

frozenfood

Europe

The magazine for frozen food buyers

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The chef's Italian favourite.



fresh frozen pasta



fresh frozen pasta specialities



frozen sauces in pellet form

SURGITAL S.p.A. - via Bastia 16/1 - 48017 Lavezzola (RA) - Emilia Romagna - ITALY - Tel +39 0545 80328 - Fax +39 0545 80121 - www.surgital.com - surgital@surgital.it

> Meat And Poultry Products

> Vegetables, Fruit and Green Herbs

> European Fish & Seafood Sector

Will Customers Stop Buying?

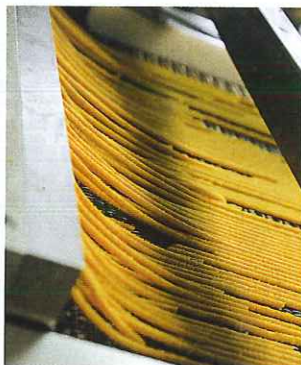
Frozen Image Gets A Boost From Marketing

Seafood As A Staple

Creativity and High Quality Encourage Growth



Set up 30 years ago as a small artisan workshop, Surgital is today Italy's leading company producing deep-frozen fresh pasta and sauces for quality restaurant cooking and catering, as well as ready to cook deep-frozen dishes for the bar and snack outlets. Dan Orehov interviewed Mr. Alberto Bondanelli - Export Manager with Surgital regarding the company's growth strategy.



How would you characterize your company's evolution in the past two years, in terms of sales, turnover and product innovations, with special emphasis on exports?

We make deep-frozen fresh pasta for the professional catering sector. We operate in a niche market, therefore, but we haven't escaped the economic crisis that has caused so much damage in the last couple of years. We operate on many foreign markets, and the crisis has hit us in many different ways. Some markets have been more difficult than others, such as Spain and Greece, but we've tried to counter the effects of the crisis with innovation: in some cases actually investing against the trend, when the generally difficult economic context would seem to weigh against further risk and investment. We've weathered the crisis well, and our export turnover has held up.

On average, what percentage of the turnover do exports account for within the company?

Fortunately our business context is one of growth, and exports account for one third of our turnover.

Which are the countries you export to most and how many export markets do you currently target?

Nowadays the European market is part of the domestic market. And in Europe, Germany, France and the UK have traditionally been our strongest markets, and the ones where we've sought to intensify our efforts. Although Europe is our main market, we export to a total of fifty countries in all five continents.

What other possible foreign markets do you consider for the future?

We're keeping a watchful eye on the American and South American markets, as well as certain Asian countries, which if carefully selected could prove very interesting.

How would you characterize the consumer behavior in terms of your products? Which are the best selling export products?

We know our clients well - caterers who value quality and service. We're constantly offering them new products. In our product mix there is one range that's truly exceptional in terms of innovation and quality. This is our Divine Creazioni range, which is produced using exclusive technology to recreate the look and texture of hand-made pasta with all its "irregularities". To make this range even more prestigious, the fillings are made exclusively with DOP ingredients, i.e. protected-denomination

ingredients, and the pasta comes in a patented packaging that's unique in the pasta sector.

What is your opinion concerning the important potential of emerging markets such as India, China, Brazil etc?

As I said earlier, these are emerging markets that we're watching with interest. We believe Asia will soon be ripe for investment of a more targeted nature than at present.

How important is product marketing in encouraging sales and exports and what emphasis does Surgital place on the marketing and promotion budget?

We dedicate a lot of attention and resources to marketing, especially direct demonstrations and tastings of our products. Obviously a very large part of our promotional budget is invested in trade fairs, which are unbeatable as product showcases and for raising awareness of our products.

What are your financial predictions, in terms of exports, for 2012? What is your expansion strategy for this year and how do you adapt your business to current market conditions?

In 2012, we'll continue with our efforts to penetrate external markets, looking for ways of getting round the crisis that's still causing so much damage by offering our clients innovation and assistance. In a crisis context, raw materials are again showing signs of turbulence, with significant price fluctuations and strong pressure to increase prices. This turbulence is a general phenomenon and everyone is affected by it sooner or later, but our strategy is based exclusively on quality and we cannot accept cheaper substitutes. Our capital is the credibility and authenticity which we've cultivated in three decades of business on the Italian and foreign markets. ■



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