

Collaboration helps Simpson's treble sales to Brazil



David Orr, Sales Director

For the last five years, Simpson's Seafish has been exporting frozen smoked cod and coley to Brazil in bulk. Exports have averaged £175,000 per annum but that is changing thanks to a chance visit to a Brazilian supermarket. With support from Seafish and advice on funding opportunities, Simpson's anticipates a three-fold increase in export sales.

"We have been very comfortably exporting frozen fish to Brazil for a number of years, all in bulk, with little real knowledge of what happened to the fish other than it was then packed and sold throughout Rio and Sao Paulo," said David Orr, Sales Director.

"That changed when I visited a Zona Sur supermarket in Brazil, an up-market chain,

and actually saw first hand their fish display and one of our products on sale. All the fish on sale was frozen, the range was very limited and simply packed in fairly old-fashioned polystyrene trays with a plain white label.

"With a country the size of Brazil, a population of 400 million and a thriving economy there had to be a lot of potential to develop this market. We have already had early success in offering new species and different packaging options, and with continuing support from Seafish we hope this growth will continue," he said.

The market

Research from the British Embassy in Brazil has shown sales of smoked fish are booming, and their economy is one of the world's fastest growing. The amount of frozen fish being imported is increasing; the agent used by Simpson's imported \$60 million of frozen fish in 2007 and had already imported \$50 million in the first seven months of 2008.

Whilst the growth is clearly evident Simpson's want to look more specifically at which fish species are the most popular, what are the potential outlets, as well as highlight population and regional 'hot spots'. To do this they have commissioned research through UK Trade and Investment.



Grant aids packaging design

“What really struck me about the frozen fish display in the Brazilian supermarket was the uninspiring packaging. The frozen smoked cod and coley that we had supplied in bulk had been portioned and packaged but the packaging did nothing to entice the buyer and provided no nutritional guidance. Packaging design has moved on and the next obvious step for us was to pack the fish in Hull and then export packaged fish to Brazil,” said David.

“Julie Snowden, our Seafish Account Manager, pointed us towards the International Grant Fund programme. With her advice and guidance we very quickly got approval for a £3,000 grant, which we have match-funded, which has been earmarked to develop new packaging designs for the Brazilian market. We are also in discussions to add the regional food group for Yorkshire and Humberside ‘deliciouslyorkshire’ logo to every pack to celebrate our roots.

“This approach is already showing dividends. We’ve sent smoked cod and coley samples, portioned and packaged to Brazil. Feedback has been positive and an order is imminent. We can see a real potential here in supplying both bulk and pre-packed frozen fish to Brazil,” said David.

As well as their pre-packed smoked cod and coley, Simpson’s also wants to introduce new lines.

Collaboration

“Collaboration is the key in our export drive and in everything else we do,” said David. “Julie at Seafish is a real asset, but equally we work with the marketing and R&D departments. We receive up-to-date retail statistics from marketing laid out in a very simple format, which is invaluable and frankly we would not have access to it otherwise.

“We are also currently working with the R&D team in another important area – looking at ways to extend the shelf life of fresh fish. We have a lot of expertise in smoking fish but with Seafish advice, we are now looking at poaching. Trials with salmon using vacuum bags are aimed at extending shelf life to 16+ days.”

Simpson’s Seafish is the UK’s biggest family-owned fish processor, based in Hull for 25 years.

Seafish, the authority on seafood, was founded in 1981 by an act of parliament and supports the seafood industry for a sustainable, profitable future. Our services range from research and development, economic consulting, market research and training and accreditation through to account management and legislative advice for the seafood industry.

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