



## Barfoots grows new business in Europe

### Fast facts

**Company:** Barfoots of Botley

**Industry:** Agriculture

**Target markets:** The Netherlands, France, Italy

**UKTI services:** Overseas Market Introduction Service, Export Marketing Research Scheme

[www.barfoots.co.uk](http://www.barfoots.co.uk)



**UK Trade & Investment (UKTI), vegetable grower and distributor Barfoots of Botley has found new customers in France and the Netherlands, bringing in £1.5 million in revenue. The company will increase this by a further £5 million in 2016, with exports to France growing by 300%. It has 200 full time members of staff in the UK and employs up to 800 temporary workers during the harvest season.**

When Peter Barfoot started a small strawberry farm in West Sussex in 1976, he never expected it to grow into an international farming operation. It was not until 1989 that Peter decided to expand the farm and introduce new vegetables to his fields, including courgette and sweetcorn. The business, now called Barfoots of Botley, quickly grew and was soon supplying, packing and distributing produce for the UK's major supermarkets, including Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Tesco, Asda and Marks & Spencer.

The demand for produce all year round, instead of only seasonally, led the company to begin importing vegetables from an array of countries around the world including Spain, where it opened an office in 2000. In 2006, Barfoots developed a farming partnership in Senegal, West Africa, where it now grows sweetcorn, legumes, sweet potatoes and spicy chilli peppers for the UK market. It also has an operation in Peru where it has become the largest exporters of asparagus to the UK. The company has 200 full time members of staff in the UK, and can take on up to 800 temporary workers during the harvest season. It has a total turnover of £113 million.

"We are farmers at heart and place a strong emphasis on quality," says Juan-Carlos Leon, Sourcing and Business Development Director at Barfoots. "We follow a holistic approach towards the business and aim to balance the demand for fresh produce with sustainable farming methods.

For example, our UK farm is carbon neutral thanks to a bio-digester, which creates energy from produce that is not fit for sale."

### Looking abroad

In 2014, Barfoots decided to look into exporting its produce to Europe. The company knew that it would be able to fill further demand and suspected that some of its most popular products, such as sweet potatoes, sweetcorn and chilli peppers, would be welcome in markets where they were not yet fully available.

**"UKTI's introductions in France were particularly helpful and gave our company immediate credibility with large distributors."**

Juan-Carlos Leon,  
Sourcing and Business Development Director,  
Barfoots

## “UKTI’s guidance saved us time and money, and opened doors that otherwise would have been closed to us.”

Juan-Carlos Leon, Sourcing and Business Development Director, Barfoots

Having little experience with exporting, Juan-Carlos contacted UKTI for advice and guidance on where to begin. An International Trade Adviser (ITA) visited the company’s farm in West Sussex and put together an export plan.

Barfoots utilised UKTI’s Export Marketing Research Scheme, which gives companies free independent advice on how to carry out marketing research. Through business contacts in the UK, the company identified several distributors in the Netherlands. UKTI’s advice gave Barfoots the confidence to approach Nature’s Pride, a large produce importer that distributes across Northern Europe. The two started working together and in just 9 months Barfoots has already sold £1.3 million worth of vegetables. Its chillies have been particularly popular and the company has captured 40% of the chilli pepper market across the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Germany, and Belgium.

In May, Barfoots commissioned Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) reports on France, Italy and Russia. The report on France contained information about local competition and vegetable preference. It also identified several importers with whom the company could work. Juan-Carlos made a market visit in July to meet those named in the report and soon after appointed one as Barfoots’ local distributor. By the end of 2014, the company had sold 3 containers of sweet potatoes and 13 tonnes of chillies, worth £100,000, in France.

“UKTI’s advice helped us recognise the size of the opportunity available in continental Europe,” says Juan-Carlos. “Their introductions in France were particularly helpful and gave our company immediate credibility with large distributors. UKTI’s guidance saved us time and money, and opened doors that otherwise would have been closed to us.”

### Future growth

With the strong demand for its produce in France, Barfoots expects to grow its exports there by 300% in the coming year.

The company is also currently evaluating Italy as a possible target market. In addition, its relationship with Waitrose has resulted in exports to the supermarket’s 2 branches in the United Arab Emirates. As a result, the company is considering appointing a distributor in Dubai.

In 2015, Barfoots expects exports to make up 5% of its turnover. Over the course of the next 5 years, this is likely to increase to 10%.

“Across Europe, the UK retailers are recognised leaders in integrated global supply chains” says Juan-Carlos. “The solutions that we developed here are unique and relevant to other markets. I would tell any company considering exporting that there is a big world out there and it is worth looking into new opportunities. UKTI’s support has been key to our success and we will continue to rely on their advice as we expand in Europe and beyond.”

### The UK and France

France and the UK are major economic and trade partners. It is the UK’s 4th-largest export market for goods and 3rd-largest market for services. UK exports of goods and services to France totalled £32.2 billion in 2013.

There are plenty of opportunities for UK companies in France, which is home to Europe’s largest aerospace and nuclear industries, and second largest agri-food and chemical industries. In the retail sector, UK brands continue to expand, due to higher profitability than in neighbouring countries. Virtually anything that sells in a British supermarket can sell in France. The leading British exports to France include petroleum products, vehicles, aircraft parts and pharmaceuticals. Other high-performing sectors are spirits, automotive components, tyres, nuclear fuels and jewellery.

**For further information about business opportunities in France, please go to [gov.uk/ukti](http://gov.uk/ukti)**

### Helping you access international markets

Doing business in another country can be a challenge, so it’s good to know that UK Trade & Investment is there to help you succeed.

Through a range of unique services, including participation at selected trade fairs, overseas missions and providing bespoke market intelligence, UK Trade & Investment can help you crack foreign markets and quickly get to grips with regulations and business practices overseas.

UK Trade & Investment’s Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) is a flexible business tool, letting you use the services of our trade teams, located in our embassies, high commissions and consulates across the world, to benefit your business.

A service package could include:

- market, sector advice
- analysis of market entry strategies
- support during overseas visits
- identification of possible business partners

UKTI was delighted to support Barfoots of Botley in its business overseas.

To connect with an International Trade Adviser and begin your own success story now, visit [gov.uk/ukti](http://gov.uk/ukti), or email [enquiries@ukti.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ukti.gsi.gov.uk)

For updates on UKTI follow us here:

 [youtube.com/UKTIWeb](http://youtube.com/UKTIWeb)

 [twitter.com/UKTI](http://twitter.com/UKTI)

 [bit.ly/UKTIlinkedin](http://bit.ly/UKTIlinkedin)

 [facebook.com/BusinessisGREATBritain](http://facebook.com/BusinessisGREATBritain)

UK Trade & Investment is the Government Department that helps UK-based companies succeed in the global economy. We also help overseas companies bring their high-quality investment to the UK’s dynamic economy. We provide companies with the tools they require to be competitive on the world stage.