

Att: Daniel Zender

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With pics
Fijian products to break into the Swiss market

Switzerland is one of the very attractive market place – with a market size of more there seven million people, a per capita GDP of 20 percent.

It is still considered a safe haven for investors, because it has maintained a degree of bank secrecy and has kept up the franc's long-term external value.

But founder of the Swiss-Fiji Business Council Daniel Zender said something was a miss - the Fijian products in the Swiss market.

"I have been here in the last 10 years and I know the number of Swiss products available in the Fijian market," he said.

"If Mexico can get their products into the Swiss market then why can't Fiji," he added.

Mr Zender said that to get the product to that market there has to be an information dissemination tool (website) because you have to be known to sell your products and to be successful in that market.

The council created its own website last year and is currently listing 25 top Fiji companies like Tapoos, Motibhai, Punjas, Pacific Green and Makosoi Soap as potential Fijian companies to make the break in a foreign market where there is no mineral resource available.

According to the Fiji Island Bureau of Statistics the total value of Swiss products imported from Switzerland was over \$2.6 million.

Mr Zender there is more to the figure because the country of origin of a product is traced only to the last port of call.

"There is neither a direct flight nor a shipping link between the two countries," he said.

In Fiji from the power generation plant at Monasavu to most executive offices in the heart of the city Swiss products is an ever-present commodity.

Brands name like Rolex, Nestle and Landis Gyr and with a range of chocolates and pharmaceuticals products being from Swiss is common phenomena

The idea of forming the council came in 1993 when Mr Zender returned from Switzerland (his homeland) after being working for the government-owned Information Technology Centre (ITC) from 1987 to 1989.

"I have received a substantial amount of support from the Swiss companies and I'm hopeful that I'll have the same here even tough I only have about 10 percent of the total support expected," he said.

Fiji Islands Trade and Investment Bureau chief executive officer Jesoni Vitusagavulu said one of most difficult factor that affects the decision of venturing into the Swiss market is the high freight cost involved.

Mr Zender said that although Fiji have been disadvantaged in terms of our size and economic status but the most important thing is to look for a market, get the right product for them and you'll have the rest of the market.

The Fijian society is almost the same as that in Swiss which is also a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual namely the Germans, Italian and the Romans.

"We have done our work and if there is not enough responses to get things through then well have to wait for another two or three years before we can try again," he said.
For Fiji the economic benefit is huge – an increase in foreign reserves.

Ends.