

EF-Active gears up for export success

Armed with a BCom, post-graduate degree and an MBA in strategic marketing, EF-Active founder and CEO Salil Dhingra is growing his hygiene business beyond borders. Having successfully established and serviced the expanding EF-Active range within South Africa, the brand is now focusing on introducing itself to new markets on the African continent.



Source: Supplied

“We have already started to expand into many African territories. We are now regularly exporting to Mauritius, we have also landed the brand in Ghana, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique,” says Dhingra.

“Before we started on the export market, we wanted to make sure that we had the local South African market optimally serviced,” Dhingra points out.

“We have achieved this and continue to support that network. The countries we are exporting to now do not offer manufacturing opportunities, so we are merely responding to the need to import a decent, reliable product, which we can do and successfully cater to their demands.”

“We are taking things slowly. One country at a time is our approach. We need to best understand the need and the demand in each and couple that with our ability to deliver before we expand further,” he adds.



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Logistically smart

Reliable distribution is critical, something that the business understands implicitly. “My team cannot [currently] travel to many of these countries, something that I used to do a lot. So, connecting and establishing critical networks, remotely, is something we’ve worked hard to achieve, and we’ve successfully overcome the many hurdles each has placed before us.”

EF-Active’s entire product line has been endorsed and regulated by the Department of Trade and Industry in South Africa. “We have the special licences to export our product out of South Africa too,” Dhingra points out. “Not everyone can export. Each business needs to apply for permission and that is only for a limited time, six to eight months before you need to re-apply again.”

“The government has, since the lockdown commenced, acknowledged that sanitiser products, the likes of ours, are a longer-term demand product and they want to make sure that the local demand is first fulfilled before the product is exported out.”

The Department of Health certification, pharmaceutically speaking, is another hurdle EF-Active responded to and adheres with. “NRCS and SABS protocols are all adhered to, so that’s why it is easier for us to export to more SADC (Southern African Development Community) countries,” Dhingra explains. “They accept our local certifications, which makes it possible for us to service those needing markets, effectively.”

Eyeing new export markets

Angola and Nigeria are the next two territories where EF-Active anticipates landing and serving the broader population with their key products. “Nigeria is highly regulated. There is a lot of red tape, but we are accustomed to challenges and continue to distribute our products within that framework. There are 200-million-plus people across both countries and it’s a region we can actively service, for the greater good.”

As for what’s next, Dhingra says, “We are currently exporting to Botswana, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Mozambique and Mauritius, so yes, the export model is tried and [successfully] tested.”



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Product development

Bringing new products online remains a key growth area for the business. “After sifting through US-based research, EF-Active took the initiative to identify a longer-term sanitiser product line, and with that US, along with UK research in hand, what came out of it was that about 80% of consumers stay true to their initial brand choices and pre or post-Covid, they will make the likes of our product a part of their regular basket shop,” Dhingra explains.

“Knowing that this category is here to stay, we decided to stick with the pre-and post-wash solutions,” Dhingra shares. “So, we have a range of liquid hand soaps, for the normal, at home, routine. Then you carry sanitiser with you, wherever you go. With all of that, your skin dries out, due to the alcohol in the product.

“And with EF-Active becoming a known and respected hygiene brand with the South African consumer, we then responded and launched a skincare cream range, including camphor, peppermint and 100% eucalyptus oil varietal balms to counter the effects of intense sanitisation. We were the first on the African continent to launch an aerosol format of these varietals,” he adds.

Dhingra concludes, “We see EF-Active evolving into a full bath, body and personal hygiene brand in future,” Dhingra concludes. “That is what we are working towards at this stage. Bringing in more skin-friendly ingredients is key for us, all while increasing our market share.”

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