



Editor's Note: Our company, Sunbelt Shows, Inc. is joining forces with Bel Soley, Inc. to assist in rebuilding the Haitian economy. I am urging my readers to contact Brian and render any assistance to this project that you can.

Brian Hays writes: I am the Chairman of Bel Soley, which is a company dedicated to development in Haiti by building for-profit enterprises for the sale of agricultural products domestically and for export. See www.belsoley.com . We have a U.S. distribution company based in Boston and a Haitian subsidiary that operates primarily in the southern part of the country (Les Cayes), with a country manager located in Port au Prince. [He and his family are OK.] We grow some of our own crops and buy other crops from small farmers. We started exporting mangos, breadfruit and hot peppers last year and were just ramping up our pepper exports when the earthquake hit. We are producing several thousand pounds of peppers a week now. Our hot peppers are habaneros from imported seed and the local hot pepper, a habanero variety called 'Piment Bouk'. Our target was to get to ship out 24,000 pounds per month by the end of the year. As you can imagine, all exports from the country have stopped for now. Port au Prince is the only real port of debarkation in Haiti. With the government destroyed and transportation over-burdened, we do not know when we can begin shipping again - although we are optimistic.



We are selling our crops locally, but the current regional market is questionable and we don't know if the market can absorb the volume. Domestic distribution beyond the immediate locale is doubtful. Furthermore, our business model is based on export income. So you can see the problem.

It has always been part of our business plan to make a good quality and truly uniquely Haitian pepper sauce. All the pepper sauce sold in Haiti now is either Tabasco or Louisiana Hot Sauce. We know there is a good domestic market and with something different and of good quality,

there should be an export market as well. But our plan was to move into pepper sauce later this year, after our fresh pepper export business was better established. Because of the earthquake, we would like to accelerate our move into the sauce business. By making sauce or mash from the peppers, we will be able to save our crops and also begin to provide edible foodstuffs to the domestic market, which is already showing signs of food shortages. As I mentioned, mangos, papayas, bananas and pineapples are readily available as a base and we can easily grow carrots. We have or can grow a range of more exotic tropical fruits as well, including passion fruit, soursop, sapote, acerola (Barbados Cherry), tamarind and more as flavorings.

Depending on the cost, we believe that we have adequate capital to set up the hot sauce operation, including bottling. We think we have found away to import equipment into the country (by by-passing Port au Prince). What we we don't have is information and expertise. Starting a business is difficult in the best of circumstances (I know, have started quite a few), but in this chaotic environment where we know next to nothing about the new business, the only way we can off-set the risk is with good advice and good partners.

- * We need recommendations of experts in the business that can advise us on the sauce making process, the bottling process and any other practical, basic operations;
- * We need recommendations of experts in food safety (we intend to meet all HACCP requirements - not only to allay fears about products from Haiti, but because it is the right way to do things);
- * We need recommendations of reliable, honest equipment vendors who will provide the right equipment - not too much or too little - and collateral expertise in setting up and operations.
- * We need recommendations of US (or EU) importers of pepper sauce (and fresh peppers too, since we will be back in that business).
- * Any other ideas, suggestions or sources of information would be also be greatly appreciated.

Thanks again for your time and willingness to help. We hope to turn a bad situation into something good. If we can get this done, we will have a few new, exotic pepper sauces from the fiery country of Haiti!

Brian

Brian J. Hays
Chairman, Bel Soley, Inc
703-421-9211 - home office
703-217-6251 - mobile