



## [10 Tips for Finding Buyers in the European Grains and Pulses Sector](#)

How can I find European buyers for my product?

When entering new markets, many sources can be used to find buyers. For example, you can approach sector associations to obtain contact details. But it is equally important that buyers can find you, especially online. Trade fairs offer a very good platform to interact with buyers in person. Whatever promotion tools you use, make sure they are consistent and leave a professional impression. Have a look at the following tips and apply them to your company.

### Contents of this page

1. [Do your market research](#)
2. [Attract buyers to your website](#)
3. [Make connections by networking on different social media channels](#)
4. [Visit and exhibit regularly at trade fairs](#)
5. [Get in touch with support organisations](#)
6. [Check the information that sector associations offer](#)
7. [Register with trade directories](#)
8. [Engage with your business contacts](#)
9. [Seek free publicity or advertise at trade shows](#)
10. [Understand your buyer's mindset](#)

## 1 . Do your market research

Plan your market entry by doing a comprehensive analysis of your target market. Take the time to investigate where your products will have better chances, in which countries and in which segments. This way you will target the right buyers for your products.

### Tips:

- Do thorough research on market statistics, comparative market sizes and background information from each country, specific to your product. Check our studies on [Trade Statistics](#) and [Market Channels and Segments](#), and other interesting sources such as [European trade statistics](#), [ITC Trademap](#) and [FAOSTAT](#).
- In-market visits are also valuable once you are done with your desk research. This way you can test your assumptions, identify opportunities and find potential buyers.

- Keep up to date with the latest information about grains and pulses, for example on the websites of [Health Grain Forum](#) and [Food Navigator](#) and [World Grain](#).

## 2 . Attract buyers to your website

Web searches are very popular among buyers, so be sure that your company can be found by using the most common search engines. Normally, this is the first place where buyers will see whether you have a well-established company. If you do not appear in their web searches, they may assume you are a small exporter that is unable to fulfil their demand. Remember that your website is the main online communication channel which should fully reflect your business and communications.

### Tips:

- Websites get out of date very quickly. Buyers look for an updated website that represents your business and products, and also offers information about your international activities.
- Be sure that your website is organised, with attractive content and pictures that offer clear information. Do not forget to include good graphic design that fits your target market.
- Websites should be written in good English as well as in the language of your target market(s).
- Create your own blog to bring the customers' attention to interesting topics.
- Use SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) to get more traffic to your website. To do this, you can register for [Google Webmaster Tools](#).

## 3 . Make connections by networking on different social media channels

In order to find buyers across Europe, you can use business networking platforms such as [LinkedIn](#) and [Google+](#). LinkedIn is the most important for professional use and includes relevant groups for many industries. Other country-specific sites such as [Xing](#) in Germany and [Viadeo](#) in France are used as well, but on a much smaller scale. When you are active on social media, make sure that your contributions are professional and enhance your company's image. Do not spam many sites randomly with information that is not relevant. All sites operate on the basis of implicit codes of conduct about how they should be used. When you are active on social media channels such as Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook, or if you run a blog, the same caveat applies: be professional and selective in your posts.

## 4 . Visit and exhibit regularly at trade fairs

Whether you are a visitor or an exhibitor, trade fairs are the first place to meet in person with your potential buyers. This is a great opportunity to talk to other companies and get a bigger picture of how the market is developing. For grains and pulses in Europe, Anuga, SIAL, FIE and BioFach are major trade fairs. Before deciding which show to exhibit at, take the time to visit the website, check who the attendees are and see if your product(s) and company are the right fit for this particular trade fair.

## Tips:

- Design an eye-catching stand, as marketing starts with the visual aspect of your company. You can re-use your stand design and infrastructure at several trade shows.
- If you prefer not to bring your own stand because of its size, weight and so on, there is also the option to rent a stand and set up the configuration according to your needs. Check with the trade show organiser whether this option is offered.
- Some trade shows schedule matchmaking meetings for buyers and suppliers to evaluate collaboration interests. These one-to-one meetings can take place in a conference room. Sometimes a fee will be charged to be able to participate. Do not forget to register in advance.
- Prepare for your visit well in advance by checking details of the exhibitors list and making appointments beforehand by email, post or telephone.
- As trade fairs take place in different countries in Europe throughout the year, it is costly for small and medium-sized exporters to attend all of them. Consult with experts to select the fairs that offer the most benefits to your company. Trade fairs also publish statistics and profiles of visitors and exhibitors that will help you to decide. To increase your impact, you may combine your participation with a visit to clients and perform in-market visits.
- Do a [trade fair benefit check](#) after your exhibition. This software, free of charge, is a tool to calculate cost/benefits for exhibitors. It is available in different languages.
- Do not forget to do your trade show follow-up!

Here you can find a selection of the most attractive EU trade shows in the sector. Please note that these shows are often international and not country-restricted.

### France

[SIAL](#) Paris. Trade fair for food products.

[Natexpo](#). Paris. Trade fair for organic products.

### Germany

[Anuga](#). Cologne. World's leading international food fair for the retail trade, food service and catering market.

[BioFach Vivaness](#). Nuremberg. Largest trade fair for organic food products.

[Certified Food](#). Hamburg. B2B trade fair for certified raw materials and semi-finished products.

### Spain

[BioCultura](#). Held in different cities. Spanish international trade show for organic products and responsible consumption.

### Scandinavia

[Natural Products Scandinavia](#). Malmö, Sweden. Trade show co-located with the Nordic organic food fair specialised in organic and natural products.

### United Kingdom

[Natural Organic Europe](#). London.

[IFE](#). London. Largest food and drink exhibition taking place in the UK.

Global: [www.biztradeshows.com](http://www.biztradeshows.com) and [www.tofairs.com](http://www.tofairs.com) are two examples of websites to search for any trade show in the world. Just filter your target country in Europe and your sector.

## 5 . Get in touch with support organisations

Contact your country's chamber of commerce, government agencies or Business Services Organisations (BSOs), which promote exports from your home country and are in contact with overseas buyers.

Commercial attaches working in your country's embassy in Europe are a point of contact as well. They often have useful information about the market.

There are also governmental organisations in Europe which promote imports from developing countries. Check with them to see whether there are specific programmes for your country and sector. For instance:

[CBI](#). CBI runs export coaching programmes in many developing countries, but they are now always open for application. Check the country pages for the latest details.

[SIPPO](#). Switzerland global enterprise. SIPPO helps SMEs in selected partner countries and sectors to export their high-quality products to Europe.

[Ixpos](#). The German business portal.

[Finnpartnership](#). Its mission is to increase commercial cooperation and promote business partnerships between companies in developing countries and in Finland.

[BTC](#). The Trade for Development Centre is a Belgian Development Agency (BTC) programme.

## 6 . Check the information that sector associations offer

Support organisations for the international trade of grains, oilseeds, rice, pulses and derived products are available and offer useful information for you to find importers, exporters and distributors. Go to the members link and there you will find associations for several of the EU countries. In each of the countries you can also find traders who are the members of the association and you can get in touch with them. For example, have a look at:

### [GAFTA](#)

GAFTA is the only worldwide trade association representing the interests of members who trade in grains, feeding stuffs, pulses and rice internationally, with over 1,400 members in 86 countries.

### [COCEREAL](#)

COCEREAL is the European association representing trade in cereals, rice, feedstuffs, oilseeds, olive oil, oils and fats and agro supply. It has members in most of the 28 EU member countries. [List of members](#).

Governmental organisations within the European Union support trade between nations by helping them to find business partnerships. For example, [Enterprise Europe Network](#) offers a very interesting database where you can look for local contact points in all EU and some non-EU countries.

## 7 . Register with trade directories

Trade directories usually charge for membership to get information on their databases and to contact other traders. After your registration, you can either join as a supplier or directly look for buyers. Be selective in the directories you are using and make sure you leave a professional impression. Posting randomly on many sites may look cheap and even desperate.

You can use a free trial to start with and then see if it is worth paying the annual fee. Here are some interesting online trade organisations:

[Green trade](#). Marketplace for organic products.

[Grains1](#). International B2B portal for the grains industry.

[Organic Bio](#). International directory of organic food wholesale and supply commodities in the EU.

[European grain](#). European trade platform for grains.

[Organic Business](#). Natural trade directory for the UK market only.

[Kompass](#). Global B2B.

[Global buyers online](#). Search for the latest trade leads from buyers and importers from all over the world.

[Europages](#). Directory of European companies. This is a professional portal that encourages business-to-business exchanges.

[Food Companies](#). Directory and marketplace for food companies.

## 8 . Engage with your business contacts

It is important to be consistent with the contacts that you make in order to obtain potential buyers. In the initial stages of selling, it is imperative to have good commercial negotiation skills, but in the long term you will have to maintain a good relationship with your clients and potential customers. [Customer Relationship Management](#) (CRM) programmes help you to have an organised overview of your contacts, opportunity management, lead generation and customer service, among other areas. There are several online options irrespective of the size of your business.

### Tips:

- Build a database using a CRM solution and make lists of your clients based on their interests.
- Keep your clients informed about your business developments. This does not need to be long, so keep it short, precise and clear. For instance, sending an e-newsletter to your clients between two and four times a year will be fine.
- Find special dates during the year to keep in touch with your clients, like Christmas or Easter holidays.

## 9 . Seek free publicity or advertise at trade shows

When you have an interesting story to tell about your product or company, you may seek free publicity. If you have the budget, advertising pays off when you are starting your business. You can use a trade show to position your firm. Trade shows have their own marketing departments that are responsible for advertising and promoting exhibitor companies. Adverts range from flyers and banners to personalised ads which can be placed either on paper, online or on mobile platforms in the exhibition media.

### Tips:

- Select the right material publicise when you have everything ready to compete in the market.
- You can usually find a press room in the fairgrounds where you can present a press release of your company and products.

- Contact the event organiser and request more information on ad sizes, resolution, prices and so forth.

## 10 . Understand your buyer's mindset

Buyers are contacted each day with offers from suppliers, therefore you should highlight what makes your product and company special. Before contacting your prospects it is important to take the time to understand their way of doing business. Since you will be dealing with people from different countries in the EU, it is recommended to adapt to their cultural mindset and expectations. Check out our study [Top 10 Tips for Doing Business with European Buyers](#).

*'Personal contacts, at trade fairs or otherwise, are a very good way to establish a relation with buyers, but you should back this up with other communication tools and especially your website. If your presentation is professional and consistent, and your product offer is interesting, they will be willing to buy from you.'* Freek Jan Koekoek, CBI Sector Expert



*'Doing business in Europe takes a proactive attitude. Your buyer will expect good communication skills and quick response times. Inform your client during the whole supply process and be proactive with offering solutions when needed. There are many ways to find potential clients, but it is your approach that puts you in business.'* Michel Peperkamp, CBI Market Researcher



Disclaimer CBI market information tools: <http://www.cbi.eu/disclaimer>