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# Baron Foods Case Study<sup>1</sup>

# Company Overview/ Profile

Baron Foods is a food processing company that began in 1991. It is the epitome of best practices in the Caribbean's manufacturing industry because of its compliance with local and international standards. As an active producer in the food processing industry, Baron Foods has manufactured over 165 products that are FSSC 22000:2010 compliant. Their products include condiments, sauces, spices, essences, dressings, mayonnaise and exotic fruit beverages.

There are over 200 employees in the company's manufacturing plants in St. Lucia, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago. The manufacturing plants in Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago deal specifically with agro-processing. However, the company has not limited its reach to the countries in which its manufacturing plants are based. Instead, it has built an expansive network that facilitates exports to the USA, Canada, Europe, Guyana and the Caribbean. Exporting into these regions could only have been possible by raising the bar on their quality processes, procedures and inevitably the end product.



Another feature of Baron Foods that makes it a good company to emulate is its link to the agriculture and tourism sectors. Successful companies do not work in isolation; they forge relationships with key players that help them win a competitive advantage. Baron Foods has strengthened ties with local farmers to get all of the raw materials needed to make their products. In fact, they purchase crops that would have rotted due to low market demand thus stimulating the growth of local agriculture.

Furthermore, Baron Foods has established lasting partnerships with key partners in the local and international tourism industries. These partners sell the products as gift packs or as exclusive products. Local vendors can, therefore, increase their revenue since Baron Foods' products have a stellar reputation. Baron Foods is committed to stimulating the growth of the local economy.



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# Background of Industry

The food processing industry, also commonly referred to as the agro processing industry, significantly contributes to the development of CARICOM economies. It ensures a consistent supply of food and provides several jobs within the region. A recent CARICOM Community Strategic Plan identifies Agriculture (Food and Nutrition Security and Export Development) as a key economic growth driver in building CARICOM's economic resilience. In this context, it seeks to reposition the regional agricultural and fisheries sector as one economic space for growth and export development.

The most commonly used standards in the Caribbean's agro-processing industry are:

1. ISO 22000:2018
2. GLOBAL G.A.P
3. The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (**HACCP**)

These standards provide a solid foundation for agro-processing businesses within the region to effectively compete in the global marketplace.

# The Impact of a Culture of Quality on the Caribbean's Agro-Processing Industry

The development of a culture of quality in the Caribbean's agro processing industry depends heavily on the creation of strong NQIs in each Caribbean nation. The Caribbean still has a long way to go in order to effectively compete in this fast-paced global economy. However, regional organizations such as CROSQ have begun to make strides towards helping countries develop strong NQIs and ultimately create a culture of quality.

A critical feature of an NQI is the use of international standards to ensure local businesses are better positioned to compete in the global marketplace. Complying with international standards helps countries remain competitive because it:

1. Reduces barriers to trade.
2. Creates opportunities for increased transparency
3. Facilitates increased accountability
4. Boosts consumer confidence
5. Increases the likelihood of establishing international partnerships
6. Facilitates gender equality since more women are able to access support for their businesses

An increasing number of companies in the Caribbean have invested in international certification and standardization as the NQI in their countries continues on a path to becoming fully developed. Baron Foods is one such company. It is a real-life example of how the creation of a culture of quality within an organization can bring significant benefits to the Caribbean's agro processing sector having received its certificate in 2018 from SGS North America and valid until 2020 <sup>1</sup>.

## The FSSC 22000:2010 Standard

This globally accepted standard is known as the Food Safety Standard Certification. It is a combination of the standards imposed by the ISO 22000:2005 (Food Safety Management Systems) and ISO/TS 22002-1. The latter is a fundamental requirement for food safety in the food manufacturing industry.

The FSSC 22000:2010 standard is specifically created for food manufacturers. Assessors focus specifically on the food safety management systems used by food manufacturers such as Baron Foods. All companies that receive certification must have a well-established quality management system that meets the requirements of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP).

<sup>1</sup>Baron Foods (n.d.). Food safety SGS. Retrieved on October 9, 2019 at <http://www.baronfoodsltd.com/cms/10>

# Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs)

GMPs are used to govern the operational and environmental conditions needed to produce safe foods. Companies that are GMP compliant ensure safe handling of ingredients, products and packaging materials. They also ensure that the food processing environment is safe and does not include any contamination risks. The specific areas that the GMP addresses are:

- Environmental control of the premises
- Personnel practices
- Shipping, receiving, handling and storage
- Pest control
- Sanitation
- Equipment maintenance
- Recall and traceability
- Water safety

A strong GMP must be in place before implementing a HACCP. GMPs are divided into two parts: written programs and implementation. The written program entails recording the policies and procedures (standard operation, sanitation, monitoring and so on) necessary to create a strong quality management system. Record keeping is also a crucial aspect of this written program. Implementation involves staff training and retraining as well as ensuring that all aspects of the policies and procedures are correctly carried out.

## Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP)

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), HACCP addresses food safety concerns “through the analysis and control of biological, chemical and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product.” The HACCP originally began as a regulation to monitor food safety in space travel but it has expanded to incorporate healthy food safety practices in all aspects of the food services industry.

Its aim is to encourage businesses to enforce best practices that minimize the risk of unsafe food. Additionally, there is no standardization of the food production process. That is left to the manufacturer’s discretion. However, emphasis is placed on efficient monitoring of food processors, manufacturers and distributors to ensure that safe products are produced that do not present a food safety hazard.

HACCP monitoring is a seven step process. The steps are:

1. Carry out a hazard analysis
2. Determine critical control points (CCPs)
3. Establish critical limits
4. Establish monitoring procedures.
5. Establish corrective actions.
6. Record and implement verification procedures
6. Establish verification procedures
7. Establish record-keeping and documentation procedures

Ultimately, the aim is to ensure that food safety is the manufacturer's priority.

## How has Baron Foods Benefited from Using Internationally Accepted Standards?

These quality standards have helped Baron Foods:

- Increase international sales
- Expand into new markets
- Improve its production process
- Reduce production costs
- Use raw materials efficiently
- Create an environment for innovation so that new products can be produced



# Awards and Recognition

Compliance with the FSSC 22000:2010 standard has helped Baron Foods gain recognition for their high-quality products. A few of the rewards they have received are described below.

## 1. The International Superior Taste Award<sup>2</sup>

Baron Foods received this award for its West Indian Hot Sauce, Banana Ketchup, Pasta Sauce and Sweet Chili Thai Sauce in the years 2014, 2015, 2017, and 2018 respectively. The award was granted by the International Taste and Quality Institute. This award comes with a 1-3 gold star rating which supports the claim that these are remarkable products.

## 2. St. Lucia Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture 2016 Awards<sup>3</sup>

In the Local St. Lucia Chamber Awards, Baron Foods has been the consecutive recipient of the Goods Exporter of the Year Award, receiving it in 2014, 2015 and 2016. The company has made a significant impact in St. Lucia and several other Caribbean islands.



## 3. Monde Selection 2019 International Quality Awards<sup>4</sup>

Baron Foods was granted the prestigious honor of receiving two Monde Selection silver awards. The awards were received for their Sweet Chili Thai Sauce and their Banana Ketchup. Michelin starred chefs and members of the Académie Culinaire de France are a part of the eight (8) member panel that chooses the recipients of these awards.



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<sup>2</sup> Caribbean Export Development Agency (June 17, 2015). Baron Foods wins international superior taste award. Retrieved on October 9 2019 at <http://www.carib-export.com/success-stories/baron-foods-wins-international-superior-taste-award-2015/>

<sup>3</sup> St. Lucia News Online (January 25, 2016). Baron Foods Limited wins two business awards. Retrieved on October 9, 2019 at <https://www.stlucianewsonline.com/baron-foods-limited-wins-two-business-awards/>

<sup>4</sup> The St. Lucia Star (April 10, 2019). Baron Foods brings home Monde Selection Quality Awards. Retrieved on October 9, 2019 at <https://stluciarstar.com/baron-foods-brings-home-monde-selection-quality-awards/>

# Awards and Recognition

## Baron West Indian Hot Sauce

**2014** Superior Taste Award  
International Taste &  
Quality Institute (iTQi)  
Brussels, Belgium



## Baron Banana Ketchup

**2015** Superior Taste Award  
(iTQi)  
**2019** Monde Selection  
Silver Award  
Brussels, Belgium

## Baron Pasta Sauce

**2017** Superior Taste Award  
(iTQi)  
Brussels, Belgium



## Baron Sweet Chili Thai Sauce

**2018** Superior Taste Award  
(iTQi)  
**2019** Monde Selection  
Silver Award  
Brussels, Belgium



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