

UKTI Helped Firm Take on the World

AN EAST Yorkshire-based supplier of laboratory equipment has its sights set on the world after growing its international business by a third.

Scientific Laboratory Supplies Ltd (SLS) was founded in Hessle in 1991 and is now the UK's largest independent supplier of laboratory equipment and chemicals.

Over the past two years, the firm has increased its international business by 33 per cent, and in the past 12 months it has gained further expansion into Ethiopia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and The Gambia.

The company is one of 165 in Hull and the East Riding that has worked with UK Trade and Investment Yorkshire And Humber (UKTI Y&H) over the past year.

And today the Mail can reveal that the combined export growth of these companies amounts to a staggering £27.5million.

Charlie Fullerton, SLS international distribution manager, said: "When we approached UKTI we were very busy doing too much.

"We were going after markets where we were unlikely to be successful and it was difficult to keep on top of the work and follow everything up.

"Our UKTI advisers helped us to focus and really sharpened our minds as to what we needed to do."

SLS, which supplies hospitals, research institutes, universities and environmental laboratories, employs 110 people and has an annual turnover in excess of £24 million.

Mr Fullerton, who paid tribute to Business Link's free export workshops for helping SLS to refocus its export activities, said: "UKTI helped us to understand our overseas markets and concentrate our energy on real business opportunities.

"Now, we have developed relationships with distributors in several of our target markets where we know there is potential for substantial growth."

New figures revealed to the Mail show that between April last year and March this year, UKTI Y&H worked with 95 businesses in the East Riding and 70 in Hull, creating or safeguarding 28 and 82 jobs respectively.

Businesses in mineral fuels, crude materials, chemicals and manufactured goods were seen to be leading the export drive, while the United States and Germany remain the region's biggest overseas markets.

France and Ireland also accounted for a substantial share of export earnings while China maintained its position in the top ten export markets by value for last year.

The news follows last week's Quarterly Economic Survey results from Hull And Humber Chamber Of Commerce.

This showed that exporters were continuing to lead the way in the region's recovery, with more than a quarter of companies increasing their export sales in the past quarter.