

Estonian Food Industry Association

Estonia is set to provide organic and “smart” food to the world

The long-standing traditions of the Estonian food sector are rooted in dairy and alcohol. Exactly these products established the wealth of Estonians in the by-gone days as the main output of manor houses. Estonian bacon, butter and eggs became the largest export articles of Estonia already in the 1930s. No wonder the oldest Estonian bakery Leibur goes back at least 250 years – proper black rye bread is a staple in all Estonian households!

The modern era for Estonian food producers started with the country’s accession to the European Union in 2004, giving a new lease on life to the entire industry with increased focus on quality and product development. The food industry today employs approximately 16 thousand people and contributes 14% of the processing industry, exporting 10% of the overall volume of the said industry.

Borrowing from the heydays of past times, the beverages industry continues to push export volumes, as due to long expiration dates, drinks withstand export better than most other commodities. Increasingly it is the dairy industry that thrives on export, as innovation is driven further through collaboration with scientific institutions on developing new products that provide healthier benefits.

A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT PRODUCES HEALTHIER FOOD

The quality of Estonian food relies on the clean resources available in the country owing to favorable climatic conditions. Estonia is not plagued by either flooding nor droughts, which in turn diminishes the use of pesticides and other plant protection products. Consequently, Estonia is the second largest organic farming country in Europe. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations has rated Estonian food as the second cleanest in the world.



The global trend is increasingly moving towards healthier food that provides consumers with extra benefits, such as more vitamins and protein. This is one area where Estonians truly stand out for their innovation and product development. Thanks to their relatively small size and innovative approach to scientific advancements, Estonian food products are some of the healthiest and safest available. Think bio-enriched yoghurts, native goods or honey-based products. Not to mention, food production in the country is highly regulated and demands manufacturers to keep up with world industry standards and certifications.

Estonian food products can be found on over 100 export markets around the globe, with the top export markets remaining in Nordic-Baltic regions. While access to lucrative new markets may be challenging to food producers, Estonian products have found their way to markets as far as even the Seychelles and Australia.

QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY WITH A DRIVE FOR INNOVATION

The future of the Estonian food industry is driven by a rise of micro-producers, while main export articles still remain within the realm of the larger enterprises. 100 of the largest manufacturers contribute 85% of the sector’s turnover and use 95% of the workforce. In step with the global trend of products with reduced salt and sugar content and using better quality fats, producing clean-label goods is also major focus in Estonian food industry.

The outlook for Estonian food products is positive, thanks to the established quality standards and the drive for sustainability. The export volumes of organic products and aquaculture are on the rise and Estonia takes the ethical treatment of animals and fish very seriously. Commitment to environmentally friendly solutions across the entire food value chain is a priority for Estonia.