

This Queensland-based business creates certified organic products that are full of flavour and light on the earth

Planet Organic manufactures an exciting range of teas, herbs and spices that are currently being sold in health food stores around Australia. With the help of FIAL, they are now delving into the waters of export and have their eyes on the US market.

NAME, DESCRIPTION AND GEOGRAPHICAL BASE:

Planet Organic, Coolum Beach, Queensland

SIZE (EMPLOYEES): 9 employees



BEFORE:

- Steady growth in Australia but feeling the pressure of the increasingly competitive domestic health food market.

AFTER:

- Exporting to TJX in the US - they have sent three shipments already! Now looking at further opportunities in the US and other markets.

FIAL'S SUPPORT:

Participation in US Market Workshop in Brisbane in 2016, and US Market Export Tour in San Francisco in 2017

KEY TIP

Getting your products into new markets is all about persistence and timing. If it didn't work the first time, try again and don't give up.

"The beauty of the FIAL workshop was that it forced me to open my eyes to how long and how hard the process could be... but I came back with a really positive attitude, it got me fired up."

"After I went to the FIAL US workshop, it spurred me on to be following up all these leads that I had started previously, as I now had a much clearer indication of what the market was like."

"A lot of Americans aren't really aware of Australian products and what we're all about. I saw some Tim Tams on the shelves, and I said: "Now you need some good quality Australian tea to dunk them in!"

Some may be surprised by the growth in organics over the last 10 years, but Mark Noble knew there was huge potential for organic products here in the Australian market. In 1997, Mark took the plunge and created Planet Organic.

“Mark had been travelling through the US and the UK when he realised there were a lot of organic options that weren’t available here in Australia,” says Brian Condon, the Sales and Marketing Manager at Planet Organic. “He had this idea of organic tea and started off small, but [Planet Organic] has kept growing over the years.”

Planet Organic now operates out of a purpose-built warehouse on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, and has around 10 permanent employees. While they are most well-known for their organic tea range, they also sell herbs and spices, nut spreads and other organic products.

It’s been Planet Organic’s dedication and focus on creating quality products that are kind to the environment that has instilled company loyalty within Brian, who is now celebrating his 7th year with the company.

“Our teas are full on flavour, while light on the earth,” says Brian. “We are trying to create flavoursome, organic tea with minimal packaging... we try to leave as little of a footprint as we can.”

Planet Organic currently sells across Australia and New Zealand in various health food stores such as GoVita, Healthy Life and Flannery’s. For Brian, this distribution model was a calculated decision.

“We have taken the stance of not going down the supermarket route. As it stands at the moment, health food stores and chains are our biggest supporters.”

However, the health food market is becoming increasingly competitive in Australia, and internationally. “The market is changing rapidly. It’s getting harder for smaller health food stores to compete when you’ve got the bigger chains coming in,” says Brian.

With changes such as this disrupting the already limited Australian market, in 2016 Planet Organic began to think about delving into overseas markets. It was at this time that Brian serendipitously received an email about a FIAL ‘US Export Market Workshop’ in Brisbane.

“We had been sending emails and samples to different suppliers in the US with varying levels of success, so when the opportunity arose to find out a little bit more about the market, it was absolutely perfect timing.”



For Brian, the workshop was an invaluable experience that exposed him to the reality of exporting to the US, which according to Brian “is like dealing with a Coles and Woolworths, but on steroids!”

“The beauty of the FIAL workshop was that it forced me to open my eyes to how long and how hard the process could be... but I came back with a really positive attitude, it got me fired up.”

The workshop also inspired Brian and the team to chase up some leads in the US that previously had them stumped.

“The beauty of the FIAL workshop was that it forced me to open my eyes to how long and how hard the process could be... but I came back with a really positive attitude, it got me fired up.”

“After I went to the FIAL US workshop, it spurred me on to be following up all these leads that I had started previously, as I now had a much clearer indication of what the market was like.”

According to Brian, it’s all persistence and timing. Armed with new insights and market knowledge from the FIAL US Workshop, Brian followed up a previous lead with TJX, a home goods store in the US that had previously turned down Planet Organic. The TJX head office had just hired a food sourcing specialist, and was now in the position to start stocking the Planet Organic teas.

With a new approach that he learnt in the workshop, Brian was able to see some positive movement.

“We sent samples to her, and the rest is history... We have sent through three shipments so far. If it was not for the FIAL workshop, I wouldn’t have been in the position to follow them up.”

Motivated by the US workshop, Brian made the decision to join FIAL on their US Market Insights Tour to San Francisco in 2017.

According to Brian, the best part of this tour was the amount of exposure he got to different people and different options for distribution. “We had a guided tour of markets, supermarkets and health food stores. FIAL put so many people in front of us and gave us so many opportunities – it was fantastic!”

Another benefit of this tour was seeing the market in person, as well as making connections that can be difficult to establish from Australia.

“When you’re actually there, it’s so much easier to deal with things then when you’re at home.... And after the US workshop, I went over there armed with so much more information than if I’d just sent samples from home, and I knew all the possible pitfalls.”

Brian and the Planet Organic team feel passionately about representing the Australian food and beverage industry overseas, as the US Market Insights Tour demonstrated how little knowledge there is all the incredible products Australia has to offer.

“A lot of Americans aren’t really aware of Australian products and what we’re all about. I saw some Tim Tams on the shelves, and I said: “Now you need some good quality Australian tea to dunk them in!”

“After I went to the FIAL US workshop, it spurred me on to be following up all these leads that I had started previously, as I now had a much clearer indication of what the market was like.”

“A lot of Americans aren’t really aware of Australian products and what we’re all about. I saw some Tim Tams on the shelves, and I said: “Now you need some good quality Australian tea to dunk them in!”

In 2017, FIAL lead the US Export Market Series Tour in collaboration with Grover Global Food Marketing. This tour took a group of Australian companies to the US for the Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco. Companies received the opportunity to hear direct from US industry experts on all matters such as brokers, logistics, labelling, marketing, and warehousing. Participants were also taken on a tour of the major retailers and introduced to contacts that could help them on their export journey.