

Every bite restores essential nutrients while advancing the economic independence of refugees

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50% SOURCED FROM REFUGEES

Order now on Amazon USA



# Travel Beyond Bars: Cereal Bar Production with Economic Inclusion of Refugee Communities

Final Report | 12th June, 2024  
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# The Assignment

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The *Travel Beyond Bars Project* set out to:

- Develop and commercialise cereal bars made with ingredients sourced from refugees and their host communities in Uganda
- Validate it's proof of concept via test marketing

To accomplish the following overarching objectives:

- Improve the livelihoods of refugee communities
- Create awareness of refugee issues

# Project Background - The Refugee Crisis

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- Forced displacement is the defining social crisis of our era. Currently 110 million people have been forced to flee due to conflicts and other emergencies
- Uganda hosts 1.5 million refugees (3rd highest)
- Key settlement strategy is to allocate land to establish their homestead and to use for cultivation
- Agriculture is the most widespread economic activity engaged in Uganda
- As the refugee crisis peaks, the funding is dipping due to other competing global events resulting in a growing interest in the private sector's role as a source of support

# Project Background - Cereal Bar Market

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- Growing at +4.6% in the last 4 years (estimated at \$13.2bn), projected growth of between 5.6% to 8.9% in the next 5 to 10 years
- Growth attributed to the rising health consciousness of consumers and their busy lifestyles (94% of new launches make a health claim)
- Companies with traditional focus on candies is also expanding into the cereal bar category
- USA and the EU are the largest markets, however consumption increasing across various countries including in India and China

# Project Approach & Methodology

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Production  
Mapping

Concept  
Development

Product  
Development

Packaging  
Development

Test Market /  
Reporting

# Production Mapping

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- Identified crops of relevance, determined its seasonality, capacity and pricing at KRS (interviews with donor agencies, District Production Officer, farmer groups, etc)
- Conducted regulatory assessment to ensure all local and export market requirements were met
- Given the sanitary conditions observed at KRS, key quality and food safety parameters were identified and lab testing was conducted (results shared with WFP)
- Since sustainability is a core company value, an environmental assessment was also conducted to guide decisions for ingredients, packaging and processes

# Production Mapping

Crop	Processing Capability	Seasonality	Capacity	Price (UGX)	Quality & Food Safety Criteria
Maize	Milled to flour	2 seasons: Mar-Jun and Aug-Nov	Main crop, high capacity	White flour: 1,000-1,500 per kg Yellow flour: 1,000 per cup	Moisture content, acid insoluble ash, aflatoxins, TPC, E-coli, salmonella, yeasts & moulds, staphylococcus aureus
Rice	None	-	Very low production, mostly within host communities	-	-
Banana (Cavendish, Apple)	N/A	Perennial	Low production, mainly for subsistence	Cavendish: 25,000 per bunch Apple: 20,000 per bunch	Brix
Pineapple	N/A	Perennial	Low production, 30 acres in host communities	2,000-4,000 per piece	Brix
Mango (local varieties)	N/A	Mar-Jun	Very low production	-	Brix, no fiber
Jackfruit	N/A	Perennial	Medium production	3,000-10,000 per fruit	Yellow, orange flesh
Passion Fruit	N/A	-	No production	-	-
Papaya	N/A	Perennial	Minimal production	-	-
Ground Nuts	Adequately dried	2 seasons: Mar-Jun and Aug-Nov	Medium production, mainly by host communities	4,000-7,000 per kg	Moisture content, aflatoxins, salmonella, yeasts and molds
Macadamia	None	-	No production	-	-
Sesame Seeds	None	-	No production	-	-
Honey	Filtered and packed	Harvest in the dry seasons	Limited production (19 farmer groups)	30,000 per kg	Free acidity, pH, brix, foreign materials

# Concept Development

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- Consumer target was defined and their physical and emotional needs were articulated as a precursor to concept development
- Brainstorming was done to originate potential sub-brand names, insights and product positionings and a matrix was developed to piece together a concept that could effectively breakthrough the consumers
- Legal approval was sought for the concept
- The Blossomz brand name was initially trademarked in Uganda



# Blossomz RE-vive Breakfast Bars

*Spreading Nature's Love While Uplifting Refugee Communities*

While the refugee crisis is not at the forefront of my worries, it is disheartening to know that every morning I wake up there are 15,000 more people forcibly displaced due to conflicts and other emergencies.

Introducing **Blossomz RE-vive Breakfast Bars**, made from 100% natural breakfast ingredients like cereals, tropical fruits, nuts and honey with more than 50% uniquely sourced from refugee communities in Uganda. Every bite not only rises to the occasion of the most important meal of the day as it restores essential nutrients for the body and mind, it also cements solidarity with the refugee communities in regaining their economic independence.

**Blossomz RE-vive Breakfast Bars** - restores essential nutrients after a night's sleep while positively impacting the livelihood of refugee communities.

Available in two variants: Cashew & Chia | Macadamia & Moringa

1.4 oz (40g) for \$1.49



*Developed in partnership with JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) Uganda*

# Product Development

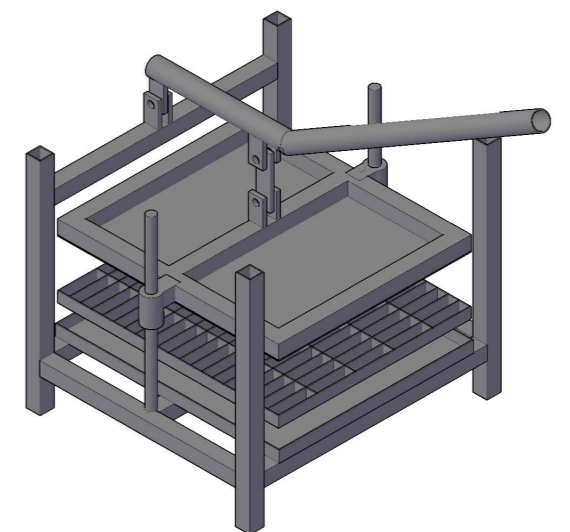
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- The goal was to develop two variants each using at least 50% of ingredients sourced from the refugee communities
- As the foundation to the product development process, an extensive competitor review was done to understand the ingredients used, the shelf-life, texture and aesthetic
- An ingredient roadmap was developed to highlight the different categories of ingredients, its function, the processing technique for each, its impact on the stability of the product



# Product Development

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- An iterative approach was adopted, dozens of trials were conducted to explore ingredients and processing techniques as per the roadmap
- In addition to applying ZFI's own experience, ZFI engaged PFS experts to specifically help with the processing of maize the final processing of the bar
- A manual equipment was fabricated locally for the forming and cutting of the cereal bars
- Tastings were done to get early feedback



# Product Development

Macadamia & Moringa	Cashew & Chia
	
<p><u>Refugee Sourced Ingredients (62.5%):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Honey - 30.0%</li><li>• Peanuts - 20.0%</li><li>• Maize Flakes - 12.5%</li></ul>	<p><u>Refugee Sourced Ingredients (63.8%):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Honey - 30.0%</li><li>• Peanuts - 20.0%</li><li>• Maize Flakes - 13.8%</li></ul>
<p><u>Other Ingredients:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Macadamia - 15.3%</li><li>• Mango - 15.0%</li><li>• Pumpkin Seeds - 2.5%</li><li>• Sesame Seeds - 2.5%</li><li>• Oats - 1.5%</li><li>• Moringa Powder - 0.5%</li><li>• Salt - 0.3%</li></ul>	<p><u>Other Ingredients:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cashews - 17.0%</li><li>• Pineapple - 15.0%</li><li>• Chia Seeds - 2.0%</li><li>• Pumpkin Seeds - 2.0%</li><li>• Salt - 0.3%</li></ul>

# Product Development

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- Based on early tastings, optimisations were done to both recipes focussing on strengthening the binding, reducing the sweetness, improving on the bite and the crunchiness
- The final recipes were lab tested against physicochemical and microbial parameters

# Packaging Development

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- The key goal of packaging was to preserve the product integrity, communicate its positioning, create impact while ensuring the design was ownable and differentiated
- In line with category norms, a flow-wrap as primary packaging and a multipack carton as secondary packaging were developed
- Emphasis was put on the visuals and text to appeal to the target consumers, comply with legal/regulatory requirements
- QR-code linking ZFI's website was prominently integrated in the front-panel of the packaging



# Packaging Development



100% natural claim prominent on the front panel

The refugee ribbon flawlessly integrated as part of the sub-brand name

Strong variant differentiation (color and name)

Ingredients sourced from refugees claim is prominent on the front panel

Impactful visualisation of the product

QR-code on the front-panel of the flow-wrap with a 'learn more' call to action

# Test Marketing

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- Amazon USA identified as the test market
- Raw materials were sourced from the KRS for the test samples
- Due to moisture content not meeting food safety standards on maize and peanuts, the primary processing was redone by ZFI
- Processing of the maize into flakes was done at a third-party processor under ZFI's strict supervision
- All other secondary and final processing was done at ZFI
- Test samples were shipped in the 1st week of April



# Test Marketing - Marketing Campaign

Awareness

Discovery

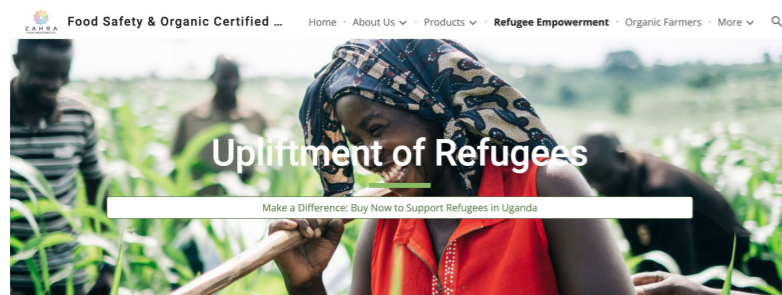
Consideration

Purchase

Advocacy

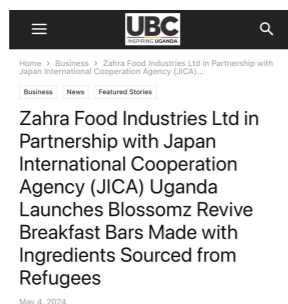
## Objective:

Create awareness of the refugee crisis (website, social media)



## Objective:

Announce the launch of the product (press kits, SEM, promotional support on social media)

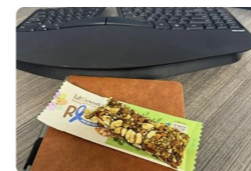


## Objective:

Encourage customers to evaluate our cereal bar (encourage product reviews)

From the United States

Yusuf Ali  
★★★★★ Verified Purchase  
Perfect breakfast for those days on the go!  
Reviewed in the United States on April 29, 2024



I ordered these to try out and I love them. This kind of snack can be used for a breakfast on the days when you just don't have time! You feel full after eating it and not guilty. It tastes healthy which I love!

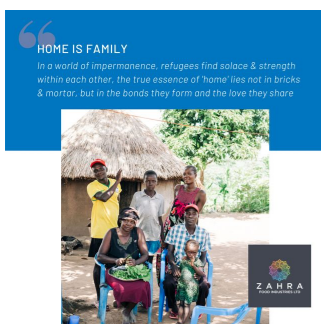
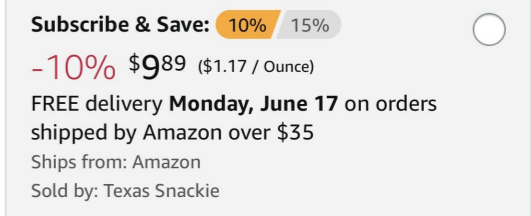
## Objective:

Motivate consumers to making a purchase (coupons, price-offs)



## Objective:

Encourage repeat purchase (loyalty programs)



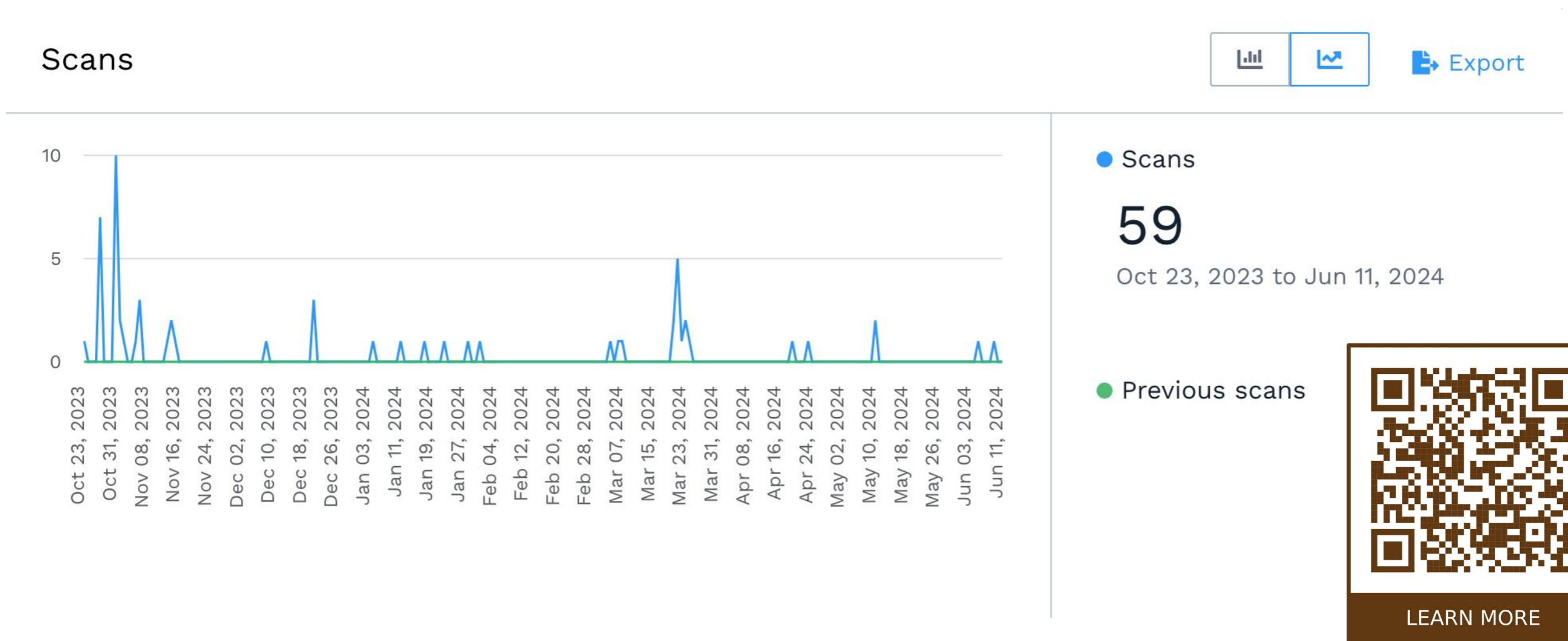
# Results - Awareness of Refugee Crisis

- There has been a surge in our website visits since the launch, 466 users have visited the refugee page. USA visitors ranked 2nd after Uganda



# Results - Awareness of Refugee Crisis

- A total of 59 scans of the QR-code have been recorded in Uganda, Japan, USA, Singapore, Spain, Kenya, Egypt and the UK. 6 scans recorded since the launch



# Results - Sales Performance

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- Test samples arrived in the USA on the 9th of April, 2024, shipped to Amazon on the 12th and the listing went live on the 17th
- The launch activities created an initial positive lift in sales (20 multipacks/120 bars got sold, 13 for Macadamia & Moringa and 7 for Chia & Cashew)
- On 26th, Amazon removed the Cashew & Chia variant citing trademark infringement. All marketing efforts were suspended by ZFI
- ZFI rushed to file the trademark by 10th May, Amazon restored the listing on 29th May

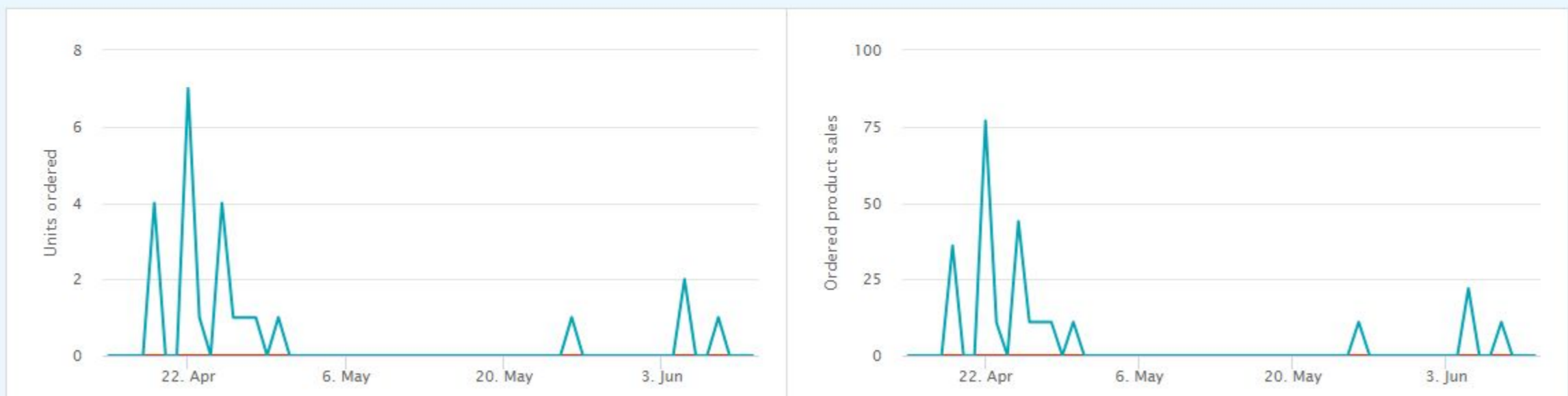
# Results - Sales Performance

- Marketing support was initiated immediately after restoration of the listing
- A total of 24 multipacks have been sold since launch (20 during the initial launch period, 4 after reinstatement of the Cashew & Chia variant)

Total order items	Units ordered	Ordered product sales	Avg. units/order item	Avg. sales/order item
<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>\$255.54</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$10.65</b>

## Compare Sales

Graph view Table view





# Results - Sales Performance

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- 3 customer ratings and two product videos have been received on Amazon. All reviews are positive which provides assurance on the acceptance of the products



Duke Seibold

★★★★★ Verified Purchase

### Great snack bars with a great cause

Reviewed in the United States on May 23, 2024

Flavor Name: Macadamia and Moringa

I love the taste of these bars. Wonderful taste of honey and grains and ingredients I know.



Pauline Bernardo

★★★★☆ Verified Purchase

### A liitle oily

Reviewed in the United States on May 16, 2024

Flavor Name: Macadamia and Moringa

A little chewy and oily (most likely from moringa) but having moringa in the ingredients is a good addition! Moringa has good health benefits and gives energy too!



Yusuf Ali

★★★★★ Verified Purchase

### Perfect breakfast for those days on the go!

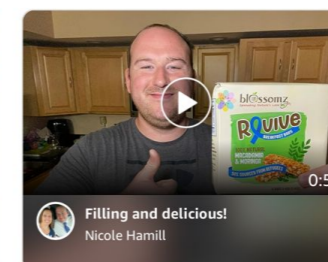
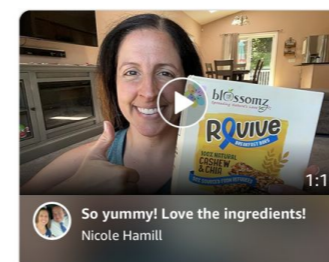
Reviewed in the United States on April 29, 2024

Flavor Name: Macadamia and Moringa



### Videos

For this product






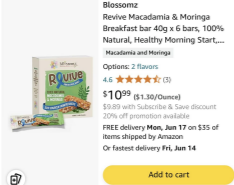
Upload your video >

# Results - Sales Performance

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- Promotional activity across all online platforms show that the achieved CTR's are generally on par with the average despite being a new product - this is a strong signal that the product positioning and ad copy are compelling enough to attract consumers' attention

# Results - Sales Performance

	Content / Channel	Actual	Average Benchmark
<p>Blossomz Revive Breakfast Bars   100% Natural   Clean Label   Empowering Refugees in Uganda  <a href="https://amazon.com/breakfast_bars/refugee_support">amazon.com/breakfast_bars/refugee_support</a></p> <p>Every bite restores essential nutrients for the body and mind after a night's sleep. The only breakfast bar with 50% of ingredients uniquely sourced from refugees in Uganda.            Product Benefits  <a href="#">Learn More</a>            Macadamia &amp; Moringa            Impact On Refugees</p>	Google	3.00%	1.0% - 3.0%
	Instagram	1.00%	0.90%
	LinkedIn	0.69%	0.40% - 0.56%
	Instagram	0.62%	0.90%
	LinkedIn	0.64%	0.40% - 0.56%
	Instagram	0.64%	0.90%
	LinkedIn	0.49%	0.40% - 0.56%
	Amazon	0.20%	0.35%



# Results - Sales Performance

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- However, conversion remains low - though not unexpected of new products in highly competitive categories like food
- Lack of brand recognition and adequate social proof, i.e., not having enough product reviews is a definite hindrance to purchase
- Even though ZFI has followed Amazon's recommendation to price the 6-pack at \$10.99 (but simultaneously offering coupons to stimulate trial), this higher pricing is likely impeding conversion
- A minimum 10% coupon has been offered across all social media platforms to break the higher price, however only 7 coupons have been redeemed

# Results - Sales Performance

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- Having just two variants has been a significant limiting factor in marketing the brand on Amazon
- Given the delay in the launch of the marketing support due to the obstruction by Amazon on the Cashew & Chia listing, there just hasn't been enough time to build sales momentum bearing in mind that most online marketing requires at least two weeks of machine learning before it starts delivering optimally
- Lastly, the cost of marketing in the USA has proven to be much higher than expected as conversion remains low despite a spend of \$739 since the launch

# Recommendation

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- Considering the positive feedback on the product and the strong interest in the concept as evidenced by robust CTR's, the recommendation is to consider a full-scale launch, provided the roll-out can fund the high initial marketing costs typically associated with new products
- Refine the pricing strategy
- Optimise the recipe to address the hard to bite concerns
- Develop additional variants to create greater impact
- Make adjustments to the multipack carton to more effectively withstand shipping stress

# Impact Forecast Model

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- ZFI has developed a model to deeply understand the impact on the refugee communities from the full scale launch
- The model takes into account living income data, annual requirement for each crop for cereal bar production, farm gate prices, yields per acre, etc
- It seeks to answer key questions like how many kgs of each crop needs to be produced to earn a living income, how many acres of land is therefore required, what crops generate the highest revenues, how many farmers/acres of land shall be required to meet demand, etc

# Impact Forecast Model

## Isingiro Example

Living Income / Day - US\$	1.32
Living Income / Year - US\$	481.80
Living Income / Year - UGX	1,854,930

Produce	Recipe % Contr.	Farm Gate Price (UGX)	Production to Earn Living Income (Kg)	Estimated Yield (Kg) / Acre	Acres Needed to Earn Living Income	Input / Output Ratio	Total Acres Needed in 2027	Total Revenue Potential in 2027 (UGX)
Mango	7.5%	1,000	1,855	2,200	0.8	12	16.5	36,387,378
Pineapple	7.5%	1,100	1,686	20,000	0.1	16	2.4	53,368,154
Sesame	2.5%	3,500	530	500	1.1	1	2.0	3,537,662
Peanuts	20.0%	5,500	337	1,200	0.3	1	6.7	44,473,462
Honey	30.0%	30,000	62	33	1.9	1	367.5	363,873,780
Maize	12.5%	1,250	1,484	600	2.5	1	8.4	6,317,253
<b>Total</b>							<b>403.7</b>	<b>507,957,689</b>
<b>Total Farmers</b>							<b>807</b>	

# Impact Forecast Model

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- Several insights can be gathered from this example, a total income of UGX 508 million shall be generated within the refugee communities by year three of the launch, a total of 404 acres of farmland and 807 farmers shall be engaged for the supply of raw materials within the same year, revenue from just 62 kgs of honey allows to earn a living income vs. 1,855kgs of mango

# Final Conclusion

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- While integration of refugees into commercial activities by the private sector is not new, an initiative that focuses on value addition within agriculture is innovative and has potential for greater impact
- The test marketing has confirmed that the product and the concept resonates with consumers, however a robust marketing support program is needed to create trial
- There is every indication that the full-scale launch will have a structural impact on the livelihoods of the refugees and thereby herald a strong sense of hope

Thank You!