

Interview

Gregoire Putz – Managing Director, SIFA Australia

Paul Zalai, Co-Founder and Director, Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA) recently had the opportunity to chat to Gregoire Putz from SIFA Logistics to see how they fared during COVID and the starting of the operations in Australia and New Zealand

1. PAUL ZALAI – Greg, to start, how has and is COVID impacting your French operations ?

The word which is coming up the most in France is weariness. That tells us a lot about the situation!

However, for SIFA France and it's 300 employees located in France, things are going well. From the early stage of COVID-19, we quickly implemented action plans to minimize the risk and keep a high level of services. Being a major service provider for the Pharmaceutical industry we had a lot of motivation to fulfil our commitments.

2. PAUL ZALAI – Greg, why did SIFA decided to recently open offices in NZ and AUS?

Launching the business in Australia and New Zealand was an obvious expansion for the SIFA group. To understand why, it is important to have a bit of background.

To quickly summarize it: SIFA started in the Caribbean islands and expanded to the French territories which it has been developing for the last 50 years. For the past 15 years, SIFA has been looking into international development with the opening



of offices in the United States, Singapore, and Africa.

Our presence has grown in the Pacific Area, especially in Nouméa and Tahiti. The Aussie and Kiwi branches were the next logical step.

3. PAUL ZALAI – Within a few months you have already established the company and depot facilities... how do you find doing business down under?

Australia & New Zealand are both known as a friendly place to conduct business. However for foreign companies there are some hurdles to overcome such as immigration (staff deployment) and regulation around anti-money laundering concerns which can both take months to negotiate / resolve even with the guidance provided.

Within 2 years we have set-up the entire in-house logistics chain, we do;

- Our own LCL pick-up with our company vehicles
- We pack Freight All Kinds (FAK) boxes in our 77G depot
- We organize import ABF/DAWE inspections, and
- Our IATA licence has been granted allowing us to manage our airfreight shipments more intimately.

4. PAUL ZALAI – What service do you provide?

We now have the capabilities to provide all services a freight forwarder can offer: packing, unpacking, inspection, storage, bonded storage. The Pacific Area is growing and our FAK packing capabilities have increased substantially (Nouméa, Tahiti, Fiji, Vanuatu etc).

We also have a strong and interesting partnership for import FAK boxes from the USA, and we are looking at launching a new European trade lane.

Having multiple sites in France is an asset.

Local business opportunities are growing with our 77G/1.3 Approved Arrangement

licensed depot. Our client's feedback is that they find our operations team to have a strong sense of flexibility when finding the right solutions for their needs.

We are dedicated to serving our customers' needs so we can build long term partnerships.

Last minute container packing unpacking are not rare anymore.

5. PAUL ZALAI – what has been the biggest challenge

Before we set-up our own depot we had to pack our boxes offsite. This was a challenge, as FAK is very demanding in terms of depot reception and very specific in terms of container packing. For Melbourne and Brisbane, we are still using third-party depots which we are very happy with. We were clear from the beginning that the nature of the business requires flexibility.

We now manage the whole supply chain. Controlling all the steps helps us to provide the best service. This is in SIFA's DNA.

6. PAUL ZALAI – and finally Greg, what is the Key of success?

If you ask me what the key to success is, I'd say without hesitation: SIFA's team.

Without the commitment of the operations team, nothing would have been possible.

Our teams average age is 30 years old, and everyone has the opportunity to accomplish goals which contributes to the business' development and continued improvement of our operations. We are optimizing our IT workflow. However this is the people behind who are constantly striving and making things happen.



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSsoy424Sos>