

Chapter 3

Honduras: Hacienda Las Flores

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Introduction

Hacienda Las Flores (HLF), located in the city of Jutiapa, state of Atlantida, Honduras, Central America, produces a unique collection of artisan and healthy chips, 100% natural and without preservatives, 100% Honduran, with non-traditional flavours. Founded in 2011, it has grown from strength to strength in the development of artisanal snacks distributed nationally in Honduras. The company has begun exporting to the United States (USA) with its brand ‘Hacienda Las Flores’ and manufactures for export under licencing. The company was created by women and supports women in their personal and professional development. Fig. 1a,b shows the current company logo and brand.

Hacienda Las Flores

Understanding the dynamics of women entrepreneurs in family businesses in Latin America is relevant as most businesses around the world are family enterprises. While scholars have provided undisputed evidence of the crucial input of women entrepreneurs and leaders in the creation and development of family businesses, their entrepreneurial engagement is often perceived as invisible and fraught with diverse paradoxes in Latin America (Discua Cruz et al., 2019). Yet recent studies suggest that they are leading socially responsible projects and integrating international initiatives into the way a family business in Latin America should operate (Discua Cruz, 2020).

HLF is a family firm founded in 2011 in Honduras, a developing Latin American country, by an industrial engineer, Silvia Paz. The company’s top

Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of Gender Equality, 25–36



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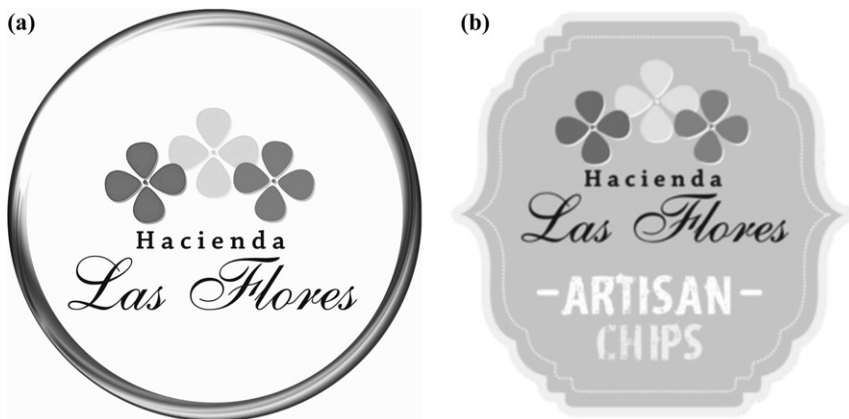


Fig. 1. (a and b): Company and Brand Logo.

management team is composed of 80% women. They provide jobs to women and men from nearby communities, offering equal opportunities to develop as people and improve their quality of life. One of its fundamental pillars is to train qualified female labourers and that by doing so it can contribute to their household development.

As the HLF factory is located in a strategic agricultural area on the Atlantic coast of Honduras, it benefits from the supply of crops and raw materials from the largest Garífuna merchant communities in the country, most of which are led by women.

Women in Honduras have played a fundamental role in all social, economic and cultural aspects of the country. It is only recently that studies have showcased their key role in the creation and continuity of family enterprises (Discua Cruz et al., 2022). However, over many years, they have had to face barriers that a male-dominated society imposed over time. In Honduras, women in the family business have faced diverse struggles. By leading family enterprises, women are raising their voices by creating and developing products and markets. In doing so, they have endeavoured to create a better working environment for women.

HLF acknowledges that Honduran society is still perceived as a patriarchal context where gender stereotypes exist and women suffer discrimination. In such contexts, gender equality and the participation of women in family firms often remain in the shadows. Such discrimination has not been eradicated despite campaigns for an 'equalitarian' and 'equitable' society. Sadly, discrimination and violence against women have been one of the challenges that prevent their professional development. A culture of 'machismo', is associated with stereotypical characteristics of control, hypermasculinity and aggression (Pérez & Morales, 2020), which in Honduras may be amplified due to a high level of poverty. This case aims to show that family businesses in Latin America can be part of the inclusion and empowerment of women through guidance based on sustainable development goals (SDGs), specifically SDG#5.

Vision and Mission

The vision of HLF is to offer appetisers in the national and international market of native products, with the highest standards of quality, social commitment and preservation of the environment. The vision is based on blending innovation, effort and professionalism.

The mission is to become the appetiser factory that satisfies the taste, desires and flavours preferred by their consumers, with the best products, and this results in a better relationship with stakeholders over a long period.

Products and Services Offered by HLF

The products offered by HLF are vegetable snacks such as banana, plantain, malanga, sweet potato, ripe plantain and cassava in non-traditional cuts and flavours under the HLF brand. HLF also offers a maquila service for these products to other brands. In doing so, they have expanded their production capability and improved quality standards, giving client companies the opportunity to focus on the marketing of their brands. Fig. 2a,b,c shows the products manufactured by HLF.

Background to Hacienda Las Flores

HLF was founded in 2011 by Silvia Paz as Inversiones S y B s de RL. HLF brand was born out of a dream and a family concern. Silvia Paz stated:

All this began with the dream of being able to maximise all the potential that women with higher education have to develop professionally and financially. The journey of being an entrepreneur has been very challenging and difficult for us as a women-run business. I have always thought that the path of entrepreneurship is not a 100-meter race, where the fastest wins,



Fig. 2. (a, b and c): Products Offered by Hacienda Las Flores.

but a marathon where, with perseverance and resistance, you reach the goal. This motto has helped HLF overcome any type of difficulties, allowing us to become stronger professionals, with better experiences to share and encourage others. It is difficult but ultimately satisfactory when looking back and seeing how far we've travelled.

Around the time of establishment and exploration of diverse ideas, family help and support were essential to craft and decide on a final product. Karen Dubon added, 'Hacienda Las Flores focused on a family concern. We wanted our children to eat healthily and that they consume reliable and quality products. We wanted to feel confident in the source of raw materials and were interested in creating a culture in our children for the consumption of fruits and vegetables in a way that was attractive to them, turning them into a snack, as well as helping and supporting the family economy'.

The Organisational chart is as follows (see Fig. 3).

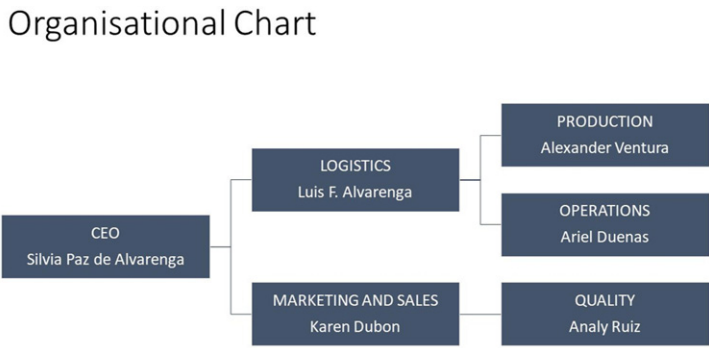


Fig. 3. Hacienda Las Flores Organisational Chart.

CEO – Silvia Paz de Alvarenga
Logistics – Luis Fernando Alvarenga (Silvia's husband)
Logistics support – Ariel Duenas
Marketing and Sales Director – Karen Dubon
Production Director – Alexander Ventura
Quality Director – Analy Ruiz
Line assistants – 11

At HLF, work is governed by the following values and attributes:
Faith in God, quality, hygiene, innovation and originality, efficiency, service, honesty, integrity, gender equality, respect and good relations with our clients, suppliers and collaborators.

The raw material used in products offered must have an optimal harvest time. For this process, farmers on the Atlantic coast of Honduras and particularly in the state of Colon produce fruits and vegetables with the necessary characteristics to offer the best quality in our products.

Silvia Paz stated, ‘We are a young family business, and we strive to transmit the values and passion for what we do. Our daughters were one of the main reasons for starting this venture. We are working so that succession occurs for the next generation’. Family members involved are keen to make the business succeed and have made the training and education of all members a key priority for the firm. Within a few years, the firm expanded operations and manufactured products for other companies under other brands. Table 1 shows the most important milestones for HLF.

Table 1. Important Milestones for Hacienda Las Flores.

Date	Event (Family or Business Milestone)
2011	Business founded by Silvia Paz.
2012	First contract with women producers of raw material in Jutiapa, Atlantida.
2012	Invitation to a food Fair at the international agricultural university Zamorano as a special guest for innovation procedures with fruits and vegetables.
2013	Expansion into a large processing plant in Jutiapa, Atlantida.
2014	Sign a contract with the largest restaurant franchise in Honduras with 54 restaurants to supply them all with banana chips and banana strips for their salad bar.
2015	Specialised training for women operators in food handling, Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Point (HACCP), safety, administration and time management.
2016	Initial participation in the weekly Fair ‘BAZAR DEL SABADO’ ¹
2017	First contract with the new production concept of maquila services for one of the biggest national snack factories.
2017	Product diversification with the Garifuna community in Rio Esteban, Colon.
2018	Implementation of new packaging designs (Fig. 2).
2019	Product line expansion: Sweet Potato and Sweet Plantain.
2021	Winner of GET START HONDURAS in Miami, Florida. ²
2021	First contract under a maquila service for export to the United States.
2021	Participants of Family Agriculture Climate-Smart, at Zamorano University. ³

Table 1. (Continued)

Date	Event (Family or Business Milestone)
2022	Member of Red de Mujeres en el Agro (Women Network in Agriculture) at Zamorano University.
2022	Winner of a Scholarship at Incae Business School for Women Entrepreneurs Acceleration Programme. ⁴
2022	Market expansion in the United States through Expo Bazar del Sabado, United States at Domino Park, Miami.
2023	Participation in the largest national expo: Expo Juniana 2023, San Pedro Sula, Honduras.
2023	Became members of Voces Vitales Honduras – a network of women entrepreneurs. ⁵
2023	Engaged in online subject matter expert training ‘Programme for the Economic Empowerment of Women in the Northern Triangle’ sponsored by the Organization of American States (Cenpromype) SIECA.

¹<https://www.ccichonduras.org/website/bazar-del-sabado/>

²<https://hondurasisgreat.org/getstart-honduras-20-emprendedores-expondran-su-producto-en-miami/>

³<https://www.zamorano.edu/>

⁴<https://en.incae.edu/es/leads-aceleracion-virtual.html>

⁵<https://vocesvitaleshonduras.org/>

SDG#5 – Gender Equality and Hacienda Las Flores

SDG#5 on gender equality is related to the company’s mission by focusing on satisfying the tastes, desires and preferences of consumers, suppliers and long-term collaborators. This implies that gender equality must also be considered in all interactions with these groups. HLF strives to partner with people and organisations that are working towards gender equality. In addition, the company’s vision includes a gender perspective that promotes inclusion and equality.

Karen Dubon stated, ‘We have spontaneously focused on sustainability issues and now we give it more importance because public awareness of these issues has increased. We have been aware of our social responsibility to women because we are women working in business. We know the struggles of being a woman in this society and how important having access to opportunities is. That is why we are led by women; we work with businesses that are also women-led and we feel as a voice for women’s equality in business’.

SDG#5 has been gradually considered and integrated based on the exposure to international initiatives and the involvement of Karen and Silvia in diverse programmes (Table 1). The company has recently been labelled as a socially responsible enterprise.

Silvia Paz stated, ‘Our approach to support women goes hand in hand with our faith. It is part of our values. If we do not live our faith by creating an environment where women find fulfilment in their jobs and opportunities to increase and apply their skills, then we will not be able to achieve any of our goals. As a family, we believe that being a women in business, whether you are the business owner or part of the leadership or a manager means you have to persevere and aim to create an environment where you and others can thrive’.

Business Model and SDG#5

‘Our business model is simple’, stated Karen Dubon, ‘We promote quality products, and customers are attracted to the way we do business. We source our raw materials from local producers who are also women, these products are transformed by women in our factory and then distributed. The plantations where our raw material comes from are also run mostly by women. This has occurred as men have often migrated and they leave their farms under the care of their wives. Hence there is a strong priority for us to ensure that they are empowered to be business savvy and to ensure that they feel capable to be part of this process’. The plantations run by women become part of a value chain that allows HLF to train women to learn about quality control, decision making and food handling. In doing so they prepare women to be better skilled in roles previously occupied by men. See Fig. 4 (a,b) for plantain and yuca plantations.

The business model focuses on (a) commitment to customers in serving them in a timely manner with their requested orders, (b) innovation in the shape and form of vegetable snacks for restaurants and hotels and (c) quality, flavour and presentation.

SDG#5 aims are approached in two ways: financial sponsorship and awareness. In terms of financial sponsorship, a percentage of the profits goes to social programmes that support rural women and girls in the Jutiapa area, focusing on education as well as training in food handling and the development of family vegetable gardens. In terms of awareness, gender equality and sustainability values are promoted through marketing and communication campaigns. HLF educates consumers on the importance of choosing responsible products and supporting gender equality initiatives. Karen Dubon has constantly participated in TV campaigns on local TV and radio promoting such aspects and making wider audiences aware that by buying HLF products they are supporting women entrepreneurs and women producers in the Jutiapa area.

SDG#5 – Gender Equality and Hacienda Las Flores

Some of HLF stakeholders, who request their products for national distribution, are Pizza Hut, Texaco convenience stores, Circle K convenience stores, large franchise restaurants, FICOHSA (bank) and large social clubs. These large players have an influence on what HLF does.

Karen Dubon has identified the expectations of international stakeholders in the way they address SDG#5, ‘We are negotiating a large contract with an international customer. They are very socially conscious. In order to be their

(a)



(b)



Fig. 4. (a and b): Hacienda Las Flores Plantation of Plantains (Left) and Yuca (Right) in Jutiapa, Atlántida, Honduras.

supplier, they have given us a series of policies that the company must comply with, among the main ones is gender equality’.

HLF has focused on the following items related to SDG#5:

Economic empowerment: At HLF, the economic empowerment of women is approached through internal training and leadership programmes. HLF encourages educational engagement and provides equal opportunities for women to assume leadership roles in their areas of work.

Equal pay: At HLF, women working in the company are paid equal to their male colleagues with similar skills and experience in equivalent positions.

Inclusion in the supply chain: HLF ensures that women also benefit from the supply chain of their products. HLF works with suppliers that promote gender equality and give opportunities to women farmers or vegetable producers.

Participation in the community: HLF encourages collaborators to participate in local initiatives that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, such as motivational talks in schools, colleges, etc.

As some of these programmes have been developing in the last few years, there are no measurements of the impact of their work against SDG#5.

Reporting and Measurement

Measuring SDG#5 is part of the plans for HLF. Currently, Silvia Paz stated: ‘We do not have specific metrics to measure SDG#5 however, we are guided by some of the guidelines such as equal pay regardless of gender. This is something that we introduced since the company started, for us, there should not be differences in gender but in capacity and skills. When we evaluate the performance results in production, we realise that the equality policy that we introduced turned out to be very effective’. Such statements are supported by their quality supervisor, Analy Ruiz, who expressed, ‘It is only when you realise that you can learn to do things better, that you have what it takes to help a business that has believed in you. They [Silvia and Karen] are also women and devoted leaders who are no strangers to discrimination and struggle. When you see that they practice what they preach then you commit not only to the company but to what they stand for. Being a woman here [at HLF] is great because it is by improving my education and skills and then applying them well that we earn the respect we deserve. Every woman working here can tell you the same: We do not only have a job that helps our household, but we have a role that gives us purpose’.

Challenges of Working With SDG#5

The greatest challenge HLF has regarding SDG#5 is changing cultural expectations. A male-dominated culture in business is not easy to change even if you have international initiatives guiding a young family business led by women. In Latin American family businesses, women are rarely given a stake in the family business. Gender inequality is rooted in cultural and social norms. Changing the mentality of women who have been discriminated against not only in wages but also in their employment opportunities and career advancement despite having

equivalent or higher education levels is difficult. Latin American societies are still perceived as a patriarchal context where gender stereotypes exist, and women suffer discrimination thus addressing SDG#5 has been difficult to address.

Moreover, age may also be a factor in women's discrimination at various levels. Challenges have been identified that being a woman over 30 years of age will limit job opportunities or chances to be trained either in government programmes or with non-profit entities. Silvia Paz stated, 'For example, we at HLF wanted to enrol one of our female employees in a training programme related to the food industry organised by an NGO. This was a great opportunity to broaden her curriculum. Yet she was not selected because the programme only accepted candidates between the ages of 17 and 30, with no possibility of expanding this restriction. There are no programmes that consider women over a certain age. It is like you have a label or "use by" date where the productive age is assigned, without considering the capabilities of the person'. Karen, committed to ongoing education, applied for the Professional Fellows Programme/Economic Empowerment scholarship, tailored for women and sponsored by the Department of State of the United States only to find herself unable to complete the process because she exceeded the age limit.

Finally, information available on international initiatives such as the SDGs is limited. Professionals like Karen and Silvia became aware of them due to business meetings, travel to other countries, engagement in diverse business activities with international associations (Participants of Family Agriculture Climate-Smart, at Zamorano University (<https://www.zamorano.edu/>) in Table 1) and interaction with international suppliers. A challenge is experienced when other organisations lack awareness about SDGs and guidance that could shape and introduce policies about gender equality.

Business and Greater Good

It has always been a desire for HLF to sponsor a school in one of the two communities surrounding our company, to sponsor teachers and furniture, since they are multigrade schools where a single teacher attends to 6 grades. We have sponsored a softball team called the Lady Ranger Girls (*Lady Rangers*, 2023). We engage in fundraising for their equipment and uniforms. From our own experience as softball players, we know that such sport allows young girls to develop team building and leading skills which will be very useful for their life as professionals.

A benefit that will have a multiplier effect for HLF in their priority to empower women is having been selected for international training programmes such as the Acceleration plan of the Women's Leadership Centre Winner of a Scholarship at Incae Business School for Women Entrepreneurs Acceleration Programme (<https://en.incae.edu/es/leadsaceleracionvirtual.html>) in Table 1). Such a programme allows women to create opportunities within their existing businesses and develop opportunities for other women either internal or external to the organisations. Such emphasis on education has been ingrained since the company started. Silvia is constantly aiming to refine and improve the production process and got involved in courses at the National Professional Training Institute

(Instituto Nacional de Formacion Profesional). Because of the empowering experience of learning new skills that would apply to business, she prioritised training in the business. Women working at HLF have been constantly trained about how to best use environmentally friendly products, management, food handling and leadership skills.

What's Next for HLF and SDG#5 – Gender Equality

Immediate plans for HLF are to increase the representation of women in leadership positions by 30%. By the end of this year, HLF will be introducing measuring and reporting metrics around equal pay within the organisation.

Additionally, Silvia Paz stated, 'We are very interested in integrating a welfare and education plan for the children of our employees, either with the opportunity for scholarships and infant care programmes in a nursery. As most of our employees are also mothers, we feel they also need that support to excel at what they do. They do not want to lose the opportunity to continue learning yet their role as mothers has to be considered when we introduce new policies to balance work and family and support gender equality'. Karen and Silvia continue to be the face of the company (Fig. 5a,b), heralding how HLF aims to be a voice for women-led family businesses that engage in SDG#5.

Finally, there are plans to expand operations and capacity. Plans to grow bananas, mazapán (Breadfruit) and other non-traditional vegetables (FHIA, 2020) are in place to fuel the company's product offering. The aim is to



Fig. 5(a). HLF Staff at the GET START Honduras Exhibition in Miami FL, USA (L-R: Silvia Paz, Luis Alvarenga and Karen Dubon); 5(b). HLF Staff at the National Exhibition Display, Honduras (L-R: Karen Dubon and Angie Dubon).

develop such plantations involving women in the whole process. As the process of developing quality products requires special attention and training, the challenge is how to move away from traditional expectations that only men could be responsible for doing such jobs. As the process of offering new products requires, what Karen Dubon mentions, as ‘a woman’s touch’ the future challenges related to empowering women to feel valued for what they do and address further goals of SDG#5.

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