

## 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 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 allowing the fluffy cooked starch and proteins contained inside the kernel to be available for enjoyment.*

*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    | Orville bought soil and planted corn so that he was able to grow the corn and make popcorn.                                                             |
| Research and Development | Orville did plenty of research to find out what makes the popcorn fluffier and taste better.                                                            |
| Production Agriculture   | Orville spent time planting corn, later he would pick the corn so that he could eventually make popcorn out of it.                                      |
| Processing               | Orville made sure that the corn was fluffy and that there were no uncooked kernels in the bag. He also put butter on the popcorn to get the best taste. |
| Marketing                | On the box of popcorn, they put Orville's picture to draw attention to the box. On the box there is also a bright red color that draws attention to it. |

## Conclusion

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

He made sure that there would be no un-popped kernels in the bag. They also made sure to have a bright and detailed box. Orville also put the perfect amount of butter on the popcorn to taste just right.

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

They wanted to make sure they knew who had first made the product. They also wanted to ensure that Orville got the proper credit for the product.

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

He made sure to make sure it was made perfectly and to also have better marketing than everyone else.