

Tips for finding buyers on the European vegetable oils market

Europe is a major importer of vegetable oils from all over the world, and an important gateway to global distribution networks. Still, it is not always easy to identify and get into contact with the right buyer for your product. Here are a number of tips to help you in this process.

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1. Get to know your target market

Europe is a major importer of vegetable oils from all over the world. It is an important gateway to global distribution networks but can be difficult to access.

As you start your search for European buyers, you must get to know the structure of your target market. Ask yourself:

- Which markets and channels offer the best opportunities for your product?
- What is my product used for? As an ingredient for further processing or as an oil for final consumer use?
- Who are the main importers of your product and what are their buyer requirements?
- What is the demand for your product per country?

You also need to assess the competition and identify your competitive advantage (Unique Selling Points or USPs).

All of these aspects will give you a good working knowledge of your target market, and help you find the right buyers.

When it comes to sales channels, you must consider which is the most suitable for you: selling directly to the end-user, through importers or traders, or through agents and brokers.

Tips:

Read our market studies about the [European market for vegetable oils](#).

Look for statistical information on [ITC Trade Map](#) and [EU Export Helpdesk: My Export](#).

2. Review the websites of sector federations, associations and

trade press

Europe has a federation dedicated to the vegetable oils market called [FEDIOL](#) (the federation representing European Vegetable Oil and Proteinmeal Industry). National associations of seed crushers and oil processors from 17 different EU countries are all members of FEDIOL.

On the FEDIOL website you will also find members from different levels of the European market, including traders, crushers, refiners, and manufacturers. FEDIOL publishes a list of its members on its website. This is a good place to look for potential buyers.

Other national and sector-specific associations in various European countries also publish online member lists. Germany's sector association [OVID](#), for instance, lists 20 member companies. These include oilseeds crushers, as well as companies involved in purchasing and transporting vegetable oils.

You should look for sector associations in the countries where there is the most demand for your products.

Further, it is vital to follow relevant trade publications in the vegetable oils sector, like:

- [Oil World](#) (an forecasting service, with price information and market intelligence)
- [Oils and Fats International magazine](#) (published 8 times per year)

Other sources for market information include [Agra](#) and [The Public Ledger](#).

Tip:

Go to the [FEDIOL](#) website. Find the links to the different sector associations' website. This is a good way to find and download the member lists of members by sector and/or by country.

3. Participate in trade fairs

Participating in trade fairs is a good way of meeting potential buyers and/or acquiring market information. Most European buyers of vegetable oils go to trade fairs such as Food Ingredients Europe, Oils and Fats, Anuga, BioFach and SIAL. They go there looking for potential trade partners like you. Whilst the In-Cosmetics trade fair targets the cosmetics market, you will also find companies there that work in the food industry.

Important trade fairs in this sector are:

- [Anuga](#) is the world's leading food fair for the retail trade and the food service and catering market. It is a useful trade fair for discovering new trends and learning about the European consumer market. It is held every two years in Cologne, Germany.
- [SIAL](#) is one the world's largest food exhibitions, encompassing a number of food ingredients and final products. SIAL is held every two years in Paris, France.
- [Oils and Fats](#), a biannual business platform for the European oils and fats industry in Munich, Germany.
- [Food Ingredients Europe](#) is a trade fair which deals with various food ingredients. Fi Europe takes place every two years in different European cities.
- [BioFach](#) – the most important international exhibition for organic food and fair trade products, held every year in Nuremberg, Germany. It is a crucial trade fair to visit or exhibit at, for companies selling certified organic products.
- [In-Cosmetics](#) – this is the leading global business event for personal care ingredients which brings together suppliers, formulators, R&D and marketing specialists. It is held every year in a different European city.

The costs of exhibiting at a trade fair can be high. If you do not have the budget, or feel unprepared to take part as an exhibitor, then you can attend as a visitor.

Visiting a major trade fair in Europe is a good opportunity for learning about your target market. It is a good place for carrying out market research.

Tips:

Visit the stands of vegetable oil importers exhibiting at the shows - you can find these in the exhibitor lists online.

Introduce yourself, your company and your products - this is a good way of establishing initial contact and future business partnerships.

Study the online exhibition catalogues of trade fairs. This is a good way of identifying potential buyers without visiting the event. See for example the [exhibitor list of ANUGA](#).

Search by product category for effective research before you leave for the event.

4. Contact trade promotion organisations

Many European countries have governmental organisations that promote imports from developing countries. They generally work with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and can help you export your products to Europe.

Find an organisation which focusses on your country and product(s). You can also apply for matchmaking programmes which these organisations organise.

Also consider contacting embassies (or trade attaché) in your own country, in the European Union or local European chambers of commerce.

Some examples:

- In the Netherlands the [Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries](#) (CBI)
- In Germany the [German Import Promotion Desk](#) (IPD)
- In Switzerland [Swiss Import Promotion Programme](#) (SIPPO)
- In Belgium the [Belgian Development Agency](#) (BTC)
- In Finland the [Finnish Import Promotion Organisation](#) (Finnpartnership)

5. Make use of matchmaking programmes and trade missions

Participate in matchmaking programmes and trade missions. These can be a good way of getting to know a new market and developing contacts with potential importers.

Many countries organise trade mission to promote their export sectors. Joining such visits can be an effective way of expanding your network.

When considering taking part in a foreign mission or matchmaking event, you need to check whether vegetable oils is one of the focus areas. Otherwise, it might be a waste of time.

Tips:

- Find trade promotion organisations in Europe.
- Search for export promotion programmes.
- Contact governmental organisations, embassies or chambers of commerce.

6. Use online trading sites

European buyers prefer direct contact with suppliers. They also like to make a detailed assessment of potential suppliers before entering into contracts. However, online trading sites can give you access to less traditional markets, or allow you to promote specific products such as mustard oil or avocado oil. This is especially useful if you don't have a large budget to spend on marketing.

Register and publish your company details and products online. For a lot of online trading sites, this is free of charge.

Make sure you analyse the responses you receive from these online trading sites critically. Some contacts can be of value to your business. Others may be less interesting or even unreliable.

Prospect databases are another source for finding sector players and achieving trade agreements. Here are some examples:

- [Foods for Trade](#), a leading Business to Business (B2B) marketplace for the food industry. It offers a company profile service and member accounts for business partners and promotes companies through trade leads. Subscribers can also create customised advertising packages targeted at potential buyers.
- [The Food World](#), which provides a useful database of companies active in specific food categories.
- [Organic-Bio](#), an online database which compiles a list of the main companies worldwide, dealing with organic (and often fair trade) products. You can specify your search at product level, filtering by 'Oils and Fats'. Both producers/exporters and buyers can be found in this database.
- [Go4WorldBusiness](#), where you can search for European buyers per sub category of edible oils.
- [Tradekey](#), where you can search for vegetable oil buyers by country.

7. Use direct marketing methods

Writing emails directly to potential buyers is a good way of introducing your company to new prospects. Make sure you adjust your message to the individual requirements of each company and its business activities (see tip 8 below).

Be sure to explain following items and follow up your email with a phone call:

- Who are you?
- Why are you contacting the buyer?
- What are you selling? What are the product specifications? What are the applications?
- How do you manage quality?
- What quantities are you offering?
- How will you deliver your product?
- Where and when can you deliver your product?
- Why should they buy from you? In other words: what are your unique selling points (USPs)?

8. Understand your potential buyers

Before you contact potential buyers, you need to be well prepared. It is important for you to understand each individual buyer and what their requirements are. Buyers in the vegetable oils sector receive calls and emails from potential suppliers every day. This means that you will need to convince them of your products and your services above all others. This can be difficult.

Visit the website of the company you wish to contact. Get as much information as possible:

- Which segment is the buyer operating in (bottling, food, processing, wholesale etc.)?
- What are his or her requirements (quality, certifications etc.)?

Search for the company on the internet and see if you can learn more about their specific needs or who they already work with.

For more general information, try researching European buyers and what they expect. Keep up to date with sector news and doing business in Europe. Being well prepared will help you in your contact with European buyers and establishing long-term business relationships with them.

Tips:

Read our study on [doing business with European buyers of vegetable oils](#).

Check the [Ingredients Network](#) for potential buyers. Also use Ingredients Network for news on trends, prices, buyers, legal and private requirements from the vegetable oils industry. This magazine is linked to the [Food Ingredients Europe](#) trade fair.

Look for price information and market intelligence at [Oil World](#). This is a forecasting service.

Consider subscribing to [Oils and Fats International \(OFI\)](#) magazine. OFI is the leading international magazine for the oils and fats industry and is published eight times a year. Each issue has dedicated news pages on market developments, biotechnology, biofuels, renewable materials and transport/logistics. The magazine also features statistics, regular market reports and in-depth features.

Consult [Agra](#) and [The Public Ledger](#) for information on prices and trends.

Check [Food Navigator](#) for find information on sustainability, scientific study results and product development news (you can select specific sub-sectors).

Look for market information in the organic sector at [Organic & Wellness News](#). This is an online magazine for the organic market addresses news items and broader themes such as sustainability, health and product innovations.

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).