

Organic herbs from Tunisia

HERBIOTECH'S EXPORT BUSINESS PROVIDES WORK FOR A WHOLE VILLAGE

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Tunisia is an attractive procurement market for dried herbs. Yet this is a little-known fact for many German importers. Most only know of Tunisia as an important export nation for olive oil. In the Kairouan region, the exporter Herbiotech employs an entire village in the cultivation of organic herbs. The Import Promotion Desk (IPD) supports the Tunisian trader as they introduce their premium-quality products to the EU market.



Herbiotech in Tunisia is still a young enterprise, which has specialised in the production of dried herbs. The Kairouan region offers excellent climatic conditions for the cultivation of herbs. In Zaafrana, a village in the Kairouan hinterland, Herbiotech grows high-quality, organically farmed herbs. At the company's production site in Bouarada, the organic herbs are refined. The company's main products are especially dried olive leaves, dill, parsley, and peppermint, but they also include basil, coriander, and thyme. On a crop area covering 160 hectares, the company produces around 5,000 tons of fresh herbs every year. Modern machinery is used to dry the herbs, process them, and prepare them for export. As a quality improvement measure, the company has invested the equivalent of roughly one million euros in raw material production and state-of-the-art agricultural processing technology.

The company fully backs organic farming. For that reason, Herbiotech also takes personal responsibility for the cultivation of its herbs. "In the past, we bought in our raw products. By growing the herbs with our own controlled farming methods, we have further improved

the quality of our harvest and of our products," Dr. Leith Tlemçani, CEO of Herbiotech adds. "Our products are 100 per cent organic, unadulterated, and natural." Herbiotech was awarded ecocertification for its products in 2012.

WELL ON THE WAY TO THE EU MARKET

Herbiotech has invested a great deal in meeting the high standards of the European market. The Tunisian company is well on its way into the EU market. On the "last mile" of that journey, it is receiving support from the IPD. The company was accepted into the IPD export promotion programme in 2015. →



»In Tunisia, there is currently an increase in the production of organic produce. Export companies such as Herbiotech are playing an important pioneering role in this development. The company has systematically developed its organic sector, adjusting its range of products in line with demand. Herbiotech has good prospects on the EU market.«

Kathrin Seelige, IPD Specialist Sourcing + Purchase



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»In 2015, we equipped our production site with a computer-operated drying plant,« says Dr. Leith Tlemçani, CEO of Herbiotech, »The freshly harvested herbs are quickly and gently processed, so that the end product retains a maximum of flavour and aroma.«

Dr. Leith Tlemçani, CEO of Herbiotech



The IPD has been advising Herbiotech in the export marketing sector, using workshops and training sessions to provide the company with all knowledge it needs regarding to import stipulations, regulations, and quality norms on the EU market. In a number of training sessions, the IPD prepared the Tunisian export company for its appearance at the Biofach and other European trade fairs. During the fairs, the IPD took on the role of matchmaker, arranging B2B meetings and liaising numerous contacts for Herbiotech to German and European importers. The IPD thus helped secure initial business transactions for the Tunisian trader. Thanks to the IPD development assistance, Herbiotech has refined its export marketing strategy, and it has developed its expertise to such an extent that the company will soon be able to organise its trade fair appearances independently.

Since it has its own cropland at its disposal, Herbiotech is able to react flexibly to the demand for specific herbs, and to coordinate with its customers in order to produce herbs in the quantities required. Herbiotech also offers importers the option of long-term cooperation, securing their supply of organic herbs by means of a grower-to-business plan.

PRODUCTS WITH A FUTURE

In specialising on organic herbs, Herbiotech has set the course for the future. "Initially, we mainly produced olive oil," Tlemçani explains, "but there is massive competition from Spain and Italy in that line of business. With the production of organic herbs, however, we are filling a gap in the market."



Olive oil production now only constitutes one-tenth of the company's overall production. In line with all the company's products, the Herbiotech Chetoui olive oil and its cold-pressed seed oils are of premium organic quality. The company plans to expand its herb output further in the future. The purchase of further acreage for the cultivation of organic herbs is already in the planning. In the near future, Herbiotech hopes this will enable them to provide employment for a second village.



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