

Eezy Fruitz whets appetites for healthy nutrition

FRUITY CREATIONS FROM COLOMBIA ARE IN VOGUE

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Many food-conscious consumers prefer natural, vegetarian products that are rich in nutrients. Fruity snacks, mueslis and smoothies with exotic aromas and valuable nutrients are fully in vogue, and there is a growing demand on the EU market for healthy, natural products. Traders from developing countries can also benefit from the expanding market for healthy food. The exporter SERO Colombia, one of the Import Promotion Desk's partner companies in Colombia, is a case in point.



The export company, SERO Colombia, has specialised in products made from freeze-dried fruits. SERO makes premium-quality fruit snacks from pineapples, mangos, bananas, and many other varieties of tropical fruit. The "Eezy Fruitz" crunchy fruit chips are excellent energy boosters for the vitamin kick between meals. Thanks to the gentle drying process, the vitamins, aromas, dietary fibres and minerals in Eezy Fruitz are optimally preserved.

"Freeze-dried fruits are amongst the most premium-quality food products in the world," explains Rodrigo Londoño, co-founder and chief financial officer (CFO) of SERO. "Dried fruit has a long shelf life, and it contains all the ingredients of fresh fruit in concentrated form. For example, 100 grams of freeze-dried banana chips have the full vitamin content of a whole kilo of fresh bananas. Through the freeze-drying process, the water is removed from the fruit by sublimation under a vacuum, while the nutrient content, colour, and flavour remain unchanged."



SERO Colombia offers a wide range of exotic fruit in freeze-dried as well as in air-dried form. Its latest product lines include soursop (graviola) and Cape gooseberries (physalis). The products can be used for many different creations: for manufacturing muesli or fruit bars, as an ingredient for smoothies or shakes, lending the final touch to chocolates, desserts and pastries, or for flavouring tea.



**100 PER CENT
FRUIT**

In terms of quality and food safety, the company has the highest of standards. "All our products are 100% natural. We use no artificial ingredients or preservatives whatsoever. Artificial flavours, colouring, processed sugar, and additives of whatever kind are taboo," Londoño emphasises. The exceptional quality of SERO's dried fruit is based on long-term research, an in-house laboratory for new product developments, and a very strictly controlled production process. →



IMPORT PROMOTION DESK



»The IPD export promotion programme has opened many doors for us. IPD expertise creates confidence amongst customers, especially on the EU markets. This makes introducing our products so much easier. The IPD has helped SERO Colombia position itself as a trustworthy supplier for even the most demanding customers.«

Rodrigo Londoño, co-founder and CFO of SERO Colombia



**EXPORT PROMOTION
BEARING FRUIT**

“SERO Colombia is fully in compliance with international food processing standards,” affirms Angie Martinez, IPD specialist for sourcing and purchase for the natural ingredients sector. “In cooperation with the public business support organisation ProColombia, we identified the company, testing and positively assessing its export potential and the quality of its products.” SERO Colombia joined the IPD export promotion programme in 2015.

Within the context of various trade fairs, such as Anuga in Cologne and SIAL in Paris, SERO has meanwhile been able to present its products to the European market. Using marketing workshops and sales coaching, the IPD intensively prepared the Colombian exporter in advance for these trade-fair appearances, also arranging B2B meetings with European importers during the fairs.

The IPD export promotion programme has enabled SERO to move forward successfully. Staff members from the company have attended schoolings, acquiring knowledge on European standards in relation to food safety, quality certification, designation of origin, certification, regulations, and import stipulations. In addition to that, the IPD has given SERO support in optimising its corporate structures and supply chains. The company has invested in improved quality management, so that it was able to obtain ISO 22000 certification as well as ECOCERT certification for organic products.

“Internationally recognised certification is an important requirement for accessing the EU market. In order for companies from developing countries to survive on the market, however, it is also crucial that they specifically align their product range to local demands,” Angie Martinez explains. “In this, SERO Colombia is headed in the right direction, because healthy organic plant products are real trendsetters.”

Since receiving support from the IPD, SERO's export business has increased. In a space of less than a year, the company was able to expand from 12 to 24 employees. This success also safeguards the local agricultural employment situation. SERO champions the cause of improved working conditions for farmers, and it is involved in agronomical programmes for the maintenance of biological diversity. The example of SERO Colombia demonstrates how, by exporting innovative products, it is possible to generate positive effects along the value chain, thereby promoting sustainable development.



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