



EU INNOVATE

**SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION IN ACTION:
THE CASE STUDY “SNAPSHOT” SERIES**

VERITAS

New Life for Substandard Organic Produce



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About EU-InnovatE

Between 2014 and 2016, the EU-InnovatE project investigated the potential of citizen innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship to achieve sustainable lifestyles in Europe by 2050. The following is one of a series of case study “snapshots” illustrating how new enterprises are being created by passionate, visionary individuals to benefit society at large.

The Case of Veritas: New Life for Substandard Organic Produce

Spanish organic supermarket chain Veritas is cutting food waste by creating a range of food products made from fresh produce that previously would have been regarded as unsalable.

On a daily basis, food waste in Europe is three times what is needed to feed the entire world. This statistic motivated Eco Veritas, a Spanish supermarket group, to find a way to reduce the volumes emerging from its operations and stores. The company specialises in organic produce and has 27 supermarkets, an on-line ordering service and a food processing centre. To cut waste, Veritas created a range of products made from good quality seasonal fruit and vegetables that due to their appearance would otherwise fail to be bought by consumers.

The ‘Cuina Veritas’ initiative is a commitment to food sustainability – but the company sees it as a creative way of addressing a social issue in parallel. In its food processing operations, it employs a high percentage of people who have some form of disability. Employees are involved in the development of products, such as considering potential produce that might be used, testing products, gathering consumer feedback to modify the existing range, or developing new products. In 2013, Veritas introduced a range of products which included vegetable soups, chicken broth, sauces, jams and pizzas, all of which helped cut food waste.

By adopting a zero-waste philosophy, the company believes that Cuina Veritas demonstrates how significant improvements can be made in the quantity of food discarded to landfill. Also, as supermarkets have an influence on customers’ eating habits, the company believes that by setting an institutional example, personal food waste levels can be influenced, greater value attributed to food stuffs, and a return made to dishes prepared with a previous meal’s leftovers. Veritas seeks to achieve food waste awareness and changes in consumer behaviours through, for example, print and online information, and workshops.

Collaborative Innovation in Practice

Veritas collaborated with a number of different organisations in the project’s development. At the outset, it commissioned Sinergia Consultants to carry out research that would inform decision making.

This was set against a background of: concerns about a target market; customers' comments about company food waste; and managerial reservations about the viability of the project. Investigations were made about potential customers, their product concerns, and motivations for purchasing food products. Based on an analysis of the findings, the consultancy recommended a communications strategy for a successful product launch.

Veritas partnered with Alícia Foundation, an organisation that focuses on technological innovation in cuisine, the improvement of eating habits, and evaluation of food heritage. A team of specialists were assigned to the project with expertise in setting up and managing food preparation, healthy nutrition, consumer workshop facilitation, and research and analysis of market information and data.

On behalf of Veritas, SIFU Group – a 'special employment organisation in the provision of socially responsible facility services' – was engaged to recruit and train people with physical, mental, or sensory impairments to work in the company's food processing centre.

Customer feedback and insights gathered from a variety of different channels set up by Veritas helped shape the project and the products. Workshops and tastings for consumers and employees led by nutritionists and other specialists provided input on, for example, recipes using seasonal produce and historical cooking and food preparation practices.

Summary of User-Driven Innovation

- To ensure the eventual successful launch of the range of products, Veritas partnered with a consultancy to gather consumer thoughts and concerns about the proposed use of unwanted fruit and vegetables.
- The company collaborated with a specialist organisation to set up food preparation facilities, run informative workshops, gather and analyse consumer feedback, and evaluate market trends and data.
- As an additional dimension to the sustainability project, employees with disabilities were employed in the preparation of products. Veritas employees were also involved in the development and testing of products, and gathering insights from consumers.

Influence on Core Business

The mindsets of Veritas staff were changed by the realisation that organic produce headed for landfill could be transformed into saleable products that would appeal to consumers. Cuina Veritas's unique selling proposition (USP) derives from a range of products sold in all its branches that are made from fresh organic ingredients, using a homemade approach. Because fruit and vegetables destined for landfill are used in the products, the company's goal of zero food waste is achieved.

Cross-Sector Relevance: Top Three Insights

- What otherwise may be regarded as waste could be re-purposed as products with inherent value and customer appeal - with end-user feedback and the input of specialists.

- Customers can be influenced in their purchasing behaviours when a consumer organisation takes the lead in a wide-ranging sustainability programme.
- A more holistic and imaginative approach to employing people with disabilities can contribute to the success of innovative projects.

To Learn More About the Case...

Please contact the lead investigators from the EU-InnovatE research team:

Sonia Ruiz Mas, ESADE Business School – Sonia.ruiz@alumni.edade.edu

Further Information

La Cuina Veritas: www.veritas.es/la-cuina-veritas

SIFU Group: www.gruposifu.com

Alícia Foundation: www.alicia.cat

Sinergia Consultants: www.sinergiaconsultants.com

ESADE Business School: www.esade.edu