

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 - after all, 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, while the oldest Estonian bakery Leibur goes back at least 250 years. And no Estonian can go without traditional black rye bread for longer than absolutely necessary.

Today, Estonian food products are renowned for hailing from the country with the cleanest air in the world, so naturally the emphasis is on ecologically fresh products. 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 15 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 drinks withstand export better than most other commodities due to their longer expiration periods. 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 favourable climatic conditions, as Estonia is not plagued by either flooding nor droughts. This in turn diminishes the use of pesticides or other plant protection products, allowing Estonia to be 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.

As consumer habits are changing around the world, Estonian food processors are quick to react to these adjustments thanks to their relatively small size and

innovative approach to scientific advancements. The global trend is increasingly moving towards healthier food that provides consumers with extra benefits, such as more protein. This is one area where Estonians truly stand out for their innovation and product development.

Estonian food products can be found on over 100 export markets around the globe, while the TOP 5 markets still remain nearby. While access to lucrative new markets may sometimes even be challenging to Estonian food producers, their products have found their way to markets as far as even the Seychelles. What matters the most is that Estonian food products are safe and certified and this is why Estonians have been able to find their favourite dishes and products on the shelves of supermarkets in Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Denmark and beyond.

QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY WITH A DRIVE FOR INNOVATION

The future of the Estonian food industry is clearly driven by an onslaught of micro-producers, while exports still remain within the realm of the larger enterprises. 100 of the largest enterprises contribute 85% of the sector’s turnover and use 95% of the workforce. The global trend is very much in favour of products with reduced salt and sugar content and using better quality fats, producing clean-label products.

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, cementing the country’s commitment to environmentally-friendly solutions across the entire food value chain.

