

PRESS RELEASE

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Food and Drink iNet helps East Midlands craft brewers tap into overseas markets

East Midlands craft brewers interested in finding out about export opportunities to China are being urged to join a project which is developing a blueprint for carrying out business primarily in South East Asia.

The Food and Drink iNet is looking to encourage craft brewers in the region to explore the possibilities available for exporting to China, where the popularity of beer has shot up in recent years. Back in 2004, China overtook the USA to become the world's largest beer market.

The iNet, which is run by trade organisation The Food and Drink Forum, has already supported a Bottle Conditioning Project at the University of Nottingham which is helping brewers extend shelf life and prepare their products for sale in overseas markets.

Now the iNet is funding a second phase of the project which is being led by Nottingham company MetafocusGlobal, with support from the University of Nottingham Food and Biofuel Innovation Centre and the Asia Business Centre, UK Trade & Investment, and Derbyshire firm Thornbridge Brewery, to develop an export solution and channel for those businesses who are looking to export for the first time or to develop new overseas. It will also explore opportunities for smaller breweries in the UK market.

Initially looking at China as the first overseas market - one in four pints of beer sold in the world is bought in China - the project will also develop an online portal for potential distribution in the UK market too for those businesses who are not yet ready for the leap to exports.

Now it is looking for additional brewers to get involved.

“Exciting opportunities have been identified in China and elsewhere for East Midlands craft breweries, but these are big markets with big challenges. The Food and Drink iNet is very pleased to be working with UKTI and funding a project which will explore these sales opportunities and develop a realistic channel for smaller craft brewers with capacity and passion to increase business in the UK and abroad,” said Food and Drink iNet director Richard Worrall.

“We have some fantastic ales being produced across Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland. This project could really

help fly the flag for the East Midlands craft brewing industry overseas and in the UK, and we're interested in hearing from small or medium brewers across the region who are keen to find out more about how they could get involved. Wherever you are on the sales ladder, we want to help you progress and if you have a desire to go higher, you should get in touch with us. "

The iNet's British Craft Brewers Sales Project will focus on developing a solution and channel for breweries to export to China, but will also form a template for exporting beer to other destinations and for smaller breweries selling online in the UK prior to being ready for export.

"In China the popularity of beer has increased rapidly alongside a desire for spirits. China already accounts for one in four pints of beer sold worldwide, double that of the US, and could account for 40% of total worldwide beer sales by 2016," said Alan Clements, of MetafocusGlobal, which is based in the Lace Market, Nottingham.

"There is no doubt that there are market opportunities for British branded boutique craft beers in China, although the biggest opportunities may be in second tier cities through pubs, clubs and supermarkets."

But there are a number of potential hurdles that breweries need to be aware of and overcome.

"The Chinese tend to emphasise food safety and like to buy from trusted sources. Britain already has a good reputation in this regard," said Alan. "Chinese complex food and drink import and labelling regulations and paperwork can be daunting and need careful research, as the Chinese are continually modifying their food laws, labelling and packaging requirements and import procedures."

The objective of the project is to deliver a full business plan that identifies a structured approach to the product, process and marketing required to sell craft beers to China as a template for other markets. It will involve research of the market, product development, branding and marketing, logistics, as well as the creation of a portal potentially for the UK market.

The Food and Drink iNet has granted almost £20,000 to fund the Collaborate to Innovate project, which is due to be completed by the end of March 2013.

Any East Midlands Craft Brewers interested in getting involved should contact the Food and Drink iNet by emailing info@foodanddrink-inet.org.uk and mark *Breweries* in the subject header.

The Food And Drink iNet, which is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), is managed by a consortium, led by the Food and Drink Forum and including Nottingham Trent University, the University of Lincoln, and the University of Nottingham. It is based at Southglade Food Park, Nottingham, with

advisors covering the East Midlands region to offer a range of support to small and medium-sized enterprises that work in the sector.

Press release issued by Louise Duffield, Perfect 10 PR, on behalf of the Food and Drink iNet.

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The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Programme, which runs from 2007-13, is one of the funds established by the European Commission to help local areas stimulate their economic development.

The ERDF objectives for England are:

- Promoting innovation and knowledge transfer
- Stimulating enterprise and supporting successful business
- Ensuring sustainable development, production and consumption
- Building sustainable communities
- Improving accessibility and connectivity (for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly only – as part of their Convergence Programme).

The programme is delivered and overseen by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

For more information visit www.communities.gov.uk/erdf

