

[News story: Cotswald bakery proves an export success](#)

Huffkins, established in 1890, shipped a 1.7 tonne order of fruitcakes, shortbread and branded merchandise to Japan, with more orders already secured for October 2018 and into 2019.

The business secured the export deal after receiving support from the [Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#) (Defra) and the Department for International Trade (DIT) to attend the FOODEX trade show in Tokyo last March, as part of a delegation showcasing British food and drink to the Japanese market.

Following the trade show, Huffkins received strong interest from a number of Japanese food and drink distributors, one of which it secured a partnership with in October of last year.

The bakery's products are now available in 2 high-end department stores in Tokyo, and as of this month will be for sale online through Huffkins' Japanese distributor's website. In November, the distributor will also be opening a shop in central Tokyo, with a dedicated section for the bakery's goods.

Huffkins products are loaded into a van, to be shipped to Japan. (c) Huffkins

Over the next year the company will be looking to further expand its exports into Scandinavia and other European markets, and has been working with International Trade Advisers from DIT to carry out market research and identify new business opportunities. Through its attendance at trade shows, the business has also secured orders to Australia, Canada and Switzerland, which will be dispatched later this year.

This support comes as part of the Food is GREAT campaign, an ambitious programme run by Defra and DIT to showcase the UK's food and drink abroad and encourage more businesses to consider exporting.

Huffkins has 3 tea rooms in the South West including 2 in Cheltenham and 1 in Stow on the Wold, as well as a further 3 sites in England. In October, the company will be opening a sixth tea room in the new John Lewis store in Cheltenham.

Last year the company sent 3 of its staff from its tearoom in Burford and its bakery in Witney to Tokyo, to open a pop-up tearoom in luxury department store, Isetan, in the city's Shinjuku district, where they sold more than 12,000 Huffkins scones in just 6 days.

Natasha Whittaker, Head of Wholesale and Export, Huffkins, said:

Exporting has been a key element of Huffkins' business strategy,

and our new deal with Japan is a real opportunity for the business' growth.

The response we got from attending the FOODEX trade show in Tokyo was incredible. People were queuing up to get a taste of our goods, and it was clear that Japanese customers were very attracted to the fact that we were a British company offering an authentic product.

Although there was clearly strong demand, there were still a few barriers we had to address in getting our products on Japanese shelves. For example, Japan has strict quarantine regulations that determine what ingredients can be included in food and drink and require you to list each ingredient's country of origin.

The support of DIT here in the South West helped us get to Tokyo in the first place, but it has also provided us with access to UK government support on the ground in Japan who could assist in co-ordinating with possible buyers and help overcome the language barrier.

We're now working with our government trade adviser at home to explore how we can get our products to Scandinavia. Exporting isn't always plain sailing, but with the right knowledge and support, it can be very fruitful. If a Cotswold bakery like ours can do it, others can too.

Paul Shand, DIT's Head of South West, said:

Huffkins has been proactive in seeking out new business overseas, and are now reaping the rewards.

There is currently huge demand for British food and drink overseas, with exports totalling £760 million from the South West in the year to March 2018. Huffkins should be proud to be adding to this figure.

Although the demand is out there, we know that there are a number of challenges that firms have to address. These include everything from legal requirements – like the quarantine restrictions encountered by Huffkins – to logistics.

To help businesses tackle these issues, and many more besides, DIT has a dedicated team of International Trade Advisers across the South West to support ambitious and innovative businesses looking to access new markets and increase exports.

We also have a team of experienced sector specialists and an overseas network in 108 countries, who can offer a range of guidance and support, including international market research and enabling contact with buyers and distributors in new markets.

Online support, find a buyer, and export readiness tools are available at great.gov.uk, where thousands of live export opportunities are also promoted.