

Exports bring home the bacon for UK family farm

With pubs and restaurants now reopening, Essex-based Wicks Manor is returning to supplying its premium pork products to eateries across the country.

However, the family business has certainly not been quiet since the lockdown began, having experienced a surge in demand for its premium bacon and sausages in the Middle East and Asia.

During the Coronavirus lockdown, the family farm faced a sharp drop in sales to pubs and restaurants, which typically account for 45% of its revenue.

Eager to find alternative routes to market, Wicks Manor sought support from the Department for International Trade (DIT), to help the business ramp up its exports to supermarkets in Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

Since April exports have increased by 100% with Wicks Manor supplying products to customers worldwide.

Owner Fergus Howie says international trade has provided a lifeline during the Coronavirus pandemic:

Our exports would usually account for 20% of sales, however since April we have been able to increase them to 40%.

The importance of diversifying our sales across different markets has been laid bare during this difficult time. We are now focused on maintaining export growth while preparing to return to supplying pubs and restaurants.

We're grateful to the Department for International Trade for the support they have provided in securing new routes to market, and I would certainly encourage other UK food producers to do the same.

Wicks Manor's pigs are either born and bred on the farm or sourced from local East Anglian rearers. They are fed grains grown on site, and the pork is then prepared and packaged at the family butchery, allowing the company to maintain complete control over the production of its meats from start to finish.

The business started exporting in 2010, when it secured a contract with a supermarket in Dubai. Since then it has expanded to 10 new markets across Asia, Middle East and Europe, where its products are especially popular with British expats missing a taste of home.

Thanks to the recent export growth, the family business has been able to maintain nearly a full staff count of 45 employees and avoid food going to

waste during the pandemic.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

Even in these challenging times, businesses like Wicks Manor are showing that there is clear appetite for British produce around the world.

Exporting will play a vital role in the UK's economic recovery from the Coronavirus, and my department is committed to delivering greater export opportunities for UK businesses through new free trade agreements.

Now, more than ever, we need UK businesses to follow in the footsteps of exporters like Wicks Manor and showcase their produce on the world stage”.

Last month the UK Government [announced](#) that it intends to pursue accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) as a key part of its trade negotiations programme.

In 2019, exports of bacon, ham, sausages and related products were worth £107.4 million, an increase of 9.3% compared to 2018.