

## **Bolhispania: high quality hearts of palm from Bolivia; a case study of export promotion**

BOLHISPANIA INDUSTRIA Y COMERCIO S.A. is a Bolivian manufacturer of canned heart of palm and processed tropical fruit. The company aims for a high and consistent quality of the products. Their main product is heart of palm, sold in cans and glass jars. Other products are canned pineapple and dried fruits. The factory buys the raw material directly from the producer organisation UNION PROASPA, thereby benefiting approximately 1000 families of palm harvesters in the region.

Currently 89% of their total sales are exports, including to Germany, Spain, Lebanon, Israel, Argentina, Venezuela, United States, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile and Colombia.

Since canned produce like heart of palm can be sold to both importers and retail organisations, there are many potential customers. The market for this product is still growing.



### ***How did CBI help Bolhispania extend their exports to European markets***

Bolhispania participated in CBI's Export Coaching Programme Natural Ingredients for Food, Cosmetics and Pharmaceuticals 2010 – 2015. This programme assisted Bolivian companies in their start-up phase of exporting their products to Europe.

During visits in Bolivia and at trade fairs in Europe, the CBI sector expert coached Bolhispania in their export development. The company also participated in several training workshop offered by CBI, on export marketing planning and corporate social responsibility. As a result, Bolhispania defined his export marketing plan, which was then gradually implemented. Bolhispania participated in three international trade shows in Europe, once at Anuga in Cologne and twice at the SIAL in Paris. The resulting business contacts have been key to the export growth realised by Bolhispania. In 2014, the total export volume to Europe had increased 364% compared to the export volume in 2010. The company is now one of the leading heart of palm exporters in Bolivia.



One of the main targets of Bolhispania was to achieve the certifications required to operate in the European market. The company has completed ISO 9001 (first certification 2009), ISO 22000 (first certification 2011), Kosher, FDA, and it is in the process to obtain IFS certification.

### ***What did Bolhispania learn from participating in the CBI programme?***

Alvaro Escobar (General Manager) and Wilmer Medrano (Trading Manager) stated that they gained a lot from the programme, in particular how to achieve maximum results from trade fairs:



1. Presence and procedures in a trade fair stand:  
“We learned how make a negotiation, awaking the interest in our product for new customers, and use The “Dance Floor” for making new commercial contacts.

2. Manage schedules in trade fair participation: “We learn how to prepare our participation in an international trade fair, considering our presentation of booth, preparation of the

material, and follow up on the contacts after the trade fair.”

In their current approach Bolhispania describes important differences compared to their business approach before their participation in the CBI programme:

- We have a different vision of the business.
- We have more vision of our products as compared to another company with a similar offer.
- We take the right steps to make our company a World class company.

*“Although our company had action and experience in the field of exports since years before, after the help of the CBI program we learned to act in a different way, considering a global vision of the business, and also referring now to Bolhsipania S.A. as a world class company.”*

