

## The Call of China



### Unicorn Ingredients' base in China allows it to build close relationships with suppliers of key products and embrace local opportunities and expertise.

As the Chinese market started to take off in 2011, Unicorn Ingredients registered its first overseas office in the country, as part of its global expansion objective. A Chinese office provides a vital communications conduit for UK-based Unicorn, in dealing with its many Chinese suppliers and Chinese customers.

Unicorn sources a whole range of its products from China, including conventional and organic pumpkin seeds and kernels, conventional and organic sunflower kernels; organic linseeds, millet seeds and buckwheat kernels. It also sells products from other countries to Chinese consumers. The Chinese office is located in Qinhuangdao City, Hebei Province, a port city in the North of China not far from Beijing, and four employees are currently based there.

Wang Yong, Unicorn's Chief Representative for China says that there have proved to be numerous benefits of having a local base. With a local base, Unicorn gets first-hand information on the progress of crops of its key products grown in China and can build close relationships with local Chinese suppliers and farmers. He says:

*“We have established strong long term relationships with our producers and understand the individual suppliers' capabilities and limitations. We can visit our suppliers regularly. This allows us to put a stop to anything we see as a technical or commercial risk immediately.”*

Having a local base makes it easy to audit suppliers' sites, sample pre-shipment goods and analyse shipment samples to make sure that all product meets specifications and that it ships on time. With its local expertise, Unicorn can also react quickly to changing demands of its customers and market trends, sourcing any new or alternative products required. And in China itself the local team can find sales opportunities for the Unicorn range of products, introducing ranges from outside China into the local market.

Having gained BRC Agents & Brokers accreditation back in 2015, Unicorn has made many changes to its business globally, which have enhanced and streamlined practices in China. Procedures for dealing with suppliers were standardised and documented, and teams were trained on meeting the demands of the new accreditation; technically, logistically and commercially, which was a time-consuming process, reports Yong. “We have implemented a strict supplier approval procedure, which ensures that any new supplier is able to meet our requirements,” he adds.

Keeping up the highest quality standards is the main goal for the future, he says. The strategy is to have 100% BRC certified processing sites for all key products in China within the coming three years and 90% for the non-core products. Yong says:

*“As a local base our task is not only to check if a supplier has a BRC certificate but more importantly we have to “testify” that BRC accreditation standards are complied with at their sites, with the standard demanding a very strong and professional approach.”*

Having a “Glocal” (local and global) base in China helps Unicorn offer complete traceability throughout its supply chain, and navigate the cultural, communication and operational complexities of doing business in China. Building glocal excellence is a constant work in progress, says Yong.