

Seaweed snack start-up gets big retail break in Middle East

A Grimsby food company is hoping to take the Middle East snacking scene by storm after securing a deal to stock its seaweed products in one of the region's largest supermarket chains.

Seaweed Agogo only launched in 2019 and now the business brought forward by entrepreneurial couple Tracy George and Prof Mike Dillon has been listed by Lulu Group.

Headquartered in Abu Dhabi, the company has stores across the UAE, with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and beyond now on the radar.

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The deal, for undisclosed volumes, followed a recent government trade mission, with a dozen retailers in the region taking an interest as it was highlighted aboard HMS Richmond.

The new business, producing seaweed snacks and seasonings, builds on the couple's previous venture, Tower Pet Products, launched on Grimsby Seafood Village, from which the duo have now taken a back seat. It produces the award-winning Sea Treats range, and like Seaweed Agogo, was built on safe supply chain and sustainability knowledge built up in the town's primary sector and exported internationally by Prof Dillon, who has worked with developing countries on United Nations projects.

Clinching the listings in the UAE is seen as a major breakthrough for Seaweed Agogo, with the pandemic taking its

toll on early ventures with health clubs, bars and restaurants.

“We are delighted and excited to be seeing such early success, but we have plans to build on this,” Tracy said.



Seaweed Agogo products on display during a trade mission meeting held aboard HMS Richmond in the Middle East.

(Image: Department for International Trade)

“We will be developing new products and now the hospitality industry is up and running again after lockdown, we believe there is more growth to come.

“We really believe in this product. Seaweed is good for the planet, good for your health and a

sustainable food source. Most importantly our products taste good. We are looking forward to a bright future.”

Hand harvested Irish seaweed was selected due to seasonal availability.

“There are thousands of species so getting the right one was very important,” Tracy said. “The health benefits are amazing. We’ve made sure the other functional ingredients are really healthy, and low sugar, as a lot of protein snacks are not. It is all vegan friendly, and above all tastes great.”

International trade was an attraction with how business is conducted, but there are plans to grow the UK market too.

“We are in local restaurants and bars, and we’ve focused on e-commerce, and we’d like to do more,” she said. “It is still early days for us, but we are a snacking country, and when people are looking for healthy snacks they fit the bill. With the rise in veganism, people looking at wellness and lifestyle, we offer something that offers that, and – fundamentally – tastes good.”

While manufacturing of the popcorn and seaweed herb snacks is outsourced elsewhere in the UK – and a closely guarded secret as it looks to protect its early wins – the recipe development, packaging and design work has all been done in the town.

Grimsby firms SouceFour and Iris Packaging Ltd were turned to for the latter, and there s plenty of praise for both.

Tracy said: “The packaging has been picked out as great when it comes to the design, and Rob Pritchard of Source Four has done all the work for us,” she said of the team behind Docks Beers’ distinctive look.

Iris, a six year old business based in Armstrong Street, has just built turnover to £1.5 million.

“Iris was key in helping me and I know they have helped many artisan food producers like me get off the ground, grow and

develop,” Tracy said, “I don’t think we would be where we are now without them.”

Gousto, Proctor & Gamble, fruit and vegetable giant Japco Glebe have also worked with Iris.

Director Craig Knight said: “It has been exciting and rewarding to work with Tracy from the initial idea to a thriving business.

“Her success is further evidence of Grimsby’s growing reputation as one of Europe’s premier food producing areas and we look forward to working alongside the firm as it grows and prospers.”

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