

9 June 2021

Session n°1: Post-COVID-19: Resilience building and new opportunities for Caribbean businesses



Caribbean Agrifood Business Series ...





RHS Marketing Limited is a leading agro processor based in Trinidad and Tobago.

We are manufacturers of a wide range of Sauces, Wet Seasonings, Spice blends, Flavourings, Chutneys and Concentrates for over 25 years and export to 27 markets regionally and internationally.

RHS Global Inc. is our distribution company which was recently established in Florida to take care of the distribution in US.

Under the RHS Marketing umbrella we have many brands that we produce: Karibbean Flavours, Herreras, Rajapuri, Kitchmixx.



Success

The COVID-19 pandemic had some positive outcomes for us:

- 1) We were allowed to continue to operate as an **essential business**;
 - 2) With the closure of all (fast food outlets) restaurants, people had to prepare their meals at home, and all our **spices sauces** and **seasonings** were in demand at the supermarkets;
 - 3) We used **social media platforms** to promote our products and demonstrate its use;
 - 4) We were able **to fill many gaps in supply**;
- We gained brand recognition and sales.
- 5) We noticed how necessary it is to **scale up by mechanizing** and reducing the labor intensive jobs:
- We reorganized and expanded our production facility: now we **produce three times** the amount we were producing before.
- We were able to engage **farmers in increasing their output** to be able to supply our demands.

Opportunities

We seized following business opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 1) **E-commerce sales** increased, especially via Amazon, as many consumers turned to e-commerce platforms to purchase products.
 - Our **distribution warehouse in Florida** played an important part in shipping products to the Amazon warehouse in a timely manner: shipping directly from Trinidad to an Amazon warehouse would have been very difficult.
 - Some of the product categories we became Amazon's choice and the number one seller. Still holding firm on those products.
- 2) **Social media** was one of the best forms of **advertising** as most people were on their phones using Facebook, Instagram, YouTube etc.

Obstacles

The COVID-19 pandemic has and still perturbrates our business:

1) As the pandemic hit, our **supply chain was interrupted**:

- Clearing containers from the port, customs not processing documents on time and shipping agents working from home **slowed the process** in getting our containers cleared on time and getting our export documents processed timely.
- We **paid unnecessary rent and demurrage** which increased the cost of our goods.
- It was difficult to secure many items needed for our production as many suppliers/factories were closed: we **shipped packaging materials from China** via Fedex because we could not secure a sailing.

2) Following the **COVID-protocols** was a challenge with staff (to keep them aware of the situation, to remind them to keep their mask on and to keep 6 feet apart).

- We implemented a **shift system** in order to minimize the amount of staff in the factory and still get the production output required.

Areas of support

Any support in the following areas would be very helpful:

- 1) **Intellectual property/protecting your brand** is very important as our export markets grow, especially into non traditional territories.
- 2) Some level of **standards** or **certification** such as BRC, FSSC, HACCP etc. is the key to easier access into markets. Many potential distributors are asking if we have any certification.
 - Being certified would give the competitive edge as distributors will have more confidence in the brands and the company.
 - But this is a very costly exercise.
- 3) Market promotion and accessibility to markets via **trade promotions, B2B meetings, exposure at trade shows** plays an important role in getting the products visible to the distributor's eyes.

Thank you!





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Thank you

