

EXPORT GOODS

A new-found emphasis on quality

by Panagiotis Drossos

Chief Executive Officer of HEPO (Hellenic Foreign Trade Board)



It has not been long since the international reputation of Greece could be summed up in two words: “glorious past”. It is a fact, however, that over the past three years, Greece has managed to earn the admiration of even the most apprehensive observers, by presenting a dynamic and optimistic present. A renewed profile, which keeps the characteristics of its history and culture intact, now draws attention to the potential and prospects for growth and progress that it has as a country.



A series of successes, starting with the organization of the 2004 Olympic Games and reaching the present remarkable achievements in the economy as well as other areas, provide conclusive proof that Greece is currently on a new course. A course firmly set on the extroverted development of the country, with the emphasis on competitiveness, quality and the creation of new opportunities on every level.

The export sector is one of the most characteristic and successful cases to have implemented this new developmental model.

Reinforcing the presence of Greek production in the global market and cultivating new international

cooperation are the focal points among the strategic priorities of the Greek Government.

This concerns a target that was initially based on two fundamental principles. The first concerns the reinforcement of the competitiveness of Greek businesses and products, not only in terms of cost, but mainly in terms of quality and innovation.

The second, equally important principle concerns the effective exposure of high-quality Greek products in markets abroad, and, at the same time, the creation of further opportunities for the expansion of a mutually beneficial cooperation between Greek and foreign businesses.

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*Mastic tree's trunk
from the island of Chios*

Starting in the sector of competitiveness, the Greek government has promoted a series of structural changes, measures and policies over the years, aiming at the cultivation of a steadier and more fertile environment for businesses. In this way, there is the gradual development of an environment favorable for investments in quality, research and innovations which promotes the development of even more ambitious business plans and provides incentive for the manufacture of value-added products.

Some of the most important initiatives in this direction were:

- The provision of tax incentives and motivation for the reinforcement of entrepreneurial competitiveness and attraction of private investment capital.
- The application of a new law for development providing motivation for new businesses, particularly in the country's provincial areas. This law puts emphasis on technological upgrading and innovation for the creation of new, quality competitive products. It also encourages entrepreneurship in new fields and production sectors.
- The acceleration of the rate of utilization of the European programs for the support of entrepreneurship, with particular emphasis on small to medium-sized businesses, through the Operational Program of "Com-

petitiveness” of the Ministry of Development.

- The assurance of high-quality standards and labeling of Greek products, with the upgrading of the relevant controlling and consulting authorities, but also the broader adoption of international certification standards.
- The application of measures to support businesses that proceed with standardization and advanced upgrading of products.
- The undertaking of comprehensive initiatives for the reinforcement of the quality and the promotion of major Greek products.

Through these policies, Greek businesses are shown to be the key promoters of the new economic reality in the country. They have the opportunity to improve their production, broaden their horizons beyond the Greek borders and pursue new cooperations, with professionalism, structure and organization.

Nevertheless, in order for this potential to be adequately exploited, another basic precondition must be covered.

A coordinated policy for the emergence of the contemporary profile of Greek businesses was needed, as well as the effective repositioning of Greek products in the international markets.

For this purpose, the Hellenic Ministry of Economy and Finance has devised a comprehensive strategic

program based on three essential priorities:

- Targeting specific large markets, following thorough surveys, analyses and studies of their characteristics.
- A greater and more coordinated presence of the businesses and of the extroverted orientation of the country abroad.
- Effective support of Greek products and services, with the advancement of modern means of advertising, marketing and public relations.

The Hellenic Foreign Trade Board (HEPO) is the medium for the materialization of this strategy, the legislative means for the application of the Government’s export policy.

Having acquired a clearly upgraded role in comparison to the past, HEPO is now instrumental in the advancement of the extroversion of Greek businesses and the presence of Greek products in markets abroad.

By developing a systematic action plan focused on the product, the business or the market, it is the resolute medium for the best Greek businesses and the finest Greek products to reach every market in the world.

Over the past two years, HEPO, with the support of the Ministry of Economy and Finance, has succeeded in tripling the presence of Greek businesses in markets abroad, by organizing business missions and participating in international exhibitions.



Along with the organized presence in the foreign markets, HEPO plans and brings to fruition integrated promotional generic programs for special fields.

Special attention is paid to the promotion of products with high added value. Products that embody tradition, new technologies, quality, innovation and planning are required so that they may contribute to the establishment of “Made in Greece” as a prominent brand name in international markets.

In the field of food and beverages, the largest industry in Greece, the “Kerasma” initiative is a typical example of this strategy.

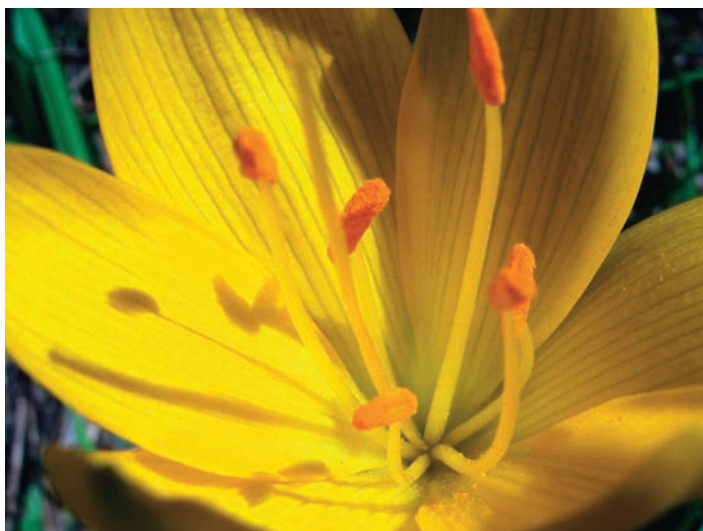
It can be said that this field constitutes the best representative Greek products, since it combines quality

with the two vital advantages of the country, nature and civilization.

Greece has the advantage of having elements that allow for the production of food and beverages of exceptional flavor and high nutritional value.

Olives and olive oil, cheeses, wines, mastic and saffron are but a few of the products that have won international acclaim as Protected Designation of Origin and received important distinctions for their quality and particularly delectable characteristics. These are a result not only of the richness of the Greek soil, but also the passion and traditional knowledge handed down through the generations to their producers.

Kerasma is an aggregate of activities that not only promotes these



Crocus (saffron), Kozani

special features, but also takes them a step further. It promotes Greek nutrition as a whole, as a dietary model and as an element of an outstanding culture.

This effort comes in response to the needs of our times, when nutritional values have become of the utmost importance and consumers' apprehension regarding food safety is becoming all the more intense.

It is a different proposal for quality in this modern world where eating is on the verge of becoming an impersonal, hasty procedure.

It identifies Greek products as the components for a Mediterranean diet, an internationally acknowledged model for balance, health, well-being and longevity. At the same time, it promotes the particular traditions and values that are connected with food in Greek culture.

In any case, this is the reason for the name of our program: "Kerasma" in Greek means "offer"; something offered with generosity, consideration and warmth to a friend, a guest or a visitor. The word embodies the meaning of sharing, the joy and genuine delight in flavor within the framework of a life where the greatness of simplicity, the small daily pleasures and human values can find the place they deserve.

With the purposeful position exemplified by Kerasma, a new, recognizable communication entity has been created for Greek food and beverages. An entity based on a harmonious relationship, flavor, quality, health and lifestyle.

The actions supported by the program have been planned with a view to promoting the quality features of every product, but also with the purpose of bringing the re-

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spective manufacturers into contact with international distribution networks, buyers and those specialized in nutritional matters of the food trade.

The response to date has been particularly positive, since Kerasma has managed to attract the attention of consumers, buyers and public opinion-makers in some of the most difficult markets worldwide. It has already been successfully presented at exhibitions such as the Fancy Food Show in New York, SIAL and the Roland Garros International Tennis Tournament in Paris, to mention but a few of the numerous countries and markets where special promotional brochures have been distributed and action has been taken.

The food and beverages field continues to be one of the main concerns of HEPO. Within the framework of applicable European programs, HEPO is planning and putting into

effect special promotional campaigns for olive oil, cheeses, olives, wine, figs and mastic in 19 markets.

At the same time, however, emphasis is being placed on other fields of production, such as those of construction materials, technology, informatics and telecommunications, chemical products, cosmetics, and so on. Two new incentives, in accordance with the Kerasma principle, have been designed for the year 2007 and are concerned with the promotion of fashion and lifestyle, the field of construction materials, manufacturing and the relevant services.

Results of the focus of the Greek economy on quality and extroversion are already visible in the course taken by export companies over the past two years. According to data of the National Statistics Service, the exporting activities of the country are on an impressive ascending

course, reversing the negative trends of the past.

During the year 2006, exports showed an increase of 18.2% as compared to 2005, a percentage that amounts to the sum of 2.6 billion euros.

The increase in exports, both in 2005 and 2006, significantly surpassed the rate of growth of the country's nominal GNP. This means that foreign trade is now substantially contributing to the configuration of the rate of growth.

These trends constitute another significant indication of the ascending course of the Greek economy and corroborate the effectiveness of the economic policy and actions taken.

Primarily, however, they confirm the new, extroverted dynamics of Greek businesses that now possess not only the ideas, capacity and willpower but also the means with which to expand to foreign markets.

They meet the requirements and have the motivation to invest in quality and innovation, so that

exceptional products are manufactured, with the ability to deal with the competition.

Greek businesses are now capable of effectively promoting their products abroad, to develop sound productive collaborations, and reap the multiple mutual benefits.

As for Greece in the 21st century, Greek products and businesses are the reflection of an economy that produces quality, an economy that is growing and responding dynamically to the challenges of a global market. These are the best ambassadors of a country that is taking advantage of the factors providing its competitive edge: nature, tradition and civilization, its advantageous position in South-east Europe, the creativity and strength of the people. A country willing and able to share all this with the rest of the world by creating opportunities and benefits for all.

USEFUL LINKS

[Hellenic Foreign Trade Board
www.hepo.gr](http://www.hepo.gr)