesses; More Businesses Have Expansion Plans Beyond ASEAN

Thursday, 14 November 2024 [Singapore] – In a promising sign of resilience and growth, the Singapore Business Federation's (SBF) National Business Survey (NBS) 2024 – Scaled Internationally Edition reveals that the proportion of Singapore businesses with overseas expansion plans increased from the past year (59% versus 57% in 2023), with Vietnam (25%), Indonesia (25%) and Thailand (21%) as the top three markets. While interest in expansion within ASEAN remains strong, more businesses are prepared to look at markets further afield with headroom for growth, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (an increase of 7%-points from 7% to 14%), Saudi Arabia (an increase of 6%-points from 5% to 11%) and New Zealand (an increase of 6%-points from 5% to 11%). Conversely, though Malaysia and China are the top three existing markets, there is a dip in interest in Malaysia (decrease of 10%-points from 29% to 19%) and China (decrease of 5%-points from 22% to 17%).

2 More businesses saw increased overseas revenue (32%) compared to 2023 (22%), which saw the proportion of businesses (having over 40% overseas contribution to revenue) rise from 54% to 56%. Looking ahead, most businesses (56%) expect positive growth in revenue earned outside Singapore in the next 12 months, compared to 6% that expect a decline. Correspondingly, more businesses (30%) expect to make direct investments, compared to 1% which planned to reduce, although most businesses (45%) will not make any changes.

3 These insights were gathered from close to 520 companies across various industries between 28 August to 29 October 2024, with 87% being small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and 13% large companies.

Trends and Challenges to International Expansion and Support Required

4 The survey assessed internationalisation efforts among Singapore businesses. 7 in 10 businesses have an overseas presence, with Malaysia (63%), Indonesia (49%) and China (46%) as the top three markets in 2024. While China remained in the top three, the percentage of businesses having a presence in the market declined by 4%-points. More businesses reported having an overseas presence in UAE (increase of 3%-points from 14% to 17%) and Saudi Arabia (increase of 3%-points from 6% to 9%).

5 Uncertainty in demand (52%), geopolitical tensions (42%) and an unpredictable operating environment (38%) were the top three obstacles to overseas expansion.

Businesses ask for support in navigating regulatory challenges (49%), having a central reference for internationalisation information (41%) and support for networking for partnerships (41%). They are most prepared to allocate resources to train and equip their staff with skills for new roles overseas through workshops (72%) and participate in platforms and networking activities for partnerships (69%).

6 The proportion of businesses impacted by supply chain disruptions has decreased from 35% in 2023 to 22% in 2024 as they adjust to an operating environment where disruption is here to stay. Among the types of supply chain disruptions, logistics delays have increased by 10%-points from 47% to 57%, to displace raw materials supply shortage and price fluctuations, which decreased by 19%-points from 65% to 46%, as the top cause. To mitigate supply chain risks, companies are prioritising the diversification of suppliers/markets (55%) over the renegotiation of prices (42%) and working with logistics companies to minimise delays (42%).

8 **Mr Kok Ping Soon, Chief Executive Officer of SBF** said, “It is heartening that despite the uncertainties in the external environment, more businesses are considering overseas expansion and expect growth in sales in the next 12 months. It reflects the resilience of our businesses and their recognition that scaling internationally is critical for their growth. Businesses are looking for actionable support to help them navigate regulatory hurdles, understand the markets, and find partners. With a team of market & FTA advisors, three Singapore Enterprise Centres (SECs) in Jakarta, Bangkok and Ho Chi Minh City, a new Centre for the Future of Trade and Investment (CFOTI) to support businesses in global cross-border trade and investment, SBF strives to be the internationalisation partner for our businesses to scale their brands, products and services overseas. In 2024, SBF mounted over 12 business missions, issued 1,000 market/FTA advisories and facilitated 150 projects overseas.”

9 **Mr S.S. Teo, Chairman of the Internationalisation Action Committee (IAC)** said, “As global business complexities grow, it’s crucial for Singapore businesses to identify key markets where they can offer strong value propositions on sustainable basis. The IAC currently oversees five business groups and plans to expand in 2025 to Canada, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and Eastern Europe, with support from the Europe Enterprise Network. We’re also organising focused sessions for SMEs with business leaders and government stakeholders, alongside regional conferences for knowledge-sharing, business matching, and networking, all aligned with our ‘Scaled Internationally’ agenda to help businesses learn, generate leads, land deals, and localise.”

Annex A: Quotes by Companies

Annex B: National Business Survey 2024 – Scaled Internationally Edition Report

Infographic Report: [https://www.sbf.org.sg/docs/default-source/about-us/sbf-national-business-survey-2024---scaled-internationally-edition-infographics-\(final\).pdf?sfvrsn=f488242f_1](https://www.sbf.org.sg/docs/default-source/about-us/sbf-national-business-survey-2024---scaled-internationally-edition-infographics-(final).pdf?sfvrsn=f488242f_1)

Full Report: <https://www.sbf.org.sg/docs/default-source/about-us/sbf-national->

[business-survey-2024---scaled-internationally-edition-final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=39855d7a_1](https://www.sbf.org.sg/business-survey-2024---scaled-internationally-edition-final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=39855d7a_1)

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About Singapore Business Federation (新加坡工商联合总会)

Singapore Business Federation (SBF) is the apex business chamber that mobilises the whole of business to magnify a world of opportunities in trade, investment and human capital. In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, SBF advances Singapore with future-ready businesses, impactful trade associations and chambers, for a globally competitive and sustainable economy.

For more information, please visit: www.sbf.org.sg

Annex A: Quotes by Companies

Quote by Wong Peck Lin, Founder, Udders Ice Cream

“The Singapore market is small and saturated. The moment you start a business, you have to lay the foundation for overseas expansion in the future and always be ready for growth.”

Quote by Sim Teck Lee, General Manager, Keminates Pte Ltd

In business, there are always risks involved. For SMEs, they may be constrained by manpower, funding, business connections and expertise in the countries they want to expand to. Support from the government body or trade association is important, as most SME members may not have enough resources or the network to navigate through the market’s challenges. Therefore, a centralised body would be helpful in connecting and coordinating businesses with relevant trade association, so that we can achieve more as a united business community.