

Sustainable and aromatic: organic walnuts from Kyrgyzstan

IMPORT PROMOTION DESK OPENS THE DOOR TO THE EU MARKET FOR KYRGYZ EXPORTERS

April 2017



The Kyrgyz export company Vega Plus has made the leap into the European market. In February 2017 the company exhibited at the BIOFACH Exhibition in Nuremberg and introduced its sustainable farming products to the international specialists at the event. The Import Promotion Desk (IPD) prepared Vega Plus intensely for the exhibition and also supported the company through the “last mile” with match-making. The success of the exhibition was quickly followed by the first business deal with Swiss importer Tinibaev Waldgeschenke KIG.

Nomen est omen: customers of the Swiss importer now also receive “Waldgeschenke” (forest gifts) from the largest natural walnut forest in the world. It is from this forest at the foot of the Tianshan mountains that the Kyrgyz exporter obtains its products: walnuts harvested from wild-grown trees, ripened in sunny heights, certified in organic quality and according to the international standards.

The company Vega Plus promotes ecological forest management and thus also the protection of nature and its biological diversity. Around 230 collectors organised into cooperatives work with Vega Plus to harvest the walnuts. In order to ensure the high-quality processing and refinement of the nuts, in 2015 Vega Plus established a new factory, hired and qualified workers and introduced improved hygiene standards. This means that the company also fulfils the HACCP criteria for food purity. At the end of 2016 the Kyrgyz company received organic certification for its whole walnut production chain.



Darja Tinibaev-Aepi,
Managing Director
Waldgeschenke

»Vega Plus satisfies all the quality standards for the European market«, confirms Darja Tinibaev-Aepi, Managing Director of the Swiss company Waldgeschenke. »Thanks to the IPD we have acquired in the Kyrgyz enterprise a reliable new trading partner. The cooperation with Vega Plus is a big advantage for us because certified organic walnuts and in particular undamaged walnut kernel halves – known as butterflies – are very much in demand among our customers.« →



IMPORT PROMOTION DESK



Kanybek Aitakalov,
CEO Vega Plus

»The IPD has paved the way to Europe for us,«
says Kanybek Aitakalov, CEO Vega Plus,
»and so has given us the chance to expand.
We have created new jobs, built a new factory
and improved our production. This means that
we are able to satisfy the high EU quality standards.«



**DEMAND-LED –
THE LEVERAGE**

“Supporting demand-led exports is the best way to help integrate developing countries into the global trade market”, explains Dr. Julia Hoffmann, head of the IPD. “Kyrgyzstan is a good example of this.”



The country has valuable agricultural raw materials, but it is missing the production and trading chains to process and market the raw materials. This means that important value-creating potential is being wasted. Changing this is the aim of the “Programme to support sustainable economic development in Kyrgyzstan” (NAWI) by the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit). Together with the Kyrgyz chamber of commerce, the state export support agency of the Ministry for Economics and GIZ, the IPD is supporting establishment of efficient value-creating chains in Kyrgyzstan’s agricultural sector. This will create the preconditions to ensure that the Kyrgyz enterprises are competitive in their export business with Europe.

“Our job here is to use appropriate qualification measures to give the firms the necessary market know-how and instruct them on access preconditions, quality standards, demand trends, certifications, etc. Because without this knowledge the firms don’t have a chance of surviving on the EU market”, says Julia Hoffmann.

The IPD and GIZ are providing specific development assistance by offering the companies and employees of the Kyrgyz chamber of commerce and the export agency technical and business trainings and preparing the companies through trainings in sales and marketing and specific trainings in exports.

**EXPORT PROMOTION
PAYING OFF**

In 2013 the IPD admitted the exporter Vega Plus, which besides walnuts also offers apricots, plums, dried fruit and mushrooms, into its support programme. Since then the company has learnt a great deal. Through its participation in several exhibitions, organised and supported by the IPD, the Kyrgyz exporter was able to familiarise itself with the EU market and establish initial contacts to European importers. Its latest exhibition participation at BIOFACH 2017 has shown that Vega Plus is fit for the EU market. During BIOFACH the IPD was able to arrange promising meetings, and further business deals are to be expected in the near future. Participation in the IPD’s export support programme is paying off for the company in hard cash.



For the Kyrgyz company, its investment in improved processing systems and internationally recognised organic certification has paid off. Vega Plus is no longer dependent upon Turkish intermediaries for marketing its products and the further processing of the walnuts – cracking, drying, packaging – has enabled increased value creation for the Kyrgyz economy. Through the refinement and certification of its organic products the company can now achieve much higher prices and compete on the EU market.

**ORGANIC
SELLS BETTER**

“There is a big market for high quality organic products which can benefit the enterprises in developing countries,” says Julia Hoffmann. “Quality-conscious consumers in Germany and other European countries are increasingly aware of whether the products they are consuming come from sustainable organic farming – organic is the buying argument!”

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