STEP – Agri-Value

Trade Mission – Biofach 2018 and Market Outreach to Belgium
February 12-21, 2018
Nuremberg, Germany and Brussels Belgium

TRIP REPORT
Overview/ Mission Description

BioFach is the world’s largest organic trade show, taking place each February in Nuremberg, Germany. STEP Exhibited as part of the Canadian Pavilion which featured companies from across Canada. STEP’s space in the pavilion gave STEP members with certified organic agriculture products the chance to reach the international organic marketplace. With the Canada-EU free trade agreement recently coming into force, this has lead to increased interest for Saskatchewan products in one of the largest organic consumer markets in the world.

During Biofach, STEP and participating members attended a networking event hosted by the Canadian Organic Trade Association (COTA). STEP and participating members took part in meetings with Trade Commissioners from different countries in the EU. STEP also contributed to a networking reception held in the pavilion attended by exhibitors and international buyers. A targeted list of companies to visit at the show was also provided to members in an effort to make the most of their efforts at Biofach.

In addition to attending Biofach, STEP also organized an optional visit to Belgium. This visit took place following the conclusion of the show. With the help of the Canadian Trade Commissioners Service in Brussels, STEP organized a two-day program. The program consisted of group meetings with potential buyers of organic ingredients and logistics providers. Belgium is a major point of entry into the EU and is a growing market for organic products.

Summarized Agenda

Biofach ran over a four day period from Wednesday to Saturday at the Nuremberg Messe Convention Centre. Saskatchewan companies were given the opportunity to exhibit in the Canadian Pavilion with STEP or to walk the show on their own. Each day had set exhibiting hours from 9:00 – 6:00 Wednesday to Friday, and 9:00 to 5:00 on Saturday. Members also had the opportunity to attend any number of educational sessions on topics related to the organic agriculture industry. The dates, times and topics of these sessions were outlined in the briefing book agenda.

Activities outside of the show hours included the COTA networking event on Tuesday, the Canadian Pavilion reception on Thursday and a group dinner for Saskatchewan companies on Friday. All events were optional, but well attended by the Saskatchewan companies participating in the mission.

The visit to Belgium consisted of two days of meetings across the country. The meetings were with organic importers, food/feed manufacturers and logistics providers.

Market Information

European Union
The European Union (EU) is made up of 28 countries and when considered as a single economic unit, represents the third most populous area in the world, behind China and India, and the second largest economy in the world, behind the United States. The EU has a nominal GDP of $16.27 trillion (2016) and is currently importing over $2.25 trillion dollars worth of goods from across the world. Saskatchewan exported
over $1.1 billion dollars worth of goods to the EU in 2016. These numbers are expected to increase following the signing of CETA. Many countries from the EU were represented in their own pavilions at Biofach 2018.

**Germany**

Germany is the second largest organic market in the world, rivaled only by the United States. Germany is an appropriate location for the world’s largest organic food trade show considering many of the other top organic markets are also members of the EU.

Since 2000, sales of organic foods in Germany have more than tripled while domestic production has failed to keep pace. This makes Germany an ideal export market for Saskatchewan organic agriculture suppliers.

**Belgium**

Belgium is the ninth-largest importer of agri-food and seafood products in the world, and the sixth-largest among members of the European Union (EU) with a value of C$47.6 billion in 2014. Belgium is also the world’s ninth-largest agri-food and seafood exporter (fifth-largest in the EU) and recorded a trade surplus of C$4.5 billion in 2014, with C$52.1 billion in exports. Canada’s performance relative to non-European Union suppliers is expected to improve as a result of CETA, particularly since Belgium is used as an important entry hub into the broader EU market.

### Results

In total, seven STEP members participated in Biofach 2018. Four exhibited within the Canadian Pavilion with the other three choosing to walk the show on their own. 102 trade leads were generated by STEP members on the mission. 21 deals were reported which will lead to an estimated $2,835,000 in export sales over the next 12 months.

The show was busy for three out of the four days. The final day of the show was significantly slower than the previous three. This is not unusual and was expected by those in attendance. The location of the Canadian pavilion was moved to the newly opened Hall 4A for the first time this year. The refreshed pavilion look received positive reviews. The new location lead to higher traffic in the morning due to the proximity of the parking lot. The natural light was a pleasant change from the usual feel of a windowless tradeshow hall. Quality leads were generated and follow up is already underway.
Five STEP members participated in the optional visit to Belgium. The visit provided a good insight into the local market. Meetings were productive a quality contacts were made. All buyers were invited to travel to Saskatchewan in September 2018 for STEP’s incoming buyer event Harvesting Food Solutions.

**Recommendations**

The mission was highly successful. Biofach is the ideal show to attend for companies interested in EU Organic Market. It provides the opportunity to meet with buyers from around Europe and the world. The refreshed design of the Canadian Pavilion was well received. The new location left a little to be desired in terms of traffic but the quality of those passing through was high. Additional promotion could be done to drive more traffic to the booth. The networking event at the pavilion is a nice touch and puts us on the same level as many of the other pavilions. This event should continue in future years if budget permits. Emphasis should be placed on recruiting buyers to attend the event.

The additional market visits proved to be very valuable as well. The STEP members that participated were happy with the results. The Trade Commissioners Service was a great partner to work with. They arranged many of the meetings and looked after the transportation. STEP will look to continue this format in a different market during future shows. STEP members in attendance were informally surveyed about their preference for future market visits. The UK, Italy, France and Spain came back as the top choices.

STEP plans on returning to next year’s show and will secure similar space in the Canadian Pavilion. Biofach 2019 takes place in Nuremburg again and the pavilion will be in a similar location. STEP will also look to organize a visit to a new market.

**STEP Contact for Further Information**

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