

CONFECTIONERY

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Inside

The Madagascan story

Nestlé: productivity in practice

The next step for whey permeate

Show preview

Foodex

**SWEETS
&
SNACKS**
WORLD



The fairest chocolate?

In this month's Confectioner's Comment on page 40, Neil Kelsall lays claim to the world's fairest chocolate. The chocolate made by Chocolaterie Robert in Madagascar is created from bean to bar in the country of origin.

"Financial transactions take place directly between companies in the marketplace and the origin company. As well as employing farmers, the process also creates production employment, quality, packaging, marketing, logistic companies and third party suppliers, all in Madagascar," he explains. "Subsequently the raised tax revenues contribute to helping Madagascar develop, in terms of health and education, new skills and raising awareness of provenance for further investment."

So is this 'Raisetrade' model the way forward for chocolate production? It is certainly a different approach to the more charitable fair trade model, though on a much smaller scale. Mondelez International's Cocoa Life programme has so far reached 76,700 farmers across six cocoa-growing nations, while Cargill's Cocoa Promise has trained and developed 90,000 farmers.

There's no perfect solution – and even when the products arrive on our shelves, produced in first world factories in western Europe, there is still room for error. The latest recall of Mars' Snickers, Milky Way, Mars and Celebrations

products has no doubt costing the company dearly, but it was handled like a well-oiled machine – smoothly, efficiently, and above all, well rehearsed. Would all confectioners be as comfortably prepared for this scenario?

Our own Graham Godfrey was called upon by the BBC to give his opinion on the situation as the news broke, and did so with his usual professional expertise. His article on page 23 gives a useful insight into how to go about using a third party manufacturer – no doubt product recall should be an item on the agenda between all interested parties.

Enjoy the issue.

Sarah McRitchie,
Editorial Director



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FDF's BCCC
sector group executive

Alex is the secretariat for the Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery (BCCC) Sector Group Technical & Regulatory Committee and represents the UK biscuit, chocolate and confectionery industry at European level within Caobisco.



Andreas Bertram
Managing director of the
Central College of the
German Confectionery
Industry (ZDS)

Andreas has a background in product and market development. He is now responsible for the day to day running of ZDS as well as managing the seminar department.



Jonathan Thomas
Principal market analyst at
Leatherhead Research

Since joining Leatherhead Research, Jonathan has written reports such as *Innovations in the Global Confectionery Market* and *Key Players in the Global Functional Foods Industry*. He also writes a monthly confectionery industry update.



Sara Jayne Stanes OBE
Chairman of the Academy
of Chocolate

Sara Jayne is chief executive at the Academy of Culinary Arts, an ambassador for 'real' chocolate, and author of *Chocolate: Discovering, Exploring, Enjoying* and co-author of *Chocolate: The Definitive Guide*.



Graham Godfrey
Confectionery consultant

Graham is a technical and manufacturing consultant with expertise in the technologies of cocoa, chocolate, sugar confectionery and chewing gum, and experience in process development, factory design and commissioning, operations development and manufacturing reconfiguration.

Neil Kelsall, export
development director,
Chocolat Madagascar/
Chocolaterie Robert

What is the background to the company?

Chocolat Madagascar is the premium export brand of fine couverture, chocolate, liquor and cacao products, grown and crafted by the Malagasy (Madagascan) owned company Chocolaterie Robert in Antananarivo, Madagascar.

Madagascar is a world apart, larger than France and Belgium together. In evolution's playground of unique biodiversity, rare, fine fruity grows cocoa under the shade of the organic rainforests in the north of the island.

The company was established in 1940, and produces chocolate for the local Malagasy and visitors alike. In 2004-5 Chocolaterie Robert began to develop its premium chocolate exports. It became organic certified in 2013, and also owns the 1,726 hectare MAVA cocoa plantation in the Sambirano rainforests. The factory has current capacity of 600 tonnes of fine chocolate, employs 120 people and the cacao is farmed, fermented and dried by over 600 people. The company is a Malagasy family owned business led by president Marcel Ramanandraibe.

The product quality has been independently verified by winning numerous gold, silver and bronze global chocolate awards from 2006 to date.



What is your own background and how did you become involved with Chocolat Madagascar?

My background career came from GEC, Philips and Chinese consumer electronic companies which operate in developed countries and markets. From my personal travel experiences in Africa, I have always been interested in seeking solutions as to why the least developed countries are trapped in a cycle of poverty compared to the developed markets I was used to.

The key business issues at origin are knowledge, strategy, market access, attracting investment and capital, creation of value added product development, training and effective communication across cultures. Ideally, the business should operate in a favourable local commercial environment, which is not the case in the least developed countries. But I think this is chicken and egg, as the country needs more tax revenues to do this – hence exporting more value is very important, as only exporting commodities is not enough to sustain the economy.

The value added process was put into action when I led a pioneering project between Madagascar and the UK in collaboration with Chocolaterie Robert back in 2004-5, where we developed Africa's first global exports of value add cocoa – seed to bean, to bar chocolate to blue chip retailers and private label chocolate – that complemented the traditional Malagasy commodity exports. The



model was cited by the Department for International Development in the UK and International Trade Centre (UN) in Switzerland as another alternative to the aid model. Subsequently, I applied the model in Mozambique with cashew nuts, and in South Africa with fine wine grown and bottled at origin.

I was invited by the Ramanandraibe family to return to Madagascar in 2013 and became a director at the factory to help facilitate the export strategy and necessary changes in the organisation. The brand 'Chocolat Madagascar' was created for export development of premium couvertures, chocolate and cacao products with the Ramanandraibe family, chocolatier and technical director Hery Amdriamampianina and multilingual export manager Nicolas Randrianarimalala.

What is the ethos of the company, that sets it apart from its competitors and other fair trade companies?

The company strives to make the finest and freshest, natural and organic certified chocolate, liquor and cocoa products for discerning customers all over the world. We make our chocolate in the same manner as a fine wine or cheese, freshly crafting the finest cocoa and cane sugar that we grow and make at origin. In Europe we would not normally export fermented grapes or local milk to make wine or cheese at the other end of the world. Madagascar cocoa is rare – about 0.1% of the world's cocoa. The Criollo-Trinitario and Forastero species have adapted to the local 'terroir' and after fermentation and drying offer very unique fruity and forest fruit flavours, and lighter red-brown colours. The flavours are freshly captured at the factory in Madagascar with winnowing, roasting, grinding, conching and packaging. We preserve the integrity of our chocolate by not chemically processing (eg alkalisising, adding potassium carbonate or Dutching) or adding flavour enhancements (vanilla) or de-odourising our pure cocoa butter that we press in the factory. We have the competitive advantage of making fresh chocolate from our own fine cocoa beans.

We are passionate in preserving the environment, as the cocoa needs the shade of the tropical rainforest. By developing chocolate exports, this links to the preservation of the habitat of the endangered wildlife in Madagascar. We also export less waste when compared to exporting cocoa only.

Malagasy fine cocoa is highly sought after due to the fine flavour quality



and can command prices well above Fairtrade standards, ensuring good sustainable incomes for the farmers. However, most chocolate in the world is manufactured and marketed in rich countries where about 95 per cent of the value circulates in that economy.

In our case, the whole chocolate is made at origin by the Malagasy, which has many times more positive impact on the economy of Madagascar than just exporting cocoa only – a process called Raisetrade. Origin chocolate grown at origin, made at origin.

What are the industry drivers that are taking you forward?

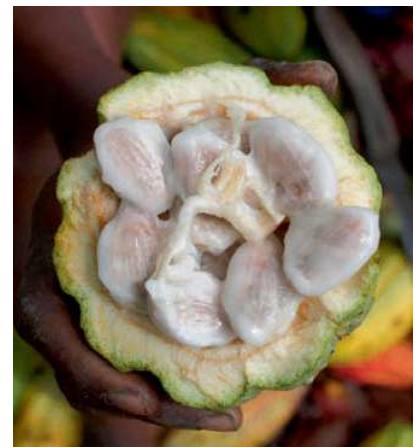
The markets in richer economies are becoming more concerned about what they consume and where it comes from. Seeking higher quality tastes, freshness, taking less sugar in the diet, traceable, provenance, healthy and organic – in our case we offer fine chocolate with integrity. Although we have a long history of bean to bar chocolate making in Madagascar, we see interesting growth of this recent trend in America, Europe and Japan. We can offer private label and chocolatiers the opportunity to utilise our natural and organic fine dark, milk and white couvertures, baking chocolate, liquor and cocoa butter/nibs, all freshly made at origin. We are investing in our plantations to ensure good supply of our fine cocoa to meet this developing global trend over the next decade.

What forms the basis of the Raisetrade, and how does it set Chocolat Madagascar apart?

The Raisetrade initiative has in its sights how to contribute to closing the gap of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita between the developed countries and least developed countries in the world in a responsible way that is not detrimental to the environment. UK GDP per capita is 27.5 times higher than Madagascar (source IMF 2014). So businesses that create products and services at origin will help contribute to closing this gap.

To do this effectively requires an analysis of the core competences and competitive advantage of Madagascar compared to other countries (eg Madagascar can grow fine cocoa

and the UK cannot). Adding value is creating chocolate, and financial transactions take place directly between companies in the marketplace and the origin company. As well as employing farmers, the process also creates production employment, quality, packaging, marketing, logistic companies and third party suppliers, all in Madagascar. Subsequently the raised tax revenues contribute to helping Madagascar develop, in terms of health and education, new skills and raising awareness of provenance for further investment. The world's fairest chocolate? As ethical as it is delicious.



What is a typical day for you?

Originally a significant amount of my time was spent in Madagascar developing the export strategy together with the management team of Chocolaterie Robert. Most of my time is now outside of Madagascar – close to the marketplace, but with daily contact with the president, the technical director and export manager related to issues such as supply, production, quality, new product development etc.

On behalf of the company, I operate as the link with current partners in the marketplace to learn of the market requirements and also help raise awareness and support of our products. For example, HB Ingredients is our importer and B2B distributor for the UK and stocking point for mainland Europe, and we work closely across both our organisations that relate to market trends, customer requirements and supply. Time is also spent developing new importers and partners around the world through networking, sampling and exhibition visits. ♦