



EKOFRISA: ECOLOGICAL GRAIN MANUFACTURER

AUTHOR

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HIGHLIGHTS

- *The need to utilize the buckwheat hulls left over from the production process led to circular solutions.*
- *Circularity is financially beneficial for the company.*
- *While circular practices are integral to Ekofrisa operations, they do not take center stage in their communication narrative.*

ABOUT THE CIRCULAR PRACTICE

Ekofrisa, founded in 2003, is a prominent groat producer in the Baltic region, specializing in the production of barley, wheat, pearl barley, pea groats, as well as flakes and flour. Their primary focus is on producing buckwheat groats. Ekofrisa also offers a range of buckwheat products such as buckwheat hull mulch, a wood chip substitute, as well as cereal bars featuring vegetables and buckwheat, granola, cocktails, flour, and even buckwheat hull pillows, mattresses, and toys. Ekofrisa illustrates a bioresource loop wherein the discarded buckwheat hull is utilized as a fuel source to produce steam for the subsequent production of buckwheat groats, rather than being discarded as waste. Buckwheat hull is also used for the production of pillows, mattresses, and toys. Ekofrisa represents an example of a traditional agricultural company using circular solutions in their practice.

BUSINESS MODEL

Ekofrisa is a key player among Lithuania's top three buckwheat producers, supplying the Eastern European market where buckwheat is a dietary staple. While Lithuania's interest in locally sourced ecological products is on the rise, Ekofrisa stands out as an eco-conscious brand, setting it apart from competitors which focus on conventional grain production. However, the challenge lies in the majority of consumers prioritizing affordability over circularly produced organic items. Meeting consumers' increasing quality expectations has driven up production costs for Ekofrisa, prompting investments in advanced quality control technologies.

The closed loop system is primarily centered around the production of buckwheat. The key component of this closed loop is the utilization of buckwheat hulls, which are transformed into various valuable resources such as energy, mulch for gardening purposes, and materials for producing pillows and mattresses. The hull, being an essential byproduct, plays a crucial role in creating additional economic value within the enterprise.

Rising energy costs have prompted the development of waste-burning solutions as a profitable approach. From a political standpoint, Lithuania supports equipment and process renewal but lacks specific incentives for circular innovations. Ekofrisa has used EU funds and development programs for digitalization and equipment upgrades. However, the absence of official certificates recognizing circularity poses a challenge



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ABOUT CIRCLE

The CIRCLE project aims to develop an interdisciplinary perspective on the circular economy in the Baltic-Nordic region by integrating insights from sociology, economics, philosophy, political science, and environmental science. The emphasis is placed on the use of by-products (bio-resources) generated as part of primary production in agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture and across the sectoral boundaries to explore the underlying models of socially- and commercially-driven collaborations, and the factors facilitating and hindering the development and wider use of circular practices and collaborative arrangements thereof.

More about CIRCLE:
<https://circle-eea.eu>

More about Ekofrisa:
<https://ekofrisa.lt>



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in communicating product sustainability to environmentally conscious consumers.

The primary emphasis of Ekofrisa's communication strategy, spanning various social media channels, their website, and packaging, revolves around the promotion of healthy nutrition rather than circularity. The company's mission is explicitly articulated as the production of high-quality and organic wholegrain products that advocate for healthy nutrition and a wellness-oriented lifestyle. While circular practices are indeed integral to their operations, they do not take a central place in their communication narrative. The enterprise actively leverages social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook for communication purposes, with a primary focus on showcasing the nutritional value and the ecological resources employed in crafting their granola bars, shakes, and granola products. These items are typically showcased in supermarket sections dedicated to promoting a healthy lifestyle.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The opportunities are related to experimentation to explore the biofermentation method. Originally, Ekofrisa had plans to develop a composting solution for the waste generated from cleaning all kinds of grain, not just buckwheat. The intention was to build infrastructure that would allow them to convert the compost into biochar, a type of fertilizer beneficial for replenishing the soil's microflora. However, the required investments for this composting and biochar production infrastructure were estimated as prohibitively high for Ekofrisa. Given their financial constraints, they decided to sell the waste materials from the production process instead. This extension of circularity allows another company to reuse the waste generated during the grain cleaning process, contributing to a more sustainable utilization of resources.

The potential challenge for the company is the limited number of organic farmers in Lithuania that can supply the materials needed for the production. Larger buckwheat markets such as Poland that can provide grains for a lower price also pose possible problems for this circular business initiative. The company is influenced by the activities of larger producers as buckwheat production is a niche sector. However, these threats do not pose any challenge for the circular solutions implemented, as the circularity is financially beneficial for the company and only makes it a stronger player in the market.