

Enterprise Ireland plans Iranian visits to tap into trade opportunity

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Peter O'Dwyer

Enterprise Ireland is planning two separate market visits to Iran in the coming months as it looks to tap into the year's largest trade opportunity.



The State agency has put plans in motion for two separate visits to the €360bn Middle Eastern marketplace in the first half of the year.

The visits will centre on promoting Irish interests in the areas of healthcare, information technology, and communications (ICT).

Those visits will follow preparatory work carried out by Enterprise Ireland in advance of sanctions being lifted last month, according to Enterprise Ireland Middle East and North America regional director Sean Davis.

“We did some exploratory visits in 2015 assessing market opportunities for client companies in Iran,” said Mr Davis.

“Some of those areas identified included healthcare, financial technology, and agricultural technology. Of course, any activities we engaged in were subject to sanctions being lifted, a significant phase of which was finalised on January 17, 2016.”

Shortly after sanctions were lifted, EI held an Iran healthcare seminar in Dubai.

“That seminar was given by our Iran honorary consul general and two Tehran-based managing directors,” said Mr Davis.

“It was well received by clients and hence we are moving to the next phase with healthcare, which is a market visit to Iran during Iran Health [International Exhibition] in May 2016.”

Enterprise Ireland staff also visited Tehran to explore ICT and technology opportunities for client companies.

That work will be followed in March by a forum to be held in Dublin and a subsequent market visit to Iran before the second half of the year.

Mr Davis also said that Enterprise Ireland's agricultural technology plan is less developed as it plans on using a major conference in Dubai later this year as a launchpad for the sector.

It has, however, been developing ag tech in the gulf states for the past four years, he added.

State agencies such as Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia came under fire earlier this week by Irish Exporters Association chief executive Simon McKeever, who said they had been slow to make inroads into the Iranian market.

Mr McKeever said Ireland was the only country in the EU without a trade mission in the country and also called for the reopening of the Irish embassy.

"What are we doing about Iran?" he said.