

# TRADE FAIR GUIDE 2022



PARTICIPATING  
IN PHYSICAL AND  
DIGITAL TRADE  
FAIRS IN THE  
FRESH FRUIT AND  
VEGETABLES  
MARKET



COLEACP



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Every year, representatives from the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries visit international trade fairs and/or exhibit their produce at a stand. It is an opportunity for producers/exporters from these regions to meet their customers, canvas prospective customers, and find out about developments and trends in the European and international fruit and vegetables market.

This guide is for COLEACP partners who wish to participate in international trade fairs. It is intended to support exporters, both visitors and exhibitors, especially those taking part for the first time, to maximise their chances of participating successfully in the trade fair.



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

If you want to export your products, one of your main challenges is finding the right buyer for them. Selling products to international buyers can mean selling in an unfamiliar country, which is never easy. There are physical distances, cultural differences and language barriers that make selling difficult. Fortunately, we live in a time when globalisation and technology allow us to connect with our target markets in person and digitally. Today, it is easier than ever to find foreign buyers for your export business.

Once you have defined your target market, the next step is to look for buyers within that market. A good way to find buyers is by visiting trade fairs. Many European businesses use trade fairs to manage their relations and show their presence on the market. Therefore, trade fairs are ideal places to meet with various importers.

On the other hand, they also offer great opportunities to find information on your target market(s) and present your company directly to your potential customers. You will probably find a large concentration of relevant prospects in one place. However, participating in trade shows is not free and can be quite expensive. It will only be worth the investment if you come prepared.

This guide is aimed at micro, small, and medium Enterprises (**MSMEs**) who export or want to export fresh fruit and vegetables to the European market. It will steer you through the process of preparing for and participating in a trade fair, whether as a visitor or exhibitor, in both digital and physical fairs.

The guide is divided into three chapters with activities **Before the fair** (chapter 2), **During the fair** (chapter 3), and **After the fair** (chapter 4). For each topic included, we offer considerations for physical and digital trade fairs. The guide also includes examples, tips and recommendations, and provides sources for additional information.





## 2. BEFORE THE FAIR

Participating in a trade fair can require a substantial investment, especially if you exhibit at a physical fair. To make the most out of this investment and make your participation successful, proper preparation is crucial. This chapter sets out the key steps to help you prepare to exhibit at a physical and digital trade fair. Most steps are also relevant for visitors.

Preparation starts with **finding the right trade fair** (section 2.1), **determining your budget and planning** (section 2.2), **targeting the right market** (section 2.3) and the customers you want to sell to. This knowledge will help you to determine your **sales and marketing strategy** (section 2.4) and to set **strategic goals for the fair** (section 2.8). You need to choose the right **product offer** (section 2.6) for the trade fair you're participating in and ensure that you bring all needed **product and company documentation** (section 2.7).

Understand that European buyers usually have several options to source their goods as many exporters frequently offer the same goods. You will need to **demonstrate how your products differ from your competition** (section 2.9), both in your **communication and promotion** (section 2.10). Use your understanding of the market to find the right potential buyer for your products and contact them before the fair for **matchmaking** (section 2.11). Ensure that you allow for sufficient time to negotiate a great **stand position and design** (section 2.5) and any other **logistics** you need to take care of (section 2.12). Develop a **checklist of materials to bring to the trade fair** so you don't forget anything (section 2.13).

### 2.1 FINDING THE RIGHT TRADE FAIR

To select the right trade fair for your company and products, it is key to research the potential trade fairs you want to participate in. Not only will this help you to select the right trade fair, it will also help you to select the right products for this fair, set realistic objectives, determine how to promote your product and company, and decide how to find the right buyer. Your research should include:

- **General information** such as how long the fair has been running, what is the international reach of the fair and how important it is to your sector. Also check whether there is a specific admission policy.
- **Size of the fair** including exhibition space, and number of exhibitors and visitors.
- **Product range**: Determine what type of products are offered by checking the trade fair's product list, whether these cover specific fruit and vegetable categories, a wider range of food products or market segments.
- **Target audience**: Check whether the fair focuses on B2B, B2C, brands etc., and which markets it covers. Verify the profile of exhibitors and visitors at the fair, in terms of sectors, origins, and type of business. You can check this in the exhibitors' list and the previous year's report. At a digital trade fair, you can usually find a more detailed list of visitors of the current fair, with contact and company name.
- **Programme**: Check which conferences, seminars, and other events are available.

## TIP: Digital or Physical fair – How to choose?

A key difference between physical and digital trade fairs is that digital fairs have no specific location. All you need to attend is a good internet connection, online presence, and digital assets for matchmaking (i.e. social media profiles, website, online company profile, digital brochures, etc.). Hybrid fairs (physical fairs with a digital addition) may or may not allow MSMEs to only participate digitally. For example, at BioFach 2022 you can only attend the digital platform if you also exhibit in the physical trade fair in [Germany](#).

You need to have a good understanding of the requirements and conditions for participating in digital and hybrid trade fairs as they might not be open to everyone. By understanding all available possibilities, it will be easier to choose the right trade fair. Finally, before deciding to participate in a digital fair it is important to consider whether it fits your business well in terms of its:

- **size** (digital fairs tend to have less attendees),
- **product range** (some digital fairs consist of variations on the actual physical fair, this means that the digital versions can have a wider or narrower range of products than the original one),
- **target audience** (does not vary much between both types of fairs),
- **digital programme** (the possibility to host multiple online workshops, webinars, and conferences at a digital fair creates a long list of exciting possibilities for attendees, which can negatively affect interest in your exhibit).

### Main advantages of digital fairs

- **Fees:** generally, exhibition fees are substantially lower than for physical fairs
- **Additional costs:** organisation costs are lower as no logistics are involved
- **Timespan:** digital fairs tend to last longer allowing for more time for interaction
- **Platform access timespan:** some fairs leave online platforms for free access months after the fair. This allows for more possibilities to interact after the fair occurred.

### Main disadvantages of digital fairs

- **Platform usability:** almost every trade fair uses a different platform. Sometimes these platforms have not been tested properly, which makes interactions difficult. In addition, each platform has its own modus operandi, therefore exhibitors spend time an effort learning how to use them.
- **Reach:** digital fairs tend to have a lower reach in terms of participants compared to physical fairs. For example, BioFach 2020 (physical fair) had 3,448 exhibitors and 47,561 visitors, whereas BioFach 2021 (digital fair) only had 1,442 exhibitors and 13,800 online visitors.
- **Interactivity:** engaging and interacting in digital fairs is often more difficult than just approaching someone at a physical fair. This makes the networking process at a digital fair more time-consuming. You will need to be much more proactive and reach out to many visitors/exhibitors.
- **Sensory marketing:** at a digital fair, samples cannot be seen, smelled, touched, or tasted. This makes it more difficult to promote your products, especially in the case of fresh fruits and vegetables where sensory marketing is a large part of promotion.

## 2.2 DETERMINE YOUR BUDGET AND PLANNING

Participating in trade fairs, especially exhibiting at physical trade fairs, can be a significant investment. In addition to determining the costs (**direct and indirect**) of participating in a particular trade fair, also consider the expected outcomes. For example, expanding your client base or increasing sales to existing clients. These are reflected in your **sales and marketing strategy** (section 2.4) and **learning and sales objectives** (section 2.8).

To calculate and control spending, prepare a detailed budget well in advance that you can use to plan and monitor your spending. Consider both direct and indirect costs of participating in the trade fair. Depending on whether you participate in a digital or physical fair, you will need to include different elements, see the boxes below. If the costs to exhibit are too high for your company, you can consider joining the fair as a visitor instead. However, keep in mind that you may need to adjust **your objectives** as well (section 2.8).

You will also need allow for enough time to properly plan your participation in any trade fair. This guide includes an overview of the steps needed to prepare well.

Also keep in mind that costs may still occur even after the trade fair is over. Usually, samples will have to be sent, analysis conducted, or production increased. All these activities involve costs that your company needs to consider. Before the first order is placed you will have to spend money on documentation, certification, and shipping. Most buyers will not pay upfront but upon delivery<sup>1</sup>.

### Relevant considerations for physical fairs

Physical and digital trade fairs both involve direct and indirect costs (see Annex I for an example budget plan). In general, exhibiting at a physical trade fair will require a higher investment than exhibiting at a digital trade fair. You will also need to start your planning well in advance, to meet application deadlines of the trade fair. Costs to consider include:

- **Direct costs:**
  - Stand space, construction and facilities (e.g. electricity, water, cleaning, renting of refrigerator/printer/etc), including office supplies/groceries
  - Communication packages of trade fair
  - Provisions for internet, e.g. SIM card, most trade fairs don't have free, good quality internet (also relevant for visitors)
  - Promotion materials including printing costs (also relevant for visitors)
  - Hotel and food (also relevant for visitors)
  - Flights, airport transfers and other transportation (also relevant for visitors)
- **Indirect costs mainly concern the time needed for specific activities:**
  - Application for stand space + registration
  - Organisation of stand construction and stand facilities
  - Organisation of promotion materials, including promotion of the stand
  - Project management (also relevant for visitors)

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<sup>1</sup> See CBI's 8 tips for organising your export of fresh fruit and vegetables to Europe for more information (<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/fresh-fruit-vegetables/tips-organise-your-export>)



## Relevant considerations for digital fairs

Although costs for exhibiting at a digital trade fair are lower than for exhibiting at a physical trade fair, participating in a digital fair does require substantial investment before the fair to achieve the right online presence. Start your presentations well in advance to meet the application deadlines of the trade fair and to prepare all the relevant digital assets for matchmaking.

Costs to consider for a stand at a digital trade fair include:

- Direct costs:
  - Stand type: instead of space, digital fairs tend to offer different forms of participation. The more you pay, the more visibility you will have in the different interfaces of the digital fair platform. Do an analysis of which packages would suit your company best. This is the main cost of participating in a digital fair.
  - Communication packages of trade fair: you might want to consider additional online communication packages provided by the fair to increase your online visibility.
  - Promotion: you might want to pay for special advertisements on the fair platform like banners and pop-ups.
- Indirect costs mainly concern the time needed for specific activities:
  - Application for online space + registration
  - Organisation of online space design
  - Organisation of online promotion materials (see the box in section 2.10, also relevant for visitors)
  - Project management (also relevant for visitors)



## 2.3 TARGETING THE RIGHT MARKET

It is important to conduct some short research into your target market before going to a trade fair, whether this is a physical or digital trade fair. This will help you understand key elements such as trade flows and structure, distribution networks, market trends and competitors from other producing countries. Determining which market you will reach at the fair will help you to set more targeted and realistic objectives. It will also help you build your reputation with potential customers as buyers expect you to know the market you're operating in.

Existing market studies covering fresh fruits and vegetables, and aimed at MSMEs in producing countries, are a good starting point to build an understanding of international markets. Some of the main sources of information are:

**The Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI)** offers market information on several fresh fruits and vegetables, both at sector level and for specific products (<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/fresh-fruit-vegetables/>).

**The German Import Promotion Desk (IPD)** offers market information on specific fresh fruits and vegetables, also targeting MSMEs in producing countries (<https://www.importpromotiondesk.com/en/products/fresh-fruit-and-vegetables/>).

Another way to find out more about a target market is to explore trade press and other publications, such as:

### Fresh fruits and vegetables

- Fresh Plaza (<https://www.freshplaza.com/>), daily updates on fresh produce, as well as stories and innovations of specific companies.
- FreshFruitPortal (<https://www.freshfruitportal.com>), an online news site for fresh produce that also publishes industry announcements.
- Fruitnet (<http://www.fruitnet.com/>) has several regional publications in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector.

### Organic products

- Organic Europe (<https://www.organic-europe.net/home-europe.html>) contains organic statistics, country reports and news articles on organic products and markets.
- IFOAM Organics Europe (<https://www.organicseurope.bio/>) and IFOAM Organics International (<https://www.ifoam.bio/>), with news articles, infographics, factsheets and reports on the organic sector.
- Organic Market Info (<https://organic-market.info/>) with news articles on a wide topic range in organic markets, as well as links to companies in the organic sector.

## 2.4 SALES AND MARKETING STRATEGY

Having a sales and marketing strategy ready before you participate in a trade fair will give you direction. This will help you to use your time and resources efficiently during the fair, and to target markets and buyers more effectively. This strategy is not specific to trade fairs, but it should guide your participation in such events.

Participation in a trade fair, whether digital or physical, is not an isolated event, and you should consider participating in a trade fair only if it responds to your current marketing and sales strategy. You should ask yourself how many times and in which fairs your company should promote its products. After participating in trade fairs, whether as visitor or exhibitor, consider revising your sales strategy based on the findings and results from the event.

A sales and marketing strategy consists of elements such as:

- **Product offer:** Details of your current product range, and what you will present at specific trade fairs (see section 2.6)
- **Target market:** Specification of the target region or country will enable you to define the most promising and suitable segment for your product(s) (see section 2.3)
- **Distribution channels:** the channels through which your fresh fruit and vegetables will be distributed. For example, directly to retailers, or through wholesalers/importers
- **Pricing:** Details of your pricing policy, including price flexibility mechanisms to promote sales (such as discounts, quantity offers, contractual tenders)
- **Promotion:** Description of your company's promotional tools such as website, social media, and brochures as well as the main promotional messages (see section 2.10)
- **Sustainability:** Details of your company's policy on social responsibility and accountability, including issues such as occupational health and safety, human rights, child labour, and the environment
- **Unique Selling Point (USP) or Unique Buying Reason (UBR):** Specification of factors that make your product(s) more interesting than your competitors' (see section 2.9)





## 2.5 STAND POSITION AND DESIGN

As an exhibitor, whether you join a physical or digital trade fair, your stand is the business card of your company at a trade fair. For both types of trade fair, the location and design of your stand can have a strong influence on your company's success at a trade fair. Having an attractive, well-positioned stand, that reflects the image of your company and is easy for visitors to find, will help you to expand your reach and meet more business contacts.

### Consider co-exhibiting in a larger pavilion

In several physical and digital fairs, different trade promotion agencies or consultancies host their own stands. Often, these agencies host pavilions to promote a country, region, or certain type of product. By grouping several companies, they can hire better and more complete packages as well as conduct direct (online) matchmaking efforts. If you are thinking of exhibiting in a digital or physical fair, consider joining a country or regional pavilion. This will allow you to appear in a better position in the fair and benefit from higher visibility. An example is the ProFound Organic Africa Pavilion at BioFach (<https://thisisprofound.com/organic-africa-pavilion/>).

### Relevant considerations for physical fairs

Your stand should follow your overall marketing strategy and help you to reach your trade fair objectives. It should ensure visitors receive a warm welcome, both passing visitors, who may be greeted and informed at a counter; and invited or expected visitors (prospects, customers, partners, journalists), who should be able to sit down. You can use physical elements (e.g. pictures, demonstrations and business cards) to create a welcoming feeling, as well as the look and feel of your stand (e.g. simple or modern/clean). Build from your own experience of participating in a specific trade fair, either as visitor or exhibitor, to identify what is the best location for your stand and what design works best.

Consider the following elements for your stand:

1. **The position:** Having a good position, within main visitor flows, is crucial to the success of your participation at international trade fairs, especially at large trade fairs like Fruit Logistica and BioFach. Choose well in advance to avoid being isolated. Request to be included in the geographical and technical area that makes sense for you. At Fruit Logistica and BioFach, stands are generally grouped together by geographical location. Check the fair's deadlines and book your exhibition space in sufficient time before the trade fair to ensure a good position. Check the assigned position from trade fair organisers on the trade fair map.
2. **Stand size:** Your stand should be large enough to display all the products you would like to show, a meeting area and space for back-office and supplies. The size of your stand also depends on the number of visitors you expect and whether the fair imposes any limitations. In general, it is better to have a small stand that is operated and staffed well than a large-sized stand appearing to leave empty spaces. Particularly as the size of the stand affects the cost, both of renting space and of building the stand (between 200 and 1200 euros/m<sup>2</sup> depending on the design). See the customised trade fair guides for more info on stand space cost. When you are planning your space, also consider your product offer and how you want to present it.

3. **Stand construction company:** If you have the time (and the budget), put out a request for quotations to three or four stand designers. This will also allow you to personalise the stand to match your company's image, rather than using a stand finish offered by the trade fair organisers. However, if you don't have enough time or budget, this may be the best option. In that case, use decorations and promotion materials to personalise your stand.
4. **Stand design:** Customise your stand to reflect your image (country of origin, brand, main products). To achieve this, you can use the design of the stand, posters and other stand decorations. If you have the budget, ensure that your stand is easily identifiable from a distance, for example with tall and well oriented signage. Provide a technical storage area, even if it is small (with lockable cabinet for valuables). Store any documents, visitors' clothes, and other supplies, which should not be left out on the stand. And think about being able to reuse (parts of) your stand for future trade fairs. This will provide economies of scale and is more sustainable. It can also be part of your sustainable development strategy to consider environment protection, recycling, and circular economy.
5. **Stand delivery:** Stands are generally finished during the afternoon the day before the opening of the fair. Plan to arrive at the stand on that morning to make any necessary adjustments in finalising its assembly and, where possible, start to set up. Plan to finish everything by 5 pm.
6. **Stand dismantling:** After a trade fair is finished, your stand builder will dismantle the stand, but you should plan time to supervise or organise this operation yourself. Pick up any documents or promotional materials that are left at the end of the fair. If you want to reuse any part of your stand for future trade fairs, take these with you. If you have fresh products left, organise sample distribution to charity organisations close to the fair.
7. **Catering at your stand:** Visiting customers or prospective clients will appreciate some refreshments at your stand, e.g. coffee/tea or water/juice. Ensure that the snacks or drinks you offer match the culture of your company. Do not hesitate to offer fruit and vegetables originating from your company's production operation as tasters if they are available at that time. A coffee machine, beverages, etc. can be ordered from service providers at the trade fair. Also consider whether you want to have running water at your stand.

## Relevant considerations for digital fairs

When you exhibit at a digital trade fair you will, most likely, have an exhibitor profile. The characteristics and position of your exhibitor profile may vary significantly between fairs. Some fairs allow you to display all sorts of visual content whereas other fairs might be more restrictive. Restrictions might relate to the type and form of the content that you may display, or to the different features the platform has, such as hosting webinars or allowing for direct online video calls.

Digital trade fairs often group the different features and restrictions in packages. These packages vary in price and offer different types of features and add-ons (such as advertising or preferential positions in the online directory of the fair). See for example the three different packages available for [Fi Europe 2021](#).

### Choosing the correct online package

You should choose the online package that suits your company best based on three main factors:

1. **Budget:** even though fees and indirect costs for digital fairs are lower than for physical fairs (see section 2.2), online packages can be expensive. Don't overspend – choose the package that allows you to display the minimum level of necessary content: company

description, image gallery, contact information, links to website, and upload of pdf files (for company profile and product brochures). This is the minimum standard that a digital exhibitor profile should have to present your company to visitors.

2. **Available digital assets for matchmaking:** another factor to consider is which digital assets you will have available for the digital trade fair. Only take an online exhibition package that will allow you to present what you have. Don't apply for an exhibitor profile with featured video if you won't be able to produce one for the fair. This will allow you to save money, and also to avoid having an incomplete online exhibitor profile that could create a bad impression to potential buyers. It is better to have an online profile with a few great pictures and no video than an online profile with a low-quality video and lots of low-quality pictures.
3. **Features and add-ons:** most digital fairs use an online platform that includes basic features such as direct messages and chat functions. Some digital fairs charge extra for additional features such as direct video calls or hosting webinars and discussion rooms. Determine which of these features you really need to engage and interact with potential buyers. For example, hosting webinars or discussion rooms is a great way to do a presentation of your company and products to a target group within the fair. However, this does not necessarily need to be arranged directly through the trade fair platform. You can also use free platforms such as Zoom for these matters. Advertisement and pole positioning might be valuable if your company/product has many similar competitors at the fair, this will allow you to appear first in the searches of potential buyers. If you have few competitors at the fair, advertisement or pole positioning might not be valuable for you.

### It's not just about the online package

Deciding which kind of online package to take is only the start. Most of the work during a digital fair occurs "outside" the space of your exhibitor profile. Due to the characteristics of digital trade fairs and online platforms, it is necessary to take a very active role in engaging with potential buyers for your product, much more than for a physical trade fair. Having a great online exhibitor profile does not automatically translate into many inbound leads. Be proactive, engage with interesting contacts you find online and redirect visitors to your exhibitor profile (see section 2.11).

## 2.6 PRODUCT OFFER

Having researched the trade fair you will participate in, as well as the potential target market, you need to define and select the product offer which is most suitable to present to buyers at this particular trade fair. This should be in line with your sales strategy. For example, if you want to sell new products to an existing market, clearly highlight these products in your stand and promotion materials (whether for a physical or digital fair).

The profile of a trade fair, and the sector it covers, will play an important role in defining the offer you will present. You should also pay attention to new product trends developed by trade fairs. For example, the Macfrut trade fair that previously had a strong focus on Mediterranean fruits and vegetables has been strongly promoting Sub-Saharan African countries since 2019. More and more, this is what visitors will expect exhibitors to present. In addition, if you find in your market research that a specific fruit or vegetable you offer is in growing demand, make sure you include it in your product offer for a trade fair.



Questions you must ask yourself when selecting what to present at a trade fair:

- What does the market need?, Does my product fulfil market demand?
- Are there existing buyers for my product?
- Is the product a good match for the market covered by the trade fair?
- Is my product ready for the market?
  - Is the product of sufficient quality?
  - Does the product comply with international standards and mandatory certifications like GLOBAL G.A.P.?
- If my product is not ready, what do I need to do to comply with market access requirements?
- How much competition is there for my product?, Can I compete in terms of volume and price?
- How much do I need to push the product? Do I have the marketing budget?

For more information on market access requirements, check CBI's study "What requirements must fresh fruit or vegetables comply with to be allowed on the European market?" (<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/fresh-fruit-vegetables/buyer-requirements>). This report gives an overview of mandatory and additional requirements, as well as requirements for niche markets, such as the growing organic market.



## Relevant considerations for physical fairs

### How to display your products?

If you exhibit at a physical trade fair, think about how to display your product offer. Keep in mind that visitors are easily distracted by the large amounts of products and presentations at a trade fair, especially at large fairs like Fruit Logistica or BioFach. Therefore, make sure that your product presentation is simple, clear, and straightforward. It should attract and hold the attention of visitors, ask yourself: “if I were a visitor, what would I find most attractive about my products?”.

Limit the number of exhibits, for example, select a focus product that you want to give most attention to. You can also use lighting as a focal point. Highlight the main benefits of your products visually but don't put too much information next to them, keep it simple and clean, with space between products or product groups. You can connect your displays to your marketing story, for example with props or specific materials. However, don't add too many items, less is more, so know when to stop.

In addition to product display, bring sufficient **samples**. If you are exhibiting, bring plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables for visitors to taste as they come by your stand. If you are visiting a trade fair, be aware that all samples you bring you will have to carry around the fair. Make sure that your samples are representative of the quality you can always deliver.

## Relevant considerations for digital fairs

Some fairs have restrictions in terms of the number of products per company that can be exhibited, therefore the right product mix is key in the context of a digital fair.

### How to display your products?

In the context of a digital fair, it is important to present your products with all the necessary information. First, you need high-quality pictures that present the origin, production, and the final product. A picture is worth a thousand words, so focus on presenting your product mix with the best picture possible. Second, make sure you display and correctly link all your product information to each product so interested buyers might research as much as they want about your product. A good way to display this information is to add permalinks with downloadable pdf documents with brochures of your product mix in addition to the available content in the digital fair platform.

### Going beyond the context of a digital fair

**Sending samples** to interested buyers can make a very big difference in your participation in a digital trade fair. Make sure you have a sample hub available for interested buyers, and ship your samples in time. Make sure to promote your free available samples at your online exhibitor profile and offer samples proactively to contacts generated at the fair.

## 2.7 PRODUCT AND COMPANY DOCUMENTATION

Once you have defined your products for the trade fair, you need to compile a product information folder. This will help you answer questions that prospective buyers may have. Having this information about your products in English could be helpful and useful during a trade fair for exchanging with your contacts, and speaking other international languages could be also an opportunity to be in touch with a new trade partner. Be aware that buyers may also ask questions about products you are not presenting.

What you need to prepare:

- **Brief description about your company:** Year of foundation, location, facilities, number of employees, your key achievements
- What is the **Unique Buying Reason** of each product? This could be related to nutritional content, year-round availability, origin, ways of preparation, exotic flavour/texture, packaging, benefits to small farmers or cooperatives etc.
- **Current volume availability** (be realistic and accurate): projections such as potential production capacity increase, seasonality, quantities guaranteed by product etc.
- **Product specifications and documentation** including nutritional value, quality certifications, varieties by product, presentation and packaging options, handling instructions, logistics solutions, expiry date etc.
- **Up-to-date price list:** EXW factory, FOB at origin port, CIF at destination port.

Tips and further resources:

- CBI's 8 tips for organising your export of fresh fruit and vegetables to Europe (<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/fresh-fruit-vegetables/tips-organise-your-export>)
- CBI's 8 tips for doing business with European buyers of fresh fruit and vegetables (<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/fresh-fruit-vegetables/doing-business>)

### Relevant considerations for digital fairs

Before joining a digital fair make sure that you have all this available documentation in a digital format. Avoid using scanned documents and aim to share high-quality but lower weight pdf files with permalinks on your website. It is always better to share links to your documentation as they are easier to share, lighter in MBs (megabytes), and traceable (in terms of visits). Remember, your product and company information should be available in the languages of your target market. If you don't want this information to become publicly available, you can share online documents with passwords. Examples of online applications to share this documentation are: [Google drive](#), [Microsoft Onedrive](#), [Onehub](#), [Dropbox](#) and [WeTransfer](#).



## 2.8 LEARNING AND SALES OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

Before you go to a trade fair you need to set realistic objectives. Exhibiting is a time-consuming and expensive activity, so setting objectives will help to determine expectations and whether the event was worth the investment. In addition to finding buyers for your product, there are many objectives for exhibiting at a trade fair. These include:

- Determining reception of a product
- Collecting market information (including competitors, seminars, events)
- Understanding buyer needs and expectations
- Determining feasibility of your company and product in a particular market
- Identifying and meeting with service providers (for example, regarding certification), investors or agricultural input suppliers
- Developing partnerships with other exporters

Make sure that your goals are **SMART**:

- **S**pecific (simple, sensible, significant)
- **M**easurable (meaningful, motivating)
- **A**chievable (agreed, attainable)
- **R**elevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based)
- **T**ime bound (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive)



## Relevant considerations for physical fairs

### Example: Exhibiting at Fruit Logistica

Company X is exhibiting at Fruit Logistica for the first time. Before going to the fair, the company set several objectives and will keep track of these goals throughout the trade fair. It researched the trade fair and was aware that it would be difficult to stand out at such a large trade fair, and that as a first-time exhibitor it may be difficult to get orders. Therefore, the company's main objectives were to build its network and expand its market knowledge.

Objective	Goal	Measurement
<i>Build network and promote company and products among trade fair visitors</i>	Collect 20 contacts per day	Day 1:
		Day 2:
		Day 3:
<i>Identify business leads for future sales</i>	Meetings with two importers and two traders	Importer meetings:
	Agree with two contacts to send product specifications	Trader meetings: Specifications sent:
<i>Build market knowledge</i>	Interview three buyers and/or marketing managers to answer market research questions	Interviews: Lessons learned:
	Identify and join two relevant workshops or seminars	Workshops/seminars joined: Lessons learned:



## Relevant considerations for digital fairs

### Example: Exhibiting at BioFach eSpecial

Company Y is exhibiting at BioFach for the first time. Before taking part in the fair, the company set several objectives and will keep track of these goals throughout the digital trade fair. It researched the trade fair and was aware that as a first-time exhibitor it may be difficult to get orders, especially since they will participate in a digital trade fair. Therefore, the company's main objectives were to build its network and market knowledge.

Objective	Goal	Measurement
<i>Build network and promote company and products among trade fair visitors</i>	Send 10 direct messages to potential buyers per day (including personal presentation, company presentation and link to the exhibiting profile of the company)	Day 1:
		Day 2:
		Day 3:
<i>Identify business leads for future sales</i>	Organise at least two video calls with one importer and with one trader	Importer meeting:
	Agree with two contacts to send product specifications	Trader meeting:
<i>Build market knowledge</i>	Interview two buyers and/or marketing managers to answer market research questions	Specifications sent:
	Identify and join five relevant workshops, online discussion rooms or webinars	Interviews: Lessons learned:
		Workshops/seminars joined: Lessons learned:

## 2.9 UNIQUE SELLING POINT, UNIQUE BUYING REASON

You will be one of many companies present and will need to stand out to visitors, whether you're participating in a digital or physical trade fair. Your first starting point is to determine your **Unique Selling Point (USP)** or **Unique Buying Reason (UBR)**.

From your market research and trade fair investigation you will have learned what is in demand on the market and what your competitors are offering. This will help you to determine how you can stand out from your competition. When you are identifying your USP or UBR, answer this question: **What makes your product/company more interesting than the competition?**

In answering this question, keep three things in mind:

- What your company does well
- What the customer wants
- What your competitor does well

You need to identify what your company does well, what the consumer wants, and what your competitor does not offer. This is your Unique Selling Point. If your competitor meets certain consumer needs better than you, stay away from it. If you and your competitors are competing in areas that customers do not care about, you are wasting your time. Be aware that if both you and your competitor can meet a customer need equally well, competition will be fierce. In such cases, pricing will play an important role in the purchasing decision.

Highlight your USP/UBR in your pitch and promotion (see section 2.10) and try to link your proposition to the needs of your potential buyer. For example:

- If you have unique or superior varieties of certain fruit and vegetables, approach specialised buyers who know the product well.
- If you work with small farmers and cooperatives, try to reach companies with Fairtrade products. If your products have a Fairtrade certification like Fairtrade or Fair for Life, find a specialised buyer who is familiar with these labels.
- Mention your production volume and farmer integration to show your supply reliability to large buyers.
- If you have organic certified fruit and vegetables, target specialised buyers of organic produce.
- If you can add value with processing such as freshly cut fruit or special packaging, and meet requirements of retailer buyers, target retail channels.
- If you offer innovative products, for example by experimenting with new cultivars, you can try to get the attention of experienced buyers.

## 2.10 PRODUCT AND COMPANY PROMOTION

At a trade fair, whether you are visiting or exhibiting, you are promoting both your products and your company. This is key for your participation in both digital and physical fairs. When promoting your company, a good promotional strategy should focus not only on the quantity of promotional activities, but also on their quality. Make sure that you find the right balance between the number of updates, mails and social media posts before, during and after the fair. You have many promotion opportunities.

**Online promotion** covers your website, the trade fair's website, and social media. Make sure that these are up to date and use them to let prospective clients know you will be exhibiting. If you exhibit at a physical trade fair, include your stand number. You can also send out a promotional email to your contacts to highlight your participation in a trade fair.

Your **website** is your 24/7 business card, and you need to treat it as such. A badly designed or unmanaged website can do more harm than good. Make sure that your website is up to date before you travel to the trade fair. If possible, include a 'news page' showing presence at trade fairs, new products, awards, etc. Your website should be accessible and readable via mobile phones, informative, appealing, and functional. Integrate videos and dynamic tools if you have them and link them to your social media.



In addition to your own website, complete your online entry on [the trade fair website](#). Include:

- Company information
- Personalised contact details (a person instead of a generic email address)
- Attractive pictures
- Products: Include product names, varieties, and classes available and provide good quality pictures of the products you offer. Potential buyers often find you through products you include here.

**Social media** is increasingly important to reach new clients. Before you join a social media platform, whether this is B2B or B2C, ask yourself what type of visibility you expect, and examine whether you have the time and resources to manage potential clients who visit your profile equally. Think of the message you want to communicate here. Use your social media to promote your participation in a trade fair.

In addition to online promotion, set up and practice different versions of a **sales pitch**, that shows your USP/UBR. Your pitch needs to be short (around 20 seconds), grab attention and invite your contact to continue talking. You can try out different versions of your pitch, always aim to adapt them to the person you're meeting.

In general, they include four key elements:

1. Start by introducing yourself
2. Provide a summary of what you do
3. Explain what you want
4. Finish with a call to action



## Relevant considerations for physical fairs

At a physical trade fair, you can use additional promotional materials to attract and interact with visitors and prospective buyers.

### Bring high-quality, professional business cards

Whether you are visiting or exhibiting, always have your business cards at the ready, indicating your first name, surname, email, mobile phone number, website, and address. Pay careful attention to the print quality of the cards. They project an image of you. It would be helpful and useful to have the cards and any other information and communication available in English during a trade fair for exchanging with your contacts. Speaking other international languages could be also an opportunity to be in touch with a new trade partner.

### Decorating your stand

If you're exhibiting at a physical fair, your stand is the first thing visitors see when they arrive and it needs to represent you well. Although the stand organiser is responsible for the design of your stand, discuss with them what is expected from you. For example, provide high-quality pictures of your products which can be used in a poster or flyer. Another option is that you provide your own **posters and flyers**, or you may have the opportunity to bring an additional poster.

Think about **stand decorations** you can bring. Discuss with the stand organisers how much space you have to fill with decorations. Use these to further highlight your image and USP/UBR.

**Connect displays to your marketing story** – For example, use props to set the tone, use natural materials for products, combine those with traditional materials from the region where your products originate. You can bring retail containers and materials used in production, as well as flyers or handouts. You can also bring pictures, bring a tablet/laptop or rent a large screen to show company videos, and you can do demonstrations and tasting sessions.

### Dress code

Also think of what **dress code** best represents your company and what codes of conduct you want your staff to follow.

## Relevant considerations for digital fairs

Don't look at the digital trade fair participation as your only online promotion activity, try to build a digital marketing strategy that will allow you to maximise your visibility before, during and after the fair.

### Online visibility before the fair

- Digital assets for matchmaking: Prepare and update your visual assets, *see below*.
- Promote your participation at the digital fair: create a banner on your website, a newsletter and/or social media posts promoting your participation at the fair. If possible, add a direct link to your exhibiting profile. Create and manage expectations about your participation at the fair.
- Prepare your staff: make sure that everyone has a good quality picture and biography for the trade fair online profiles. Make sure that they update their LinkedIn profiles, they might receive connecting requests through this platform.
- A blog post about your participation at the fair on your website
- Change your email signature with an update on your participation at the fair

### Digital assets for matchmaking

Digital assets for matchmaking are key to being successful at a digital fair. Your digital assets are the results of your digital marketing strategy, meaning the correct set up of your website, social media profiles, online company profile and products brochure. Before participating in a digital fair make sure that you have time and budget to develop the following:

- **Visual assets:** high quality pictures of your products, process and company
- **Online company profile:** a permalink with your company brochure in the form of a page or an uploaded pdf file available for download
- **Products brochures:** A permalink with your products brochure in the form of a page or an uploaded pdf file available for download
- A **website** that contains contact information or contact forms. It could be helpful and useful to have an English version of your website, while speaking other international languages could be an opportunity to get in touch with new partners
- **Social media profiles** for your company (targeted to B2C audiences (Facebook, Instagram) or to B2B audiences (LinkedIn))

### KEY – Work on your mobile website's online positioning, SEO and SEM strategies

There are over 4,000,000 Google searches each minute. Google is still the most popular search engine with a share of 90% of the global search engine market. From these searches, mobile devices account for around 63% of all searches.

Based on the above you should focus your digital marketing strategy on creating a website and digital assets for matchmaking that are interactive and easy to read with mobile devices. Also make sure that you have an SEO ([Search Engine Optimisation](#)) and SEM ([Search Engine Management](#)) strategy in place so potential buyers will find your company if they are looking for your brand or product via Google.

## 2.11 MATCHMAKING

Matchmaking is a continuous process and not confined to trade fairs. However, trade fairs will give you exposure to a large pool of buyers, so you will benefit from preparing in advance. The matchmaking process will be similar for both physical and digital trade fairs, you will mostly use online resources.

Matchmaking should not be accidental, but strategic and planned:

- Use your sales and marketing strategy to plan meetings with potential customers
- Filter out companies that are not relevant according to your strategy and objectives
- Identify the right person and introduce your company and your offer in advance – schedule meetings at the trade show
- Match your offer to the profile and interests of your potential customers
- Make appointments at your stand, either digital or physical, and visit other stands
- Plan your follow up with people and companies of interest
- Gather information and business leads to start creating or expanding your customer relationship management system for future trade fairs and other marketing activities.

### What resources can you use to find your ideal customer?

- Check the exhibitors' list of the trade fair you're visiting, and other trade fairs relevant for your product. The list of trade fairs covering fresh and processed fruit and vegetables is very extensive, and includes:
  - **Fruit Logistica** in Berlin (Germany) is the largest and best-known trade event for fresh fruit and vegetables (<https://www.fruitlogistica.com/>)
  - **Fruit Attraction** in Madrid (Spain) has gained importance over recent years (<https://www.ifema.es/en/fruit-attraction>)
  - **Macfrut** in Rimini (Italy) presents a wide variety of companies that are active in fresh produce (<https://www.macfrut.com/en/>)
  - **BioFach** in Nuremberg (Germany) is a relevant trade show for suppliers of organic food and beverages (<https://www.biofach.de/en>)
  - **Anuga** in Cologne (Germany), a global trade fair for the food and beverage industry, also includes fresh fruit and vegetables as well as an organic section (<http://www.anuga.com/>)
  - **SIAL** in Paris (France), a trade fair focusing on food businesses and innovation, also includes fresh fruit and vegetables (<http://www.sialparis.com/>)
- Look for sector associations in Europe to find the names of fruit and vegetable traders in their member lists. Most associations and several leading companies are listed by Freshfel Europe, the European Fresh Produce Association (<https://freshfel.org/member/our-members/>). Its members work along the whole supply chain, across Europe, and include:
  - **Deutscher Fruchthandelsverband**: the German association that represents the interests of companies from all areas of trade in the fruit and vegetable sector. Its members (*Mitglieder*) account for approximately 70% of all fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Germany (<https://www.dfhv.de>)



- **Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC):** the United Kingdom's fresh produce trade association, with 700 member companies in the fresh fruit, vegetable and flowers industry (<https://freshproduce.org.uk/>)
- **Chambre Syndicale des Importateurs Français de fruits et légumes frais (CSIF):** On their website, you can find a list of French importers of fresh fruit and vegetables (<https://www.csif.eu/sites/en/>)
- **The Fresh Produce Centre:** the Dutch association for companies in the fresh fruit and vegetables industry, you can search for members based on an activity or product (<https://freshproducecentre.com/>)
- **Fresh Trade Belgium:** the professional federation for companies in the fruit and vegetables sector in Belgium (<https://freshtradebelgium.be/en/home/>)
- **EUCOFEL Fruit Vegetables EUROPE:** If you want to develop partnerships with producers, members of this association include producer organisations of fresh fruit and vegetables in France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain (<https://eucofel.eu/members/>)
- Create an account on trade databases and platforms, and contact buyers directly. You can also use these directories to present your own products. Aside from sector associations, there are no specific databases for the fresh fruit and vegetable sector. Examples of general databases and platforms include:
  - **ITC Trademap:** Database of international trade in all products and services. If you create a personal account, you can search for importing companies per country/region based on the Harmonised System codes for your produce (<https://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx>)
  - **Organic Bio:** International directory of organic food companies (<http://www.organic-bio.com/en/directory/>)
  - **greenTrade:** A marketplace for organic products (<http://www.greentrade.net/>)
  - **Kompass:** Global B2B database (<http://www.kompass.com/selectcountry/>)
  - **Global Buyers Online:** a place to search for the latest trade leads from buyers and importers from all over the world (<http://www.globalbuyersonline.com/>)
  - **Europages:** Directory of European companies; a professional portal that encourages business-to-business exchanges (<http://www.europages.com/>)
- Check CBI's report with 11 tips for finding buyers on the European fresh fruit and vegetables market for more tips and sources (<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/fresh-fruit-vegetables/finding-buyers>)

### What do you do after compiling a list of potential customers?

- Check the websites of the companies and other platforms such as LinkedIn to get a better idea of their profile and suitability as your potential customer:
  - What do they do (e.g. trade, produce, distribute, own a brand)?
  - What is the size of the company?
  - What is the vision and mission of the company? Do they focus on sustainable and ethical value chains?
  - What are their requirements (e.g. organic, BRC, IFS, GLOBALG.A.P. or other certifications)?
  - What is their market segment (e.g. organic, ethical trade)?

- Do they already use or market the product you are offering?
- Where do they currently source products from? How does your business compare?
- Identify a contact person, if possible.
- 

## Engaging with your target buyer

### FIRST CONTACT

- Prepare an introductory email to the relevant companies / contact persons.
- Don't make your introduction too generic; you don't want the customer to think it's spam. Add a personal note or something you observed about their company or product assortment.
- Address the email to a specific person – try your best to identify a direct contact: mail@, info@, etc. email formats usually don't get an immediate response.

#### Content and recommendations:

- Use a good subject line, something that catches the attention of your potential customer.
- Inform them about the event and your participation, the location of the show (physical or digital) and your availability.
- Promote your products and make use of your Unique Buying Reasons: does your offer attract the interest of your targeted customer?
- Include your catalogue of products (but don't make it too heavy!)
- Be prepared to be responsive:
  - Online presence is key: your website should be working and contain relevant information (see section 2.10)
  - If you receive an answer, be ready to respond immediately.
  - Include all your contact details in all communications.
- Is the company interested/interesting but *not* attending the trade fair? Save the contact and keep in touch or try to meet online (e.g. through Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Skype). You can always contact the company again when you're participating in another trade fair.

## SECOND CONTACT

- Refer to the informative invitation email you sent.
- If you know that the company is attending the trade fair, communicate your interest in meeting them there.
- Identify their interest (product [and which], origin, variety, packaging) and try to set an appointment based on this interest.
- After talking or exchanging an email, agree to send a further email with more details; people may need time to think.

When calling a potential customer, remember:

- Be prepared, be structured, short and to the point. Establish the purpose of your call and contextualize the information you give.
- Make sure that your website and/or social media are up-to-date; they will be the first background check the customer makes during or after the call.
- Present your products clearly and professionally.

## CLOSING STAGE

- Give it 2 to 3 days and call back if you have not heard anything from them, or as indicated by the potential customer.
- If possible, send them a reminder or, even better, give them a call.
- Set up an appointment at the trade fair. For a physical fair, you can meet people at your stand, their stand, or elsewhere, such as a café or restaurant. For a digital trade fair, verify which communication channel you will use, the trade fair's platform or a different tool.
- If you do not manage to set up an appointment, repeat the previous steps or close the process.
- Be persistent, but don't stalk your potential customer.

### How to organise your matchmaking agenda for a trade fair:

- Organise your interesting contacts into a time-bound agenda, so that you can cater for all potential customers and avoid double bookings. You can use a table format for this (Excel spreadsheet-type).
- Prepare two types of agenda for two persons at your stand: Inbound (to host the meeting at the stand) and Outbound (to visit the potential customer at their own stand / restaurant / any other meeting space). If you cannot arrange a meeting with an interesting company before the trade fair, you can still make an appearance at either the digital or physical stand of the company at the fair.
- Give each meeting sufficient time (20–30 minutes each). Aim at quality, not quantity.
- Confirm the day / time / place of the meeting (both for inbound and outbound) with your potential customer. Prepare and send them an invitation message / email which includes some basic information about your company and product of interest, as well as its Unique Buying Reason (UBR).
- Re-confirm all meetings some days before the trade fair.
- Organise a **matchmaking folder** containing your overall agenda and basic information about each meeting, as well as your basic promotional material: a brief description of the company, the product specification sheet(s), a copy of the valid certificates and your business card. At a physical trade fair, you can hand this promotional material to your prospective buyer, while at a digital trade fair you can email it before your meeting.





## Relevant considerations for digital fairs

The process of finding new potential buyers will be the same for both physical and digital trade fairs, as you should do this before the trade fair. However, at digital trade fairs you will be confined to online communication channels, which require a different etiquette than face-to-face meetings.

### The etiquette for online business meetings

Your first online meeting with a potential buyer is key. During this meeting the buyer will form their first or second impression about you, your company, and your products. Please make sure that you consider the following nine tips for successful online meetings:

1. **Be prepared:** practice your pitch about your company, your products and your USP/UBR. Be ready to "sell" your product. Think about potential questions that the buyer might have and prepare answers for them. Think about which digital assets you could share during the meeting to keep it informative and interactive.
2. **Have control:** organise the meeting with a platform that you know. These days, Zoom, Skype and Microsoft Teams are the most common platforms to arrange video calls. Make sure you know them and how to manage video calls, and choose the one you feel most comfortable with and that works best with your computer.
3. **Information at the ready:** make sure you keep your online matchmaking folder ready in case you want to share any materials with your buyer. Most online platforms and digital trade fairs allow screen sharing where you could share visual information. For example, a short PowerPoint presentation with information and pictures of your product, product specifications or a copy of your certificate(s).
4. **100% focus on the meeting:** don't eat, don't multitask, and don't do anything else besides focusing on the meeting. To keep the focus, close all other windows on your computer, silence your mobile.
5. **Use the video:** try to use the video option when possible (when connection allows and your stage for the video call is appropriate (see point 6)).
6. **Set the stage:** test your video call several times before the fair. Make sure that you have a clear background, the right lighting, and no distracting objects or sounds during the call. If your laptop webcam does not provide a good quality video, then invest in a good webcam. Use good microphone/headphones as they allow you to focus better and provide a better sound to your attendee.
7. **Look at the camera, not at the screen:** the buyer is going to be looking at you through the screen, therefore try to make "eye-contact" by looking directly into the webcam.
8. **Stay on mute if you are not talking:** if you are not talking keep your microphone on mute, this will allow a clearer communication during the video call as there is only one audio input.
9. **The host is the last one to leave:** a normal video call has one host. If you invited the buyer to this meeting, then you are the host. This means that you start and end the call. Be there a couple of minutes before your appointment time and be the last one to leave the call.

## 2.12 LOGISTICS

For both digital and physical trade fairs, you need to allow for plenty of time to arrange any logistics.

### Relevant considerations for physical fairs

Since you will be travelling to visit or exhibit at a physical fair, your logistical arrangements are more extensive than for participating in a digital trade fair. These include:

- **Hotel:** Book rooms as far in advance as possible and try to book a hotel with free cancellation in case your visa cannot be obtained. Please note, hotel rates vary depending on the period and the occupancy rate. They are therefore normally relatively higher at the time of a trade fair. Use websites like booking.com or Airbnb.com for your research and reservation. To save costs, you can also book a hotel further away from the trade fair site, as long as it is close to transportation, e.g. metro or bus routes. Check how long your transport will take, ground transportation during rush hour can be time consuming.
- **Visa:** Obtain your visa well in advance, usually the exhibition ticket can be used as an invitation letter. If an embassy insists on obtaining an invitation letter, you can submit a request to the trade fair organisers or their representative in your country. Commonly this is a paid service. Make the request at least one month in advance.
- **Flights and ground transportation:** Travel arrangements should be made well in advance, especially if your company is looking for reasonable air transfer fares. Start with your travel arrangements at the same time as your application to a trade fair. Also check out availability and costs of local transportation such as public transport and taxis.
- **Other arrangements:** In addition to travel and accommodation, there are other logistics considerations that may be useful for your participation. For example, plan to get a local SIM card for your phone to make it easier to call potential and current clients or connect to the internet. The free internet service at a trade fair is usually quite slow. Consider getting a credit card from your bank to ease smaller transactions.
- **Sanitary conditions:** For trade fairs taking place during COVID-19, there may be additional sanitary conditions. Always check conditions of the fair you participate in, whether as visitor or exhibitor. At BioFach 2022, exhibitors need to ensure that visitors can keep a distance of 1.5 metres at all times in their stand, either with distance or plexiglass dividers, and they need to record contact information from all visitors coming to their stand. Access to the fair is restricted to tested, vaccinated, and recovered persons with appropriate proof. All participants (visitors and exhibitors) need to wear face masks and regularly wash their hands (<https://www.biofach.de/en/info/protective-measures>)

## Relevant considerations for digital fairs

Of all the factors that can determine your success at a digital fair, logistics and infrastructure may be the most important. Even if you have chosen the best fair and prepared the best digital assets for matchmaking, if you don't have a good internet connection and hardware, your efforts may become useless.

In the days prior to the fair, make sure you have a computer and internet connection that allow you to surf the internet quickly, access the digital event platform fully, make high-quality video calls, and send and receive different files. To be sure that you have the necessary infrastructure, try it! Make video calls, send files, and access the fair days before to test your navigation.

### KEY – Prepare a plan B

Prepare a plan B in case you lose your internet connection, or your computer has problems. Make sure you have a backup place where you can easily connect to the platform and the internet.



## 2.13 WHAT TO BRING TO THE TRADE FAIR - CHECKLIST

Promotional materials	
Physical fair	Adjustments for digital fairs
Poster or banner	Include these in your online stand
Company flyers: these should be small and easy to hand out with good quality pictures, product and contact information	Prepare digital flyers to send to buyers or share via your company website
Lots of business cards: It is better to have too many than too few business cards, they are small and easy to carry with you	Share contact information over email or through the digital trade fair platform
At least 100 copies of business contact sheets to record all your meetings.	Use an online or Word version of your business contact sheet
Sufficient samples to give away. The number of samples, as well as the sample size, depends on your type of product and the trade fair you are participating in; bring additional samples for your key products. Provide samples with labels containing all necessary information: company contacts, batch number, production date, product name.	Make arrangements with interested buyers to send samples after you meet them online
Single-use spoons/cups for tasting, if relevant: check with the trade fair organisers which materials are allowed	Not applicable
Photos of production and/or collection areas	Include these in your online stand
Decoration for your display. Discuss with the stand organisers how much space you need to fill with decorations	Not applicable
Agenda, with appointments made with buyers in advance	Have this available on your computer
Outbound list with exhibitors at the fair you want to meet with	Have this available on your computer
Stationery and other practical items: A notebook, stapler, several pens, calculator, USB-drive	Have these at your desk for note taking
Smart formal clothing (e.g. suit) for the trade fair, with comfortable shoes. Check the weather forecast to determine if you need to bring warm clothing (sweaters, coats, shawls and gloves) for outside.	Wear smart formal clothing during your video calls



## Company and technical documentation

### Physical fair

**Product documents:** Product specification sheets, Technical Data Sheets, Safety Data Sheets, if available and relevant

**Certificate of analysis** with results of laboratory tests. These should match the samples you're handing out.

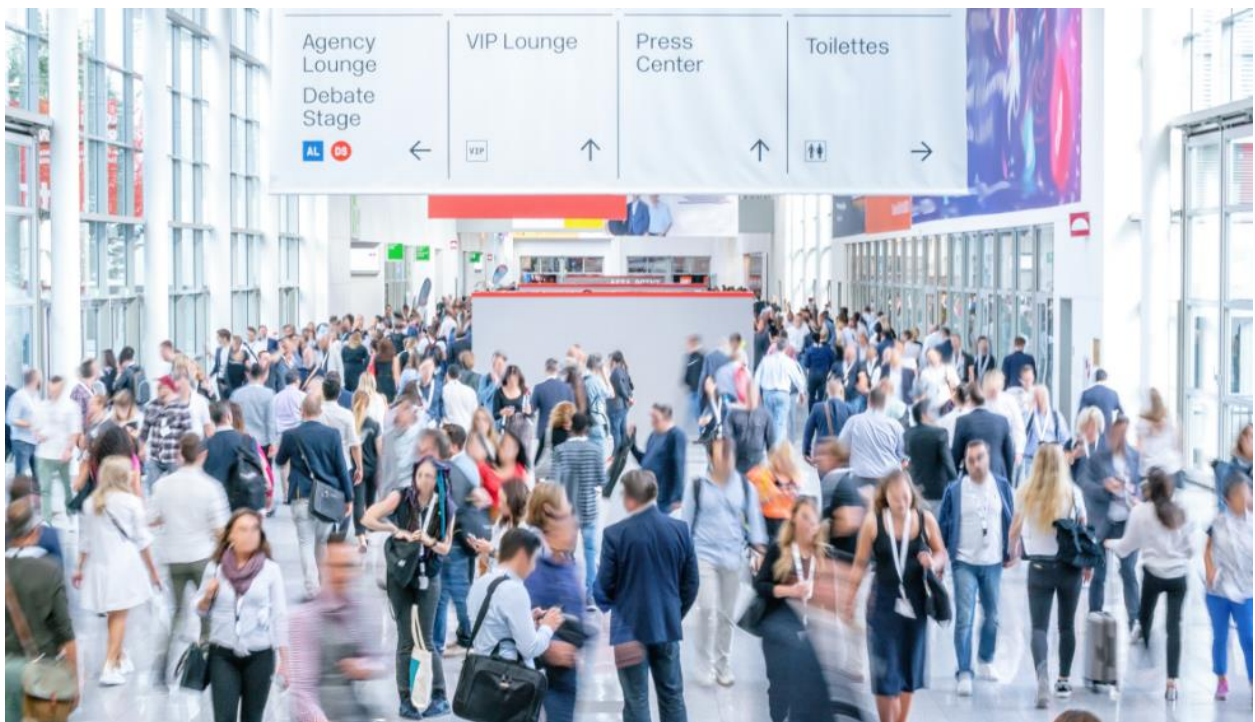
**Certificates** for organic production, Fairtrade, quality management (such as ISO 22000) and health certificate from respective authority

**Product list** with product origin, harvest periods and quantities available

**Price list** (for your own reference) with discount possibilities (depending on volumes/terms of delivery)

### Adjustments for digital fairs

Have this available on your computer and ready to share with prospective buyers



## 3. DURING THE FAIR

After you completed all your preparation successfully, you are ready to participate in the trade fair. To make the most of your participation, **stand management** is key for exhibitors (section 3.1). For both exhibitors and visitors, you may be meeting a lot of people during the trade fair. Proper **management of business contacts** (section 3.2) will help you in the follow-up after the fair. Moreover, during the fair you can still **promote your stand** if you're exhibiting to maximise the number of visitors at your stand (section 3.3).

### 3.1 STAND MANAGEMENT

As your stand is the business card of your company, it is crucial to manage it well during the fair. This means different things for a physical and a digital trade fair.

#### Relevant considerations for physical fairs

Make sure that the stand is always well kept and clean. Arrange for a cleaning service each evening. Keep jackets, bags, additional samples, and luggage in your closed supply closet. At the stand, do not:

- Have a big meal (except snacks / drinks available at booth)
- Accept phone calls during a meeting, don't be late for any appointment
- Talk extensively with co-workers / neighbouring stands
- Leave your booth unattended, not even at the end of the trade fair

#### At the start of the trade fair day

Trade fairs usually open earlier for exhibitors than for visitors. First thing in the morning someone should check the stand for integrity, switch on anything that needs to be switched on and make sure that all exhibits are in place. Depending on the size of the stand this may be up to one hour before the trade fair opens. During the fair, always observe: watch the competition and your visitors and take notes of interesting findings. A trade fair is one of the best opportunities to collect first-hand competitor and customer information.

#### Trade fair staff

The type and number of staff present at a trade fair depends on your strategy and objectives. Make sure that you have at least two company representatives with good knowledge about your products. This will give you the flexibility to visit companies at their stand and to have meetings at your stand while ensuring that there is someone to welcome new visitors.

If you have a large stand, you can also assign a stand manager who is responsible for the appearance of the stand, accompanies the set-up and close-up of the stand before and after the trade fair and is responsible for opening and closing the booth each day. In addition, sales staff are essential at a trade fair, especially if your objective is to make new business contacts and sell products. It could be helpful and useful if your staff speaks English during a trade fair for exchanging with your contacts, and speaking other international languages could be also an opportunity to be in touch with a new trade partner. Ensure that there are always staff on hand to welcome visitors to the stand. Inform the entire team if VIPs are expected.

## Relevant considerations for digital fairs

When the digital fair starts, please make sure to follow this daily agenda:

- Start your day an hour before the official start of the fair and make a plan with the goals and activities for the day
- Update your exhibitor profile according to the events or highlights of the day, if any
- Update your website according to the events or highlights of the day, if any
- Make a post on your social media channels to update your audience on your participation that day
- Make sure all your staff have the necessary infrastructure to log into the digital fair
- Set up the stage for your video calls

### KEY – Engage, engage, and engage

Being present at the digital fair and having your digital assets ready for matchmaking is only half the job. Make sure that every day you try to complete your activities and goals related to finding and interacting with buyers. Most likely, you will have to actively find those interesting buyers for your company, identify the staff who work there and interact with them. The more you interact with potentially interesting buyers for your product, the greater the likelihood that you will find the right buyer for your products.



## 3.2 BUSINESS CONTACTS

Actively approaching new business partners with your sales pitch and documenting your meetings and contacts are equally important when you participate in a trade fair, whether that is as a visitor or exhibitor. Always bring a business card to any meeting you participate in. Use a business contact sheet to write down the details of a meeting and thus support your follow-up after the fair. Use these documents to:

- Keep track of proceedings at the fair
- Gather contact details
- Remember topics discussed in meetings and promises made
- Classify contacts as very important or less important to prioritise follow-up
- Have a basis for post-fair evaluation

Topics to include in a business contact sheet:

- Contact details (or attach a business card)
- New or existing contact
- Type of contact
- Notes of the meeting
- Follow-up required, by you or by the contact. Only make promises you can keep.
- Classification of the contact (very important, important, or less important)

Ensure that anyone visiting the stand can easily leave their contact details, either by using their business card or by filling in a simple pre-printed form (surname, first name, email address, direct professional phone number, company, country, nature of the enquiry).

### Communication during the fair

When you talk to potential clients at a trade fair, try to analyse them and determine if they are an interesting contact or not. Ask questions to find out the role of your contact in their company, and to identify their needs and concerns.

DO'S	DONT'S
Know who to target & focus on / quickly distinguish real prospects	Never "wing it"
Be prepared (approach, message and possible objections)	Never jump to conclusions
Ask questions to determine real needs	Don't be problem-focused
Listen (80/20 rule)	Never claim to know the answer to something when you don't
Demonstrate, proof, show!	Don't be shy to ask what they want to understand how to follow up
Give value and be solution-focused	Don't claim to be the first or unique
Be honest	Don't claim it will sell

# BUSINESS CONTACTS SHEET EXAMPLE



## Biofach 2021 Business Contact Sheet

Date: | \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Attending team member: \_\_\_\_\_

New contact     Existing contact

Type of contact:

Importer     Retailer

Agent     Supplier

Manufacturer     Service provider

Wholesaler     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Card

Key points discussed (e.g. nature of interest, product interest, trade relationship, orders):

Follow-Up required: \_\_\_\_\_ Deadline: \_\_\_\_\_

Send quotation: Product: \_\_\_\_\_ Quantity: \_\_\_\_\_

Send sample

Send company information (e.g. certificates) on: \_\_\_\_\_

Send product information (e.g. CoA, specifications) on: \_\_\_\_\_

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up by contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Classification of contact:     Very important     Important     Less important





## The value of creating a leads database

Buyers may not be interested in buying your products in the short term, but they may be interested later. Therefore, a key result of participating in each trade fair should be to update your database of potential buyers. Regardless of whether it is a sophisticated CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system or a spreadsheet stored on your laptop, be sure to add all your business contact sheets to this database. Doing this will be key to building a strong database with potential buyers. This database will be the starting point for all your future online communications with your target audience. Update your leads database daily during the fair to avoid accumulating work for after the fair.

## Relevant considerations for digital fairs

A great advantage of participating in digital trade fairs, compared to physical trade fairs, is that you can access the full list of the trade fair visitors as well as exhibitors. This means you don't have to interact with all potential buyers to get their contact information. It will be easier to build a large database of potentially interesting buyers for your company when you attend a digital fair. Research potential buyers extensively, profile them, and store their contact information in a system or spreadsheet. Mark in your spreadsheet those contacts with whom you interacted during each fair to have a clear historical overview of your matchmaking efforts.



### 3.3 PROMOTION

If you've prepared well, you will have already promoted your company before the start of the trade fair. You have contacted existing clients and potential business leads to meet you at the fair, and you have used social media, your website, or a mailing to communicate your participation. You should also have prepared your company and product promotion materials, either online for a digital trade fair or offline for a physical trade fair.

It helps to promote your company actively during the trade fair as well, to ensure even more visitors find your stand, whether digital or physical. You can also use the trade fair to take photos you can use in later promotion activities, for example of your stand full of visitors or of yourself in a business meeting. Increase your **online visibility during** the fair, for example:

- During the fair dates, make sure that you communicate via your website and social media profiles. This will not only help you to gain visitors but also keep your audience updated on your participation.
- Make sure that your exhibitor profile is updated every day, especially if you're participating in a digital fair.
- If you exhibit at a digital trade fair, consider hosting a webinar or roundtable to present your company, story and products. Make sure that the day and time is correctly highlighted in your exhibitor profile.
- Create content (specially for social media) about the daily highlights of your participation at the fair, you liked and/or achieved on that day. For example, post short videos taken at a physical fair or daily social media updates about your participation at the fair.
- Remember to collect all relevant social media profiles and emails of potential buyers.
- Consider paying for special advertisements to gain higher visibility during the fair days.
- Promote your online exhibitor profile one-on-one, send direct messages to interesting buyers inviting them to visit your profile or stand.



## 4. AFTER THE FAIR

Well done, you have successfully concluded your trade fair. However, you still have quite some work to do to **follow-up on contacts made at the trade fair** (section 4.1) and to **evaluate your performance** against the objectives you set before going to the fair (section 4.2).

### 4.1 FOLLOW-UP

Since you've documented your contacts well during the trade fair (section 3.2) your follow-up will be a lot more efficient. Ensure you plan sufficient time for follow-up and start immediately after the fair. The follow-up procedure will determine if your trade fair participation is a success or not. Be aware that most orders and contracts will not be made at the fair, but rather in your follow-up, especially if you are a new exhibitor.

If you haven't updated your leads database during the fair, do this right after the fair. Use your business contact sheets to prioritise your contacts. Follow-up with the most promising contacts first, your 'very important' category of contacts. Start this process as soon as possible, not more than a few days after the trade fair ends. Your clients and new contacts will expect a timely follow-up. You can call or send a personal email to your contacts. Link your communication to the fair and refer to the topics discussed.

Follow-up actions can include:

- Follow-up meeting at the fair, if needed
- Send samples and additional information as requested
- Communicate if there are any delays to inform your contact, for example if you need to gather information or prepare samples. Let your contact know when they can expect to receive this information.
- Prepare and send a quotation. Make sure that your quotation is clear and to the point, and mention the product characteristics (volume, size, packaging and price), [Incoterms](#) and date of expiry of your quote. Make sure to have a written acceptance by the buyer and read any additional purchase conditions of your buyer before confirming or signing anything on your part. The duration for a contract can be per shipment but also per season.
- Communicate if you cannot make a suitable offer
- Request a response from your contact if an answer does not arrive on time

Check CBI's 8 tips for doing business with European buyers of fresh fruit and vegetables for more information (<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/fresh-fruit-vegetables/doing-business>).

#### Online visibility after the fair

To transform many of the leads generated during the fair you will have to develop a company and product digital promotion strategy. In addition to the personalised follow-up described above, your strategy should include the following steps:

- Store all the contact information in your database.
- Send connect invitations (LinkedIn or Facebook when accurate) to all the people you met but also to the people you identified that might be interesting for you.
- Send a general newsletter or email commenting on your participation at the digital trade fair, sharing your digital assets for matchmaking and giving a clear invitation to connect with you.
- Create one or two social media posts summarising your participation at the digital fair.

## 4.2 EVALUATION

Your follow-up is your first priority after the trade fair ends. Once you have contacted new and existing clients, you should evaluate your trade fair participation. If your experience was successful in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and overall trade fair experience, consider participating again in the next version of this fair. Also use the evaluation to determine what you need to change or improve for participation in a next trade fair.

### Did you meet your trade fair objectives and goals?

To determine how effective your participation was, consider whether you achieved your learning and sales objectives and goals described in section 2.8. For example, let's go back to company X which was participating in a physical version of Fruit Logistica for the first time (see table below).

The company wanted to collect 20 contacts per day, for all three days of the fair. By checking the business contact sheets filled out, this can be easily verified. Another objective was to build market knowledge by interviewing three buyers and/or marketing managers to answer market research questions. In addition to checking the number of meetings, company X also recorded its main lessons learned from these meetings, which it will share with colleagues back home. *(see example table in next page)*

In addition to determining whether you've reached your objectives and goals, discuss what you've seen and learned at the fair with your colleagues. For example, did you:

- gather new market knowledge?
- find out information about your competition?
- collect new consumer insights?
- find new suppliers?
- use the opportunity to test your product(s) in the market?
- meet the right people at the fair?

### Was the participation efficient?

The efficiency of your participation can be more difficult to judge. Here you will compare the investment you made (see section 2.2) with the outcomes of the trade fair, to determine whether the investment was worth it. It may be difficult to quantify the outcomes of a trade fair as in most cases it will take time until business talks and negotiations you've had at a trade fair result in tangible orders or an increase in turnover. To help your measurement,

you can think of indicators such as overall number of contacts, number of important contacts, or contacts with new customers.

### Overall trade fair experience

You should also evaluate your overall trade fair experience. If you're a visitor, evaluate whether this would be a useful trade fair to exhibit at in the future. If you're an exhibitor, especially when attending a specific trade fair for the first time, conduct an evaluation on the last day of the fair with your team to discuss, among others:

- **Stand position:** Was the stand space sufficient? Was your stand located in the right hall and how good was the location of the stand within the hall?
- **Stand design:** How visible was the stand? Were you happy with the design?
- **Stand set-up:** How well did the set-up work?
- **Visitor traffic:** Compared to other booths, what was the level of attendance? What was the quality of visitors?
- **Trade fair in general:** How good was the overall visitor attendance at the fair?

Objective	Goal	Measurement
Build network and promote company and products among trade fair visitors	Collect 20 contacts per day	Day 1: 17
		Day 2: 23
		Day 3: 15
Identify business leads for future sales	Meetings with two importers and two traders	Importer meetings: 2 Trader meetings: 1
	Agree with two contacts to send product specifications	Specifications sent: 2
Build market knowledge	Interview three buyers and/or marketing managers to answer market research questions	Interviews: 4 Lessons learned: which documentations required; organic certification increasingly important; market for exotic fruits/veg growing (especially avocado)
	Identify and join two relevant workshops or seminars	Workshops/seminars joined: 2 Lessons learned: market for organic fruit and vegetables is growing



## ANNEX I – Budget overview (example)

	Budget	Actual costs	Gap
<b>Direct costs</b>			
<b>Stand</b>			
Stand space			
Stand design and construction			
Stand facilities: - electricity - water - cleaning - renting of refrigerator/printer - catering - other			
Office supplies/groceries			
<b>Promotion</b>			
Communication packages			
Promotion materials design			
Promotion materials printing			
<b>Travel, accommodation, and logistics</b>			
Flights			
Local transportation			
Hotel			
Food provision			
SIM cards			
Sample shipment			
<b>Indirect costs</b>			
Application for stand space and registration			
Organisation of stand construction and stand facilities			
Organisation of promotion materials, including promotion of the stand			
Project management			



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