



Activity 1.1.3 Popp'n with Orville

Purpose

Getting a product from the farm to the fork may require several steps. Each step adds value to the commodity and creates thousands of career opportunities in the process. There are many careers available that are connected to agriculture. Even if “farming” is not your thing, you have an opportunity to be involved in many different aspects of agribusiness. Some of the careers require heavy science or skills in promotion and communication.

Pop a bowl of popcorn and enjoy it as you take a journey down the path of how one of your nation’s favorite foods was developed by a true agricultural innovator. During the journey, you will learn how this one person capitalized on many of the steps necessary to produce and market an agricultural commodity.

Materials

Per student:

- Pencil
- *Agriscience Notebook*

Procedure

Read the following biography on Orville Redenbacher, the American entrepreneur known for his innovations with popcorn.

Orville Redenbacher was an ambitious Indiana boy who took a simple 4-H project of growing popcorn and selling it to local customers and turned it into a major food industry. He was 12 years old when he began to raise popcorn in order to sell it for money to attend college. After college with a degree in agronomy, he worked in several jobs including managing a 12,000-acre farm and selling fertilizer. But his passion was the popcorn business.

As a reward for his persistence, Orville, a slender gray-haired man who sported a red bow tie and black thick-rimmed glasses, became very rich as well as a national advertising icon. It was the passion for making something good, even better, which drove Mr. Redenbacher to take a simple food like popcorn and make improvements that would appeal to all types of consumers.

To start with, Orville searched for varieties of popping corn that when popped proved to be lighter and fluffier than others and would not leave many un-popped kernels. These characteristics were the signature of his brand and he would spend a lifetime searching for one allowing the fluffy cooked starch and proteins contained inside the kernel to be available for enjoyment and breeding hybrid varieties of popping corn to meet the demands of his consumers.

Popcorn is a special type of corn with a very hard outer hull preventing moisture to enter or leave the kernel. Once heated, the water and oil contained inside the kernel expand. Because the hull is so hard it explodes rather than cracks. The explosion forces open the kernel.

Mr. Redenbacher discovered varieties to be consistent with his desired characteristics and marketed the product as “Orville Redenbacher’s Gourmet Popping Corn.” He began to produce commercials and other advertisements featuring himself as the spokesman for the product. Over several decades of producing successful television commercials, Mr. Redenbacher became a famous face in television marketing.

His success was not all marketing and advertisement. His company stayed a step ahead of customer trends by continuous research and development of products. He and his company perfected packaging that kept the popcorn at optimum moisture levels to ensure a high popping ratio. Orville's company was also one of the first popcorn companies to develop packaging for microwave technology. To top that, they introduced the first light microwave popcorn long before the health craze was in full force.

Anyone who loves popcorn has tried Mr. Redenbacher's legendary product. It is the number one selling brand of popcorn in the country.

After reading the case study, identify the different aspects of Mr. Redenbacher's enterprise and how he addressed several areas of agribusiness through the stages of development for his agricultural commodity in Table 1.

Table 1. Agricultural Activities

Type of activity	Evidence of activity from the above article
Agricultural Services	<i>selling fertilizer. .</i>
Research and Development	<i>. Orville searched for varieties of popping corn that when popped proved to be lighter and fluffier than others and would not leave many un-popped kernels. These characteristics were the signature of his brand and he would spend a lifetime searching</i>
Production Agriculture	<i>managing a 12,000-acre farm .</i>
Processing	<i>. He and his company perfected packaging that kept the popcorn at optimum moisture levels to ensure a high popping ratio. Orville's company was also one of the first popcorn companies to develop packaging for microwave technology</i>
Marketing	<i>. It was the passion for making something good, even better, which drove Mr. Redenbacher to take a simple food like popcorn and make improvements that would appeal to all types of consumers.</i>

Conclusion

1. How did Mr. Redenbacher make his agricultural commodity stand out from other similar products?

Light,fluffy and every kernel pops. Gourmet popcorn.

2. Why was his name important to be included in the labeling and advertisement of his product?

He was the spokesman for his product.

3. How was Orville able to increase his chances of financial success by raising popcorn?

He made improvements that good improve the product and consumer wants for gourmet popcorn.