

## DIT supports Taywell in Hong Kong



*Luxury ice cream producer, Taywell, is based in Paddock Wood in Kent. The company has 13 employees and a turnover of £650,000. They have recently launched their exporting business in Hong Kong. With advice from the Department for International Trade (DIT) and funding to attend trade shows, Taywell secured a local partner to represent it in-market. When support was needed to secure a replacement trading licence, DIT joined up with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Food Standards Authority, Maidstone Local Council and an Environmental Health Officer in a cross government effort to help resolve the matter. To date, exports stand at £14,000 with more orders from Hong Kong, Thailand, China and India in the pipeline.*

When entrepreneur Alastair Jessel set up Taywell Ice Creams in August 2006, his initial aim was to use surplus fruit from his farm and turn it into something special. He was determined not to use any artificial additives, colours, stabilisers or bulking agents in his recipes. His range has expanded over

the years and he now offers everything from traditional favourites like vanilla, chocolate and mint choc chip, to original, exotic flavours like wasabi and chocolate, yuzu and Umeshu (plum wine).

# OMIS provides vital information

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Alastair's creations have won several awards and Taywell has been featured on television and radio shows like The Apprentice and Farming Today.

"Consumers have grown tired of poor quality, mass-produced, cheap ice cream," says Alastair. "We create high quality products, sourcing ingredients locally where possible. We constantly innovate and in November 2013 launched NOSH, one of the world's first, natural, dairy 'no added sugar' range of ice creams and sorbets for diabetics and people looking to reduce their sugar intake."

## Heading East

In October 2012, Alastair decided to start exporting. He signed up to Account Management, the DIT programme that helps businesses to prepare for international markets. Following this, an International Trade Adviser (ITA) worked with Taywell to consider which markets to approach first. The company decided to start with Hong Kong, hoping to use it as a gateway to China. They commissioned an Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) from the in-country DIT team and learned that there was nothing like Taywell's ice creams in Hong Kong.

Keen to learn more about the market first-hand, Alastair signed up to join a DIT Trade Mission in March 2013. This included exhibiting at trade show HOFEX. While there, the company found an importer interested in bringing in its ice creams.

*"HOFEX is the region's leading food and hospitality tradeshow, so it was really useful for us to exhibit there. The funding from DIT made a significant dent in the costs, making it more affordable to go."*

"We realised that we could ship our products to Asia for around the same cost as driving them up to Scotland, so the question became, why not?" says Alastair. "Our ITA's advice to start with Hong Kong was great, as the language, a lot of the culture and much of the population are English or European. The OMIS showed us that there were good

possibilities of entering the market but we needed to go there and investigate for ourselves. Our first export orders came in the autumn and these were sent out by air freight. We got our licence to trade in February 2014 and immediately prepared to send out a pallet by air, followed by a 20ft container of products."

## Trouble shooting

Unfortunately, while fixing an error that had occurred in labelling the tubs, 2 of the 11 flavours being sent out by air became contaminated. When they were tested at the Hong Kong Health Department, they were rejected and the whole load banned from sale. Taywell turned to DIT for help meeting the conditions that the local authorities placed on re-issuing the licence. DIT worked with the Environmental Health Officer, Maidstone local council, the Food Standards Authority and Defra to provide the necessary checks and reports. A new licence was granted in October and £14,000 worth of ice cream has since been exported to Hong Kong.

Taywell also exhibited at the Restaurant & Bar Show in September 2013 and 2014 with the help of DIT. There, the company made contact with a very large buyer in China who is interested in the ice creams. Talks are also underway through the Hong Kong importer with a buyer in India, and a container will be shipped to Thailand in spring 2015, once the relevant licence for this market has been secured.

"Mistakes can happen in business and you need to know who your friends are when you need help," says Alastair. "DIT was exceptionally proactive as a broker between us, the Hong Kong Department of Health and the various bodies in the UK whose support we needed. Our shipments have now recommenced and we can't thank enough the UK and Hong Kong teams at DIT. Working with them, we really feel like Britain cares about expanding our export business and helping us achieve our goals. It's comforting to know what an impressive team backs us up all along the way. We look forward to their continued support as we tackle new export markets."

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Published January 2016 by Department for  
International Trade

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