

HUSSEY & CO FINDS FRESH MARKETS IN ASIA

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Australia's free trade agreements are helping Hussey & Co export fresh salad leaves to Asia's health-conscious consumers.

As the Managing Director of Hussey & Co, Jeremy Haw has come a long way from selling live chickens and tomatoes on the side of the road at just ten years old. Today, Haw is still selling fresh produce, albeit on a much larger scale.

Haw oversees a business supplying fresh baby leaf salads to some of Asia's biggest brands. These include Singapore Airlines and Cathay Pacific, as well as leading supermarkets in Hong Kong, Indonesia and Singapore. The company also has a strong presence in Japan, Malaysia and Thailand.

Free Trade Agreement with Asian countries boosts sales for exporters

Haw says Hussey & Co has benefited from Australia's bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements with the Asian countries with which it does business.

'Free trade agreements are very important,' says Haw. 'As a high-quality producer, Australia's costs of production are not low, so obtaining preferential tariffs available under our free trade agreements is essential if we are to be competitive in overseas markets.'

Asia a healthy export choice

When Haw acquired Hussey & Co 10 years ago, the company was only selling 12 tonnes of salad leaves a week. He believed there was plenty of scope to develop and expand the business. Developing an export marketing strategy for Asia's vast consumer markets has been one of the areas they have seen consistent growth.



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Jeremy Haw, Managing Director, Hussey & Co

'I looked at Asia and thought "surely there's going to be some people there who eat salad",' Haw says.

Haw booked a stand at Food & Hotel Asia, a major event that connects global suppliers with Asia's key food, beverage and horticulture buyers, and says he was the only 'veggie guy' at the event.

'A couple of people asked what I was doing there because Asians tend to cook vegetables so they weren't sure if there would be any interest in fresh salad leaves,' recalls Haw.

It turned out there was plenty of interest. 'Our first customer was Singapore Airlines,' says Haw. 'Singapore is now our biggest export market.'

'So don't listen to what people say: if you believe in your product, then it's worth giving it a go.'



Australian Government

Australian Trade and Investment Commission



To ensure its salad leaves reach international customers in the freshest state possible, Hussey has invested in optical sorting technology to grade produce. Featuring the largest air-drying tunnel in the world, the technology controls the amount of moisture on leaves, while on-farm vacuum cooling enhances shelf-life.

The investment has paid off: last year, Hussey's exports grew 18 per cent and the company was a finalist in the Agribusiness category at the 56th Australian Export Awards and has recently won the Victorian Grower of the Year for 2019.

Choosing the right partner

The fragile nature and short shelf life of Hussey's product required a logistics partner that could ensure zero deterioration in quality during shipment.

'The biggest challenge for us was finding the right logistics partner – you can't just use any freight forwarder,' says Haw. 'We looked for a partner that understood our business and was prepared to accommodate the unique conditions of keeping vegetables fresh.'

Haw adds that the right partner can also help grow your brand and business.

'The Hussey brand is really well recognised in Hong Kong, Indonesia and Singapore, so I am always looking for partners that understand our way of doing business and are prepared to sell our brand. They can play a powerful role in building your business in the market.'

Keeping on top of quarantine issues

As an agricultural producer, Hussey must stay on top of import restrictions and quarantine issues.

'The inspection protocols can be challenging,' says Haw. 'To date, inspection hasn't been a major issue in the countries we're trading in. Japan's probably our toughest market. A good importer can usually help navigate the quarantine and inspection process.'

Invest in relationships

Like many others who do business in Asia, Haw says building solid relationships with customers is vital to success.

'You're trusting your product to someone else so invest time in going to the market, be there as often as you can and find the right people with whom to work,' he says. 'This applies for any customer, whether in Australia or overseas, but it's particularly important in Asia.'

'We have the same trading terms in Asia as we do in Australia and that's only possible because we have such strong relationships with our customers.'

Market insights from Austrade

Haw turns to Austrade when he needs information and advice about a specific market. 'Austrade has got a great international network,' he says. 'In any country you go to, you can ask someone and say "what can you tell me about the market" and you'll get good insights from them. They're fantastic and a great resource.'

Hussey is also the recipient of an [Export Market Development Grant \(EMDG\)](#). Administered by Austrade, the grant reimburses up to 50 per cent of eligible export promotion expenses. The EMDG was a big help in getting our export business started,' says Haw.

Next step: China and Korea

Hussey is now eyeing China and Korea as its next export markets.

'As a fresh food supplier, we have to look at those countries that aren't necessarily able to grow food 365 days a year,' says Haw. 'That's why Korea and China are interesting for us. China – where Australia has a good reputation as a supplier of clean, green produce – is definitely a market we want to be in.'

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