

Bug based packaged food: Market obstacles and opportunities

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Edible insects have been talked about on Western media for over three years now but are the products on the supermarket shelves? Despite the efforts of a number of start-ups and associations, there are still a limited number of packaged foods based on processed bugs. And the mainstream distribution does not seem to believe these products can move fast. Analyzing the commercial obstacles and opportunities is critical to demonstrate that edible insects can really turn into an industry. Regulations (or the absence of rules) are also slowing down the market. The problem is not limited to Europe, with the new Novel Food law, but also to other worldwide guidelines and legislations. For example, there are no product codes for insects, according to the Worldwide Custom Organization, which makes import and export more complicated. And it will take years before insects will be included in the FAO's Codex Alimentarius. Even countries where insects are commonly eaten are often considering them illegal. In China for example only the silkworm is listed as a legal food. How do we get products into the mainstream market? Are cricket energy bars the way to start from a niche and then move to the average consumer? Is the mealworm having better chances than the cricket, considered the gateway bug for the past two years? Is silkworm the Chinese another way, since it represents 500.000 tons produced yearly in China? The presentation will try to give an answer to these key commercial questions.

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