

Towards the 21st Century – An Expanded Focus for the Food Technology Unit (FTU)

G. Baccus-Taylor

Abstract

A safe, nutritious and affordable food supply is the first requisite of human well-being. Food manufacturing processes have a basic role in food products that are suitable for human consumption, can be distributed widely, and are available throughout the year. As they fulfill these needed functions, the food manufacturing industries make a significant contribution to employment and economic development.

From the very beginning of the postgraduate programme in Food Technology, it was strongly felt that there was a need to develop a vibrant food processing industry in the Caribbean. This sense of purpose was, and still is, reflected in the philosophy and goals of the Food Technology Unit at the Faculty of Engineering, The University of the West Indies here in Trinidad. The programme is heavily applied-oriented and thus responds to the developmental needs of the food industry in the Caribbean, in the real world of commerce. Thus, the emphasis has continued to be in the areas of food processing and food product development and their application in commerce. This however does not imply that any less emphasis is placed on research and science per se since there are innumerable benefits which may accrue. The more readily apparent are to the following sectors:

- (i) Farmers – because new products developed will expand markets for farm commodities;
- (ii) Food processors – because they will have the knowledge necessary to develop safer, better-quality food products and have a more educated workforce to manufacture, distribute and market these products;
- (iii) Related industries – such as equipment and packaging manufactures, transportation companies, and ingredient suppliers – who will have a market for their outputs;
- (iv) Consumers – who will have a wider choice of economical processed food for products available throughout the year;
- (v) General public (all of whom are also consumers) – because of jobs created and general economic contributions through the multiplier effect, and
- (vi) Government – through increased revenues, foreign exchange earned through export and a sounder foundation for food regulations.