

Food2025

An export strategy for the Belgian food industry

'Food.be – Small country. Great food.' is the promotional brand created by Fevia, the federation of the Belgian food industry.

food.be
Small country. Great food.

Summary

Why a Food2025 strategy?

Fevia, the federation of the Belgian food industry, and its sub-federations developed the present export strategy to boost exports of Belgian food & beverages. This is a prerequisite for the food industry to remain sustainably embedded in Belgium as the largest industrial sector and job creator:

- Over the last decade, the domestic market became saturated.
- Meanwhile, the international market showed the biggest growth potential: exports grew by an average 5% year on year.
- In 2016, already half of our sector's turnover of 50 billion euros was generated through exports.
- By deduction, exports of Belgian food & beverages provided 115,000 direct and indirect jobs in Belgium.
- However, our growth path is challenged by protectionism and an underdeveloped export potential for our producers.

Our ambitions

The Belgian food industry is rightfully ambitious!

Between now and 2025, we want to:

- maintain a 5% average annual growth of our exports
- increase the turnover generated through export by 1 billion euros each year, thereby generating a turnover of 35 billion euros through exports by 2025
- at a minimum maintain a stable trade balance of 3.7 billion euros

Our strategy

To accomplish these ambitions, we reach out to all companies in the food industry, our partners in the food chain and the public authorities to join forces.



Let's proudly promote the diversity, quality and innovations of Belgian food & beverages abroad and show the world that We are Food.be – Small country. Great food!

Our goals

What

Why

How

<p>1 Increase political and public support for the export of Belgian food & beverages.</p>	<p>To stimulate policy choices that help us attain our full export potential, especially given the emerging protectionism.</p>	<p>By demonstrating the impact of exports on turnover, added value and domestic employment in the food industry.</p>
<p>2 Optimise collaboration between our sector and the public authorities responsible for international trade.</p>	<p>To translate political support into operational support for exporting F&B producers.</p>	<p>By optimising the flow of information and the working process on export facilitation.</p>
<p>3 Strengthen the image of Belgian food & beverages abroad.</p>	<p>To increase foreign demand for our products.</p>	<p>By focusing our promotional actions on our target audience in key export destinations.</p>
<p>4 Increase market access for Belgian food & beverages in third world countries.</p>	<p>To enhance the growth potential for export of Belgian food & beverages.</p>	<p>By helping the competent authorities to defend our interests in bilateral and multilateral trade agreements and work with them on opening up markets.</p>
<p>5 Accelerate the internationalisation of the Belgian food industry.</p>	<p>So more Belgian F&B companies will export more of their products.</p>	<p>By equipping producers with knowledge and skills on international trade and connect them with relevant partners.</p>



Our actions

In order to accomplish each of these goals by 2025, we will develop yearly action plans in close collaboration with our partners.

Each action plan will be added to this publication.

Key export destinations

While the world is our market place, we need to focus on export destinations which are relevant for a substantial group of companies in different subsectors in the Belgian food industry.

The quantitative analysis of export markets with high growth potential and the qualitative input of the directors of the sub-federations combine to warrant the following conclusions:

- Overseas exports show the biggest potential for growth:
 - Exports to the **US** and **China** are seeing spectacular growth, respectively doubling and tripling over a 4-year period
 - **Japan, Saudi Arabia** and **Canada** currently complete the top five of our main overseas export destinations
 - In Southeast Asia, **Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia** and **Malaysia** show significant potential for growth, as do the more mature Asian markets of **South Korea, Hong Kong** and **Taiwan**
 - In Latin America, we are keen to develop our exports to **Brazil, Mexico** and **Chili**
 - The **United Arab Emirates, Jordan** and **Algeria** too show potential for further development
- Our four neighbouring countries (**The Netherlands, France, Germany** and the **UK**) represent 65% of our exports and remain our main export destinations. The Brexit and protectionist measures place the UK and France high on our list of priorities
- In Europe, we are witnessing a shift to the east, with growing export numbers to **Central and Eastern Europe**

The list is indicative, not limitative. It goes without saying that we need to continuously monitor global economic developments and respond to opportunities and threats.

GOAL 1: Increase political and public support for the export of Belgian food & beverages

Why?

Political and public support is paramount to underpin policy choices that help us attain our full export potential. This is becoming increasingly more relevant in a context of emerging protectionism. Globally, this is seen to take on the shape of anti-dumping measures against certain Belgian products.

Closer to home, the Brexit, initiatives on country of origin labelling and diverging national environmental and food safety norms are placing the European Internal Market before an existential crisis. Our sector is already clearly impacted by these developments, with export numbers to the UK and France dropping in multiple product categories, after already having suffered under the enduring Russian embargo. In our own country, scepticism regarding free trade is leading to calls for a self-sufficient food system, where we only produce and buy locally.

While we welcome initiatives to stimulate domestic sales of Belgian food & beverages, folding back on our own market is not an option. As an export-oriented sector in a small and open economy, the world is our market place.

How?

As the spokesperson for the Belgian food industry, Fevia will strengthen political awareness on export as a prerequisite for the sustainable growth of the food industry and the long-term embedment of our sector in Belgium. We ask our governments to allow us to restore our competitiveness and facilitate export conditions.

We will raise awareness among public opinion by highlighting the impact of exports of Belgian food & beverages on turnover, added value and domestic employment in our media messages.



GOAL 2: Optimise collaboration with public authorities responsible for international trade

Why?

Public authorities translate political support into operational support for Belgian food & beverage producers. In Belgium, multiple public authorities at federal and regional level are responsible for different aspects of international trade that affect the export of food & beverages.

an efficient flow of information and optimise working processes on export facilitation.

Fevia works with the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain to further optimise its functioning to the benefit of Belgian food & beverage exports.

How?

Sector representatives and civil servants from these public authorities meet as part of the Taskforce Export Agri-food, coordinated by the FPS Foreign Affairs. Under the header of this taskforce, we will organise

The trade promotion agencies are our key partners in business support. Fevia Vlaanderen and FIT join hands on the internationalisation of the food industry through a partnership agreement 2017-2021. Fevia Wallonie and Fevia Brussels consult with AWEX and BIE on a structural basis on joint actions to be undertaken.

Which public authority is our contact point?

Trade promotion agencies

Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT), l'Agence wallonne à l'Exportation et aux Investissements étrangers (AWEX), Brussels Invest & Export (BIE)

- Foreign trade promotion
- Financial support for international entrepreneurship
- Information and advice on export, internationalisation and foreign markets
- Activities and events for prospecting and business contacts

Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs

- Concertation on various aspects of international trade, i.a. the Belgian position regarding EU and WTO trade policy
- Coordination of joint economic missions and state visits, together with the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency and the trade promotion agencies
- Belgian embassies are key partners in the image building of Belgian food & beverages abroad

Federal Public Service Economy

- Monitors the European policies on market access and trade barriers and defends the Belgian position in the relevant EU committees and working groups
- Organises info meetings for the sector federations

Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC)

- Issues export certificates
- Negotiates SPS conditions for exports to third countries
- Coordinates incoming inspection and factfinding visits
- Organises plenary info meetings on SPS aspects of exports for the agri-food sector
- Safeguards the high-quality food safety image of Belgian food beverages
- Attaché for the Asian market based in China

Federal Public Service Finances

- Customs and excise duties
- 5 customs attachés in BRICS countries

We need to optimise the collaboration with these administrations, so they can defend our interests at bilateral and multilateral level and adapt their services as widely as possible to our sector specific needs.



GOAL 3: Strengthen the image of Belgian food & beverages abroad with food.be

Why?

A strong identity for Belgian food and beverages bolsters foreign demand for our products. Which is why Fevia and its members have been promoting Belgian food and beverages abroad under the joint “Food.be – Small country. Great food” brand. With food.be, we highlight our main strengths: the rich diversity and high quality of the food and beverages produced in Belgium and our drive to continuously innovate to make our products even more tastier, healthier and more sustainable.

The launch of food.be infused our sector with a new dynamic and positioned us as an export champion. Since 2012, we have been building domestic support for the brand. Food.be became well-known with our sub-federations, our companies and our partners and stakeholders. It proved its merit as a flag around which to rally our companies and partners at trade fairs, state visits and economic missions. Food.be also strengthened the role of Belgian food & beverages as ambassadors, delivering a positive image of Belgium and its regions as an essential but vulnerable prerequisite for a strong global economic position.

The next step is to use food.be to further strengthen our position internationally and to facilitate the connection between foreign buyers, distributors, food service professionals and opinion makers in the food industry and Belgian food companies. To strengthen the added value for our companies, we reinforced the international recognizability of food.be: we adapted its logo and developed its branding.

How?

We will use the food.be website as a means to strengthen the image of Belgian food & beverages abroad and as a liaison between foreign partners and the companies on the site. We will reach out to our target audience, i.a. through our social media channels.

Together with our partners, we will maximise visibility for our companies and their products at trade fairs, state visits, economic missions and promotional events.

We will continue to support Belgian, regional and sectoral image campaigns.

GOAL 4: Maximise international access for Belgian food & beverages

Why?

Exports to third countries show the biggest growth potential. Diversification is essential to minimize the impact of disruptive developments such as the Russian embargo, the Brexit and purported anti-dumping measures.

Multilateral and bilateral trade agreements are intended to open up markets and eliminate trade barriers.

The European Commission negotiates bilateral trade agreements with non-EU countries. Negotiations are ongoing with a number of important export markets for Belgian food & beverages, including Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia and Mercosur. The EU-Mexico (2000) and EU-South Korea (2011) agreements will be updated. Where no EU trade agreements are in place or (certain) SPS aspects are kept out of an agreement, it is up to national authorities to negotiate export terms and the necessary certifications.

The Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain works on market access for i.a. Belgian dairy, meat, fruit and vegetable products.

Once an agreement enters into force, which was the case for CETA recently, it is essential to see it fully implemented, so that our sector benefits from reduced customs tariffs or quota, simplified regulations and other measures to stimulate trade between the signatories.

Aside from gaining access to new markets, it is also important to maintain market access. We also need to assist sectors or companies that unrightfully face anti-dumping measures.

How?

We will inform our political representatives of the offensive and defensive interests of our sector to be upheld at trade negotiations at EU and WTO level.

We will work with the public authorities in charge to maximise market access and eliminate trade barriers for Belgian food & beverages in countries where we see significant export opportunities.

With the assistance of the public administrations, we will see to the implementation of trade agreements.



GOAL 5: Accelerate the internationalisation of the Belgian food industry

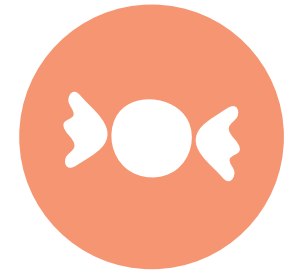
Why?

Belgian food & beverage producers need to fully seize on the potential for exports. Given that the food industry largely consists of SMEs, they sometimes lack the knowledge and skills to be successful at international level. The digitisation of our sector deserves particular attention, with social media and e-commerce becoming crucial elements in international marketing & sales.

How?

Together with public and private partners, we will (co-)organise:

- info sessions on consumer trends and the retail landscape in key export markets
- thematic training sessions on regulatory matters, e-commerce, international marketing & communications, etc.
- expert sessions at trade fairs
- foreign study trips
- export missions



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Discover the quality, diversity and innovation of more than 1,200 Belgian food and beverage companies on www.food.be.

Fevia

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