Excellence in the Bag for Burts Chips

"The technical expertise and practical advice sourced from the University of Plymouth through this KTP has been simply superb. As a result we have improved our manufacturing processes and secured our market leading position with an expanded premium product range, culminating in our relocation to new purpose built premises. A new quality management system has sharpened our competitive edge, equalled only by our customer satisfaction.”

Jonty White, Director, Burts Chips Ltd

Burts Chips Ltd was established in 1997 and now employs more than 30 staff from its base in Devon. The company manufactures and sells high quality hand-fried potato chips in a fiercely competitive specialist sector of the market.

Burts’ potatoes are obtained from traceable sources, certificated, and then batch fried and packed in 175g bags. Product outlets are Farm Shops, delicatessens, national chains such as Oddbins and Waitrose together with more unique outlets such as The Eden Project and Royal William Yard. The company has received numerous press endorsements from top food writers, is at the premium end of the market and has experienced rapid growth.

www.burtschips.com

For assistance and technical support to enhance their understanding of the nature of the raw materials used and their impact on the production processes in manufacturing their product, Burts turned to the University of Plymouth Knowledge Transfer Partnerships team and academic experts in agriculture, food science and technology. They recruited BSc (Hons) Animal Sciences graduate Rebecca (Becky) Woodward, and commenced inspections on the process of generating a recognised Quality Management System to British Retail Consortium (BRC) Global accreditation standard for food production. This involved the recording and analysis of a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system, a Quality Manual, the formalisation of Production Operational Procedures and establishment of a documented hygiene control system required to improve the Company’s understanding of the quality parameters needed. Burts’ raw material procurement arrangements were streamlined, resulting in increased output and efficiency of the plant.

The establishment of a formal technical function at the company together with newly awarded BRC accreditation means Burts is now better informed about quality performance allowing proper identification of corrective actions leading to continuous improvement which has in turn significantly enhanced customer confidence. The company’s operational improvements have led to an increase in sales and a real competitive edge in the marketplace. To meet consistently growing demand, Burts Chips have recently relocated to a new, purpose-built manufacturing facility at Roborough in Plymouth, significantly increasing production capacity and further enhancing quality performance. Becky has now accepted the permanent position of Technical Manager with Burts and the company is looking forward to continuing their fruitful relationship with the University of Plymouth.

Rebecca Woodward, KTP Associate with Burts Chips Ltd
THE BENEFITS OF THIS KTP PARTNERSHIP

"Links with industry such as through this KTP project with Burts provide an excellent vehicle for the application to teaching and learning which serves to develop subject specific professional skills and increase employability of University of Plymouth students”.

Dr Victor Kuri, Senior Lecturer in Food Quality, the University of Plymouth

To the Company

°C Implementation of the BRC standard enhancing the company’s reputation in a competitive national market place
°C Company now better informed about quality performance allowing proper identification of corrective actions leading to continuous quality improvement
°C Technical function has capability to successfully represent Burts on customer audits, further enhancing customer confidence
°C Updating packaging to reflect changes in food manufacturing legislation
°C Improved analysis of weight control virtually eliminating complaints and improving profitability
°C Enhanced operational performance due to formalisation of processes and work instructions
°C Complaints analysis leading to process improvement has raised the quality of the jobs on the shop floor leading to better staff retention and morale

To the Associate

°C Experience of leading a major technical project key to the company’s competitiveness and future business growth
°C Presented a synopsis of her project to students and future potential company partners
°C Personal development training courses in Advanced HACCP, Advanced Food Hygiene certificate, trainers certificate and traceability review with Food Processing Faraday Ltd
°C Gained NVQ Level 4 in Management
°C Accepted the position as Technical Manager with Burts

"The KTP programme taught me a great deal in many different areas such as project management, team management, personal skills, etc. The programme was well designed so that all parties achieved their goals. I would not be where I am today without the KTP programme."

Rebecca Woodward, Technical Manager, Burts Chips Ltd

To the University

°C MSc student project on the oxidation of frying oil
°C Academic paper on frying technology published in Food Chemistry
°C Company hosted student visits and given presentation to students
°C Burts processes and products are used to support teaching activity and research in food technology, contributing to the university’s reputation for teaching excellence
°C Case study material produced
°C Greater understanding for teaching staff of the management challenges associated with a rapidly expanding business

For further information on Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and other University services contact:
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