



BFA Press Release 17th February 2009

Australian organic attracts Japan's top noodle maker

Authentic Japanese organic noodles are taking off in Australia, according to Hakubaku noodle company, Japan's number one dried noodle manufacturer.

The company – which has established a processing facility for high-end noodles in outback Ballarat (Vic) - recently received accolades for securing Australia's largest export order for organic retail products (organic Somen noodles) to Korea.

But Hakubaku Sales Manager, Mr. Ryuji Nakamura, says the biggest market for their organic noodles will remain down-under, despite the company's original intentions to export back to Japan.

He says over the last decade, Australians have demonstrated an unexpected interest for the organic variety of Japan's iconic food staple.

"Hakubaku originally began making premium organic noodles in Australia in 1998 to export to Japanese markets," he says.

"We established operations in Victoria because we needed to be closer to our producers," (*The company uses Australian organic wheat for all its organic noodle lines.*)

"Then we realised there were sales opportunities in Australia which could not be ignored.

"Now, around 70% of our organic business is outside of Japan, and the majority is in Australia."

Mr. Nakamura says before Hakubaku hit the shelves, words like 'Soba' were not heard in the local area often.

"Now, organic Japanese noodles are a common purchase for Australian consumers!" he says.

He says their authentic Japanese organic noodle range, which includes Soba (wheat and buckwheat), Udon (thick wheat), Somen (thin wheat), Ramen (Chinese style) and Cha Soba (Green Tea) noodles appeal to every-day Australian shoppers, who are health conscious.

Mr. Nakamura says while strong demand for the noodle products looks set to continue, supply of Australian certified organic wheat could be a problem.

He says the future of Hakubaku's organic range runs parallel with the future of Australian producers.

"It's been difficult to source the right organic wheat article over the last three years – we are optimistic about our product, but we are waiting to see what happens with the drought."



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Ms. Akiko Nicholls, Managing Director of Australian Certified Organic (ACO), says Hakubaku's interest in Australian certified organic products is a credit to Australian organic producers.

"Not only has Hakubaku brought Japanese flavours to Australia – they have helped raise the profile of Australian certified organic products in Asian countries. This is another example of growing international recognition of the quality and innovation of organic ingredients produced in Australia."

ENDS

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