

COMPANIES

Cricket, lovely cricket: Wicklow firm signs agreement to provide insect protein in Europe

Willows Ingredients, a distributor of raw materials for the food, healthcare and sports industries, is meeting demand from customers in animal nutrition and nutraceuticals

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David Scrivens, managing director and founder of Willows Ingredients: ‘As we have grown, we have entered new markets and new products.’ Picture: Fergal Phillips

Wicklow-based Willows Ingredients, a distributor of raw materials for the food, healthcare, sports and animal nutrition industries, has signed a distribution agreement with Cricket One Asia to provide cricket protein in the European markets.

CricketOne Asia has gained EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) Novel Food Accreditation and is the only non-EU supplier of the cricket protein selling into Europe.

“Eating crickets is not new. Crickets have been the regular diet of more than two billion people worldwide and have been safely consumed for over 2,000 years,” David Scrivens, managing director and founder of Willows Ingredients, said.

Demand for cricket protein is currently strongest from customers in animal nutrition and nutraceuticals, according to the company.

However, in the North American markets some manufacturers in the bakery and snacks industry are offering products with cricket protein powder such as cricket nutritional bars, cricket pasta, and cricket burgers, he added.

“It is only a matter of time before we see Europe following suit,” Scrivens said.

Family-owned Willow Ingredients imports product from all over the world and distributes to companies in both the human and animal nutrition industry across the UK, Ireland, Europe and North America.

It has offices in the Ireland, Britain, Belgium, China, Germany, and very soon Portugal.

“We don’t manufacture the final products. We supply raw materials, we buy in bulk from all over the world,” Scrivens said.

“We bring it from our central warehouse, located in the Netherlands and the UK, and we distribute to manufacturers who make tablets, sachets, or capsules, for human consumption and on the other side pet food pre-mix companies.”

In Ireland its customers include ConnollyRedMills, equine nutrition company TRM and ABC Nutrition.

The company’s full range of dietary supplements and functional ingredients include amino acids, joint care products, vitamins, and botanicals on the human nutrition side of the business.

“We started off with zero sales in April 2007 in the area of joint care. As we have grown we have entered new markets and new products,” Scrivens said.

“As our joint care market expanded, more of our customers were requesting more and more ingredients from us, so we added vitamins and minerals and speciality products to our range. As we have grown we have expanded our product portfolio and our territory.”

Willow, which has a turnover of around €20 million, said its main focus over the next year will be on sustainability.