

Tips for finding buyers on the European natural food additives market

The ‘finding buyers study’ provides key tips on how to increase your chances to find suitable buyers for your natural ingredients in the European food & drink market. Success depends on various factors, such as product quality, pricing, level of competition, the types of ingredients you supply and online presence.

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1. Know what buyers to target

As an exporter of natural food additives to Europe, it is essential you thoroughly research the market before approaching prospective European buyers. You should map out the structure of the European natural food additives market and outline the supply chain.

A major advantage of doing market research is that it prepares you for entering the European market. This is because it will give you knowledge and a deeper understanding of the European market. Furthermore, being prepared is likely to save you both time and resources in your journey to accessing the European natural food additives market.

The European food and drink market is growing at a steady pace. There is high demand from food and drink companies looking to add natural food additives to their products. A major driver behind this trend is growing consumer demand for natural food and drink products, i.e. food products without or with fewer synthetic ingredients.

You should first consider targeting European food and drink manufacturers directly. Secondly, you should consider targeting parties that supply and distribute natural food additives to European food and drink companies.

Nestlé, Unilever, Oetker Group and Associated British Foods are some of the largest European food and drink companies that use natural food additives. Large and medium-sized European suppliers/distributors of natural food additives include Mane, Nexira and Naturex. Consider targeting European food and drink companies, as well as their suppliers and distributors.

Other types of players include small and medium-sized buyers of food additives and ingredients. These companies tend to focus on specific types of ingredients. For example, Übelhör Organic Germany specialises in certified organic ingredients, including sweeteners. Large organic food companies usually source directly.

Table 1: Types of buyers in the European food additives sector

Buyer type	Description	Reasons to target	Examples
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Large to medium-sized buyers	These buyers offer a wide range of conventional, as well as certified ingredients and food additives.	Approach these buyers if you are able to supply in bulk or have a wide range of ingredients.	Mane, Nexira, Dölher, Naturex
Small to medium-sized buyers	These companies include smaller traders. These buyers tend to specialise in certain ingredient groups or a specific market.	Approach these buyers if you supply lower quantities, if your ingredients are certified or if you supply niche ingredients.	Delphi Organic, Übelhör Organic-Germany
Large to medium-sized food companies	This group includes conventional food companies that use natural food additives.	Consider approaching these companies if you are able to supply larger quantities of your ingredients.	Unilever, Nestlé, Oetker Group, Associated British Foods
Small to medium-sized natural and organic food companies	Natural and organic food companies that almost only use natural/organic ingredients.	Approach these companies if you are looking to set up long-term projects and/or if you are able to supply certified ingredients.	Rapunzel

Source: Ecovia Intelligence

An increasing number of European food and drink companies, as well as their suppliers and distributors, are setting up their own sourcing projects. This trend is predicted to continue. This is because it offers them traceability of their ingredients, as well as greater control over product quality and prices.

Tips:

You must do thorough market research before approaching prospective European buyers of natural food additives.

Determine your capabilities as an exporter of natural food additives; for example, what volumes can you supply and with what frequency? Based on this, target prospective European buyers of natural food additives.

Target European buyers who already have experience with natural food additives.

2. Visit and participate in industry trade fairs

Consider visiting and participating in industry trade fairs. Doing so offers numerous advantages to exporters of natural food additives seeking to enter the European market.

Key advantages of visiting and participating in industry trade fairs include finding and networking with prospective buyers, increasing your company's awareness and gaining further knowledge of your industry. Visiting and participating at industry trade fairs gives you an advantage when you are looking to enter the European market. The most important trade fairs include:

- [ANUGA](#) – this is one of the world's largest trade fairs for food and beverages. This is an important trade show for natural ingredients for the food sector in Europe. This trade show is worth visiting to network with conventional and natural food companies and buyers.
- [Fi Europe & Ni](#) – this is the leading trade show for food ingredients in Europe. This trade show is worth visiting to meet buyers of conventional and organic food ingredients.
- [Sial Paris](#) – one of the leading food trade shows in Europe. This trade show is worth visiting to meet buyers of food ingredients.
- [Biofach](#) – this is the biggest trade show for organic products in the world. You should visit this trade show if you supply certified ingredients. You can network with buyers and finished product companies that make organic food and drink products.
- [Natural & Organic Products Europe \(NOPE\)](#) – a trade show that focuses on natural and organic finished products in Europe. As an ingredient supplier, you will be able to network with some of the leading natural and organic food companies and buyers.
- [NatExpo](#) – French trade show for the natural and organic sector. You should consider this trade show if you want to target the French market.
- [EcoLife Scandinavia](#) – Scandinavian edition of NOPE. This trade show focuses on the natural and organic products industry in the Scandinavian region. However, many exhibitors from outside the region also come here. The trade fair focuses on finished products.

You could also consider visiting and participating in industry trade fairs taking place outside Europe. The most important trade shows in Asia include:

- [Food Ingredients China](#) (FIC) organises one of the largest trade shows for food additives and ingredients in China. You can find buyers looking for new food ingredient suppliers here.
- [Sial Middle East](#) – one of the leading food trade shows in the Middle East. This trade show is worth visiting to meet buyers of food ingredients
- [Biofach South East Asia](#) – trade fair for the organic sector in the South East Asian region. You can meet buyers looking for certified ingredients here.
- [Biofach India](#) – trade fair for the organic sector in India. You can meet buyers looking for certified ingredients here.
- [Biofach China](#) – trade fair for the organic sector in China. You can meet buyers looking for certified ingredients here.

Important African trade shows include:

- [Food Africa](#) – one of the biggest trade shows in the food and beverage sector, located in Cairo. You can meet international and African agents, distributors and retailers from the food sector here.
- [Africa's Big 7](#) is one of the leading food and beverage trade shows in Africa. You can meet international and African agents, distributors and retailers from the food sector here.

- [Hostex](#) – food, drink and hospitality exhibition based in South Africa. You can meet international and African agents, distributors and retailers from the food sector here.
- [Food West Africa](#) – leading food and beverage trade fair in West Africa. You can meet international and African agents, distributors and retailers from the food sector here.

Trade fairs in Latin America you should consider include:

- [ALIMENTEC](#) – international trade fair that focuses on food processing, food and beverages, based in Colombia. You can find buyers looking for new food ingredient suppliers here.
- [Food Ingredients South America](#) – this is the leading trade show for food ingredients in Latin America. This trade show is worth visiting to meet buyers of conventional and organic food ingredients.
- [Biofach Brazil](#) – leading trade show on organic products in Latin America. This trade show is worth visiting if you supply certified ingredients.

Visiting and participating in industry fairs near your region is advantageous because it offers opportunities to research the European market without actually travelling to Europe. It provides an opportunity for you to find and network with potential buyers at relatively low costs.

On the other hand, there will likely be fewer European buyers attending trade fairs in your region. On balance, you should therefore try to participate in European trade fairs, because they increase the likelihood of you accessing the European market.

Tips:

Focus on visiting and attending trade shows that have dedicated sections for natural food additives, as this increases your chances of finding buyers.

Before visiting, participating in or exhibiting at trade fairs, prepare yourself well. Look at exhibitor lists and identify the parties that are most relevant to you. Make a note of them before approaching them. Similarly, identify presentations that are relevant for you and attend them.

Start preparations for trade fairs you want to attend a minimum of one year in advance. This includes budgeting, purchasing trade fair tickets and arranging travel and accommodation.

Use [TradeFairDates](#), [toFairs.com](#) and [10times](#) to find relevant trade fairs.

3. Connect with sector associations

You should connect with sector organisations in Europe, and in particular for European country markets you seek to enter. A key advantage of doing so is that sector organisations provide a range of support services that help exporters like you enter the European market. For example, they provide information and support on laws and legislation you need to be compliant with, alongside market trends and developments.

Another advantage is that sector organisations provide information about the market and potential buyers of your natural food additives. Note that this information is usually found on their members lists. This is valuable information that you should utilise. Do so by finding and contacting members that are of interest to you, to improve your chances of entering the European market.

Important sector associations include:

- [European Flavour Association](#) (EFFA) – this is an umbrella organisation of the European flavours sector. You can find the [members list](#) on its website.

- [The International Federation of essential oils and aroma traders](#) (IFEAT) represents the interests of companies involved in the production, processing, trading and manufacturing of ingredients used in flavours, fragrances and aromatherapy. Consider connecting and utilising the support the IFEAT offers.
- [EU Specialty Food Ingredients](#) is a membership organisation for the specialty food and ingredients sector. You can find the full [members list](#) on their website.

At the same time, consider connecting and utilising the support offered by sector associations at the European country level. Important examples include:

- [Food and Drink Federation](#) (FDF) – this is the association of the UK food and drink industry. You can find the full [members list](#) on their website.
- [UK Flavour Association](#) – this association represents the interests of the flavouring industry in the UK. You can find the full [members list](#) on their website.
- [Deutscher Verband der Aromenindustrie e.V.](#) (DVAI) is a German association of the flavour sector. You can find the full [members list](#) on their website.
- [Syndicat National des Ingrédients Aromatiques Alimentaires](#) – association representing food flavouring companies in France. You can find the full [members list](#) on their website.
- [Dutch Association of Fragrance and Flavoring Manufacturers](#) (NEA) – an umbrella organisation of the fragrance and flavouring sector in the Netherlands. You can find the full [members list](#) on their website.

If you are looking to supply organic ingredients to the European market, consider information provided by the European Commission, which offers information and support about [organic certification](#). Similarly, consider reviewing information provided by [IFOAM](#) and [Bioagricert](#). Doing so will help you access the European market if you have certified organic additives. These sites will also guide you on how to produce organic additives and export them to Europe.

Tips:

Identify, connect with and utilise the support provided by associations in European countries offering the best opportunities for your natural food additives.

Regularly check association websites for the latest updates on natural food additives, such as regulations, trends, developments and innovations.

Review members lists on association websites because they help you find prospective European buyers for your natural food additives.

4. Ensure you can be found online

Ensuring your company has an online presence is a critical part of exporting your natural food additives to Europe. An online presence gives you several advantages, mainly that European buyers are able to see your company and product range online. This is becoming essential for them to assess whether you are a credible business partner.

Having an online presence also gives you several other advantages; they include reducing your overheads and giving you greater flexibility and availability. For more advantages of doing business online, [click here](#). To benefit from this, consider investing your time and resources to ensure you have an online presence, and then maintain and strengthen it.

Ensuring you have a respectable and well-presented website is an essential part of your online presence. Make sure your content is orderly, concise and without grammatical errors. Lists of the natural food additives you

export and any related certifications are important content and must always be included. Provide professional photographs of your products, team and production facilities, as this gives you added credibility. [Samara Farm](#) and [BLG](#) are two good examples of companies with a good online presence and a professional company website.

On its website, Samara Farm has a gallery of photos and videos that illustrate the production process of coconut sugar. The website also provides a detailed description of the company's background, certification schemes, mission and products.

You can promote your company online at fairly low costs, with social media offering a cheaper alternative. [LinkedIn](#) is a social media platform designed for networking, which offers you good opportunities to connect with prospective buyers through its networking features. Useful features include LinkedIn groups that allow you to promote your company's material and connect with LinkedIn members without being connected to them.

In order to increase traffic on your website, create blogs that you can then share on other social media platforms or forums such as LinkedIn, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Quora](#). Ensure you regularly update the social media platforms you use, and create new blogs to help maintain and potentially increase your online presence.

Tips:

Ensure you have an online presence that is of a good quality and a respectable standard.

Create accounts on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Quora. These provide good opportunities to connect with European buyers.

Maintain your online presence by regularly updating your website and social media accounts.

5. Contact trade promotion agencies, embassies and chambers of commerce

Take advantage of the resources and services that trade promotion agencies, embassies and chambers of commerce provide. Doing so will give you an advantage when you are looking to enter the European market. Valuable resources and services offered include information about regulatory requirements in order to enter the European market, solvency information and advice about the import-export process.

You may experience difficulty during the import-export process with European buyers if you do not get assistance from the chambers of commerce; your business relationships could also suffer. Reviewing the financial reliability and background of potential customers, which may be available on chamber of commerce websites, is essential, because doing so can help you decide if potential buyers would be reliable business partners.

Examples of chambers of commerce that offer valuable resources and services include Eurochambres, [France's Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#) (CCI), Germany's [Association of GERMAN Chambers of Industry and Commerce](#), the Netherlands' [KVK](#), Italy's [Association of ITALIAN Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Craft and Agriculture](#) and the United Kingdom's [British Chambers of Commerce](#). Visit [Eurochambres](#) for a complete list of chambers of commerce in Europe.

Some of the main activities of these institutions are providing training and matchmaking programmes and raising awareness about trade opportunities. These programmes provide guidance to enterprises to help them create profitable partnerships.

Increasing awareness about trade opportunities, delivering training programmes and organising matchmaking

programmes are three key activities that chambers of commerce provide. Such activities are designed to provide assistance and guidance to businesses to help them become profitable.

Tips:

Ensure you thoroughly research and assess any potential buyers of your natural food additives. Determine whether prospective companies are financially strong and reliable. Failure to do so could result in losses when problems arise.

Find out information about the food market, prospective buyers and companies and your competitors in the natural food additives sector.

Connect with chambers of commerce in your country, and make use of the resources and services they provide. Examples include Indonesia's [Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#), the Philippines' [Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#), Paraguay's [Chamber for International Trade & Industry of Paraguay](#) and Brazil's [Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency](#).

Ensure you familiarise yourself with important information about the natural food additives sector published by business support organisations.

6. Participate in trade missions and matchmaking programmes

European organisations provide trade missions and matchmaking programmes. As an exporter of natural food additives, you should participate in them. Participating could help you if you encounter practical and legal problems in accessing the European market. You could also gain valuable skills that may save you time and resources.

European organisations provide a range of support services, such as training and coaching programmes and market research on specific European sectors. They often provide insights into trends in the European natural food additives market; you should use this information to adjust your marketing material accordingly. Important information about mandatory and additional regulations you need to comply with is often provided as well, which could be useful to you.

Not using the range of support offered by trade missions and matchmaking programmes may cause you to miss out on valuable information about the European market. Your export activities can also suffer if you lack information about additional buyer requirements, mandatory requirements and regulations that you must comply with.

You should participate in programmes such as those organised by the [Centre for Promotion of Imports \(CBI\)](#), the [Import Promotion Desk \(IPD\)](#), [Open Trade Gate Sweden \(OTGS\)](#) and the [Swiss Import Promotion Programme \(SIPPO\)](#). Organisations such as the [International Trade Centre](#) and the [Food and Agricultural Organisation](#), which has a [partnership with the EU](#), provide market access services.

Tips:

Apply to participate in trade missions and matchmaking programmes.

Make use of market studies provided by business support organisations in your country.

7. Meet buyer requirements and demands

Ensure you meet the mandatory and additional requirements of European buyers. European buyers are frequently contacted by exporters; you should therefore familiarise yourself with their mandatory requirements before approaching them. It is also important to inform buyers that you meet their mandatory requirements, as this can help to persuade them to do business with you.

When it comes to meeting additional requirements, there is space for negotiation. However, as an exporter seeking to enter the European market for the first time, it is essential that you show flexibility and a willingness to meet specific requirements of prospective buyers. Be aware that not all European buyers have the same requirements, and these can differ from company to company.

Failure to meet buyer requirements and demands could lead to business opportunities being lost. Your business activities in Europe may also suffer, which could damage your reputation and put your exporting activities at risk in the long run.

Tips:

Review the CBI Study with tips for organising your exports to Europe. This Study has practical advice on topics such as export insurance, packaging and logistics to help you on your journey to accessing the European market.

Review the CBI Study with tips on doing business with European buyers, which provides valuable information on how to create and maintain relationships with European buyers.

8. Conduct an email marketing campaign

Worldwide, an increasing amount of business is done via email, and this trend is set to continue. As an exporter, you can approach prospective European buyers of natural food additives by conducting an email marketing campaign.

You can start by creating a list of prospective buyers to contact. The content of your email must be short and concise without any grammatical errors. Provide relevant information about your business, such as what you offer, links to your company website and how European buyers can contact you.

Before starting your email marketing campaign, proofread your email and do [test runs](#). Contact European buyers after you are satisfied with test results in order to leave the best first impression. Try to do regular email marketing campaigns, but do not bombard prospective European buyers with emails, because that could cause reputational damage.

Tips:

Start email marketing campaigns. These can help you on your journey to accessing the European market.


Read [Top Tips For Successful Email Marketing Campaigns](#).

Do additional research on how to do a successful email campaign. You can find various [websites](#) and blogs with tips on how to increase your chances of success when launching an email campaign.


This study has been carried out on behalf of CBI by [Ecovia Intelligence](#).

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