

Green Entrepreneurship

Successful business cases of Green Entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean



Ezgi Gida: Vegetarian uncooked meatball production in Turkey

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Name: Ezgi Gida
City, country: Ankara, Turkey
Name of entrepreneur/ founder: Selime Kaya

Description: EZGİ GIDA established in Ankara in 1993 is a major player in the food sector, by broadening its production capacity and selling network each year. In 2005, EZGİ GIDA developed a new product called ETİYOK, the vegetarian uncooked meatball, which has had a successful market penetration and is seen as a good example of reducing meat production. The penetration of the product into market was very successful thanks to its unique taste although produced without meat. It is seen as a good example of reducing meat consumption, which is known to be environmentally unsustainable owing to intensive resource (especially water) use associated with meat production.

Investment: *Start up capital:* 86,000 €
Rate of return on investment: 1 year
Sources of funding: Financed by Technology Development Foundation of Turkey (50% of the project budget), and TUBITAK (50% of the project budget).

Employment generation: 13 workers are employed for the project.

Timeline: 2001 - Inception
2006 – Implementation

Feasibility study: Since meat is the most expensive ingredient the vegetarian uncooked meatball is advantageous in terms of raw material costs when compared to traditional uncooked meatballs. EZGİ GIDA estimated their selling potential to be 60,000-90,000 €/year including the export share, enabling them to produce 4-5 tones of meatball daily.

Geo-social-economic setting: Turkey is a country whose cuisine is associated with meaty kebab dishes, doner sandwiches, and lahmacun; where essentially the food revolves around beef or lamb. Traditional uncooked meatball (Çiğ köfte) originated from south-eastern Turkey is prepared with “bulgur” and raw minced meat. It is one of the well known tastes of traditional Turkish cuisine. Raw meat is accepted as a threat to human health when it is not treated with caution and hygiene, and traditional uncooked meatball has a very short shelf life when compared to cooked forms of meatball. This situation hinders the widespread consumption of traditional uncooked meatball in Turkey.

Key features: Sustainable Consumption and Production, Social change, Innovation in food sector, Traditional product, Resource Efficiency

Overall rational and motivation:	To develop a new innovative product for vegetarians. To produce a more durable and more hygienic uncooked meatball for not only vegetarians but also for those who have reluctance towards the “uncooked meat” concept and to create a new sector based around the vegetarian meatball. To minimize the ecological footprint of meatball production, which is very high mainly associated with meat production (due to high water consumption during meat production).
Strengths:	Eco-friendly product, Hygienic Product, Saving natural sources indirectly, More durable than the traditional meatball although it has the same taste, Sold in many shops as a take-away type of food
Challenges and constraints:	Strict laws and regulations as well as standards on food products, Replicability of the concept by other companies in the sector, Unfair competition between other producers who are not taking hygiene as an issue sufficiently. A threat is the potential competitors and the fact that it is difficult to protect products through patents.
Direct activities and Impacts:	<i>Social:</i> Thousands of shops across Turkey sell a new vegetarian alternative. <i>Environmental:</i> 4-5 tonnes of a meat alternative produced, reducing resource use, particularly water. <i>Economic:</i> Employment opportunity to produce uncooked meatballs in a more hygienic way.
Use of innovative Technologies:	The innovation in this eco-friendly approach is not using meat in the product, reducing water consumption considerably, as well as making the product more durable with the same taste quality. Another innovative aspect of the project was to use automation instead of manpower which also brings hygienic production processes. This product has been patented.
Evidence of a holistic approach/world view:	“Meatball without any meat” is itself a radical change.
Scale of benefits:	National with thousands of shops selling the new product and 13 direct employees.
Policies, incentives and regulations needed:	Specific support programs for environmental R&D, investment and entrepreneurship activities should be increased and implemented. For environmentally friendly products incentives (tax deduction/ exemption, etc.) should be applied, stable market policies and conditions should be maintained for encouraging entrepreneurs and investors.
Lessons and recommendations:	SCP concepts should be disseminated. Innovation brings many indirect positive impacts. Patience, non-stop working, ambition and taking help from academics are the key points for the success of an innovative work.
References:	www.ezgigida.com/index.php?english2