

FROZEN PREPARED MEALS



A Market Opportunity Profile

November 2009



This Opportunity Profile on Frozen Foods covers the following areas:

Product Definition

Frozen prepared meals - also known as frozen ready-to-eat-meals... “[are] prepackaged, frozen meal[s], which usually come in individual packages. They require very little preparation and contain all the elements of a single-serving meal.”

Preferred Types of Frozen Foods

- Vegetarian
- Low Fat
- High-Fibre
- Organic

Product & Market Access Considerations

- Optimum freezing conditions (Blast Freezing)
- Support systems required
- Packaging and labeling requirements and certification (local and international)
- Local and overseas requirements (e.g. HACCP certification)
- Required permits and country specific regulations
- Trade agreements
- Market entry strategies

Market Opportunities to be Explored

- Asian
- North American (including Caribbean Diaspora in North America (US and Canada))
- European (particularly UK)
- CARICOM

The profile concludes that there is a definite opportunity for developing frozen prepared meals and successfully distributing them in local, regional and Diaspora niche markets in the short to medium-term.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Market trends indicate that consumers in the Asian, North American and European markets are more likely to purchase and consume ready-to-eat meals due primarily to their busy schedules. More specifically, up to 2006, frozen prepared meals accounted for 50% of the sales of ready-to-eat meals in the United States of America (US) and Europe. The trends also indicate that vegetarian type meals and meals that are low-fat, high-fibre and particularly those that are organic, will be most sought after by persons that are health conscious and have a higher disposable income.

Although a few Jamaican manufacturers have developed frozen prepared meals in recent years, the local industry is still embryonic and to date none of these companies have exported these products directly from Jamaica. Grace Foods International, a leading Jamaican food distribution company is currently preparing, packaging and distributing a newly developed brand of frozen prepared meals outside of Jamaica; however, the brand has not yet been introduced into the Jamaican market. A reason cited for this delay is “readiness” of the local market, as the products are priced at a premium level due to input costs and product position.

So far, indications are that the Caribbean Diaspora market in North America (US and Canada) is the most feasible for targeting at this time, due to its continuous demand for Caribbean Cuisine. Another market with growing demand for convenience foods and frozen meals is Western Europe – particularly the United Kingdom (UK). The CARICOM market also presents an opportunity for the distribution of frozen prepared meals but that market is relatively small compared to that of the developed regions. In CARICOM, focus should be on markets such as Trinidad, Barbados and Cayman as they enjoy a higher per capita income in the region and are already importing convenience foods from Jamaica. Jamaica also has special trading agreements with all these countries mentioned above.

In developing frozen prepared meals, special attention should be paid to packaging, eating quality and competitive pricing. Additionally, companies entering the industry should ensure that they are able to comply with the local and overseas requirements for exporting frozen prepared foods, particularly the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) certification, required by the US, Canada and Europe. Consultation with the relevant local technical and trade agencies mentioned throughout this booklet is highly recommended before embarking on such a venture. Finally, exporters should ensure that the inputs they need for preparing frozen prepared meals are readily available, the formulation is in place to ensure consistency of the products and that freezing and cooling equipment and mechanisms, including a cooling chain system, are reliable for ensuring the integrity of their products as well as preserving *Brand Jamaica*.

Keywords in this report: Convenience; healthy; eating quality; standards; climate controlled environment; market niche

Cost for Opportunity Profile: \$ 4000.00

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