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New Life Health Food Products

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New Life Health Food Products was a vegetarian food industry owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil that operated from 1957 to 1997. It was located on the Engenheiro Coelho campus of the Brazil Adventist University (Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo). Its goal was to contribute to the planning, production, sale, and distribution of products that corresponded to the biblical ideal of holistic health and the Adventist view of a healthy

lifestyle. Its last headquarters was located on Pastor Walter Boger Municipal Road, kilometer 3.4, zip code 13445-970, Lagoa Bonita neighborhood, in the city of Engenheiro Coelho, in the state of São Paulo, Brazil.

Background

In 1915, the Adventist presence began in the region of the capital of São Paulo, which later became known as the neighborhood of Capão Redondo. The growing Adventist presence contributed to the establishment of the Adventist Seminary (Seminário Adventista), presently known as Brazil Adventist University (Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo - UNASP), under the leadership of two Adventist missionaries, Pastors John Boehm and John Lipke. With the school's progress, many Adventist families moved to the region, with the main purpose of bringing their children to study in the school.¹

In the following decades, the Adventist work expanded rapidly in the city of São Paulo and its surroundings. The Adventist message was preached in different ways and reached new places. One of the missionary fronts that made this possible was the distribution of Adventist literature. In 1922, the missionary Cyrillo Martins was successful in offering Adventist literature in the regions of Capão Redondo and Itapecerica. According to his report, in 42 days of work, he was well accepted by people and generated a satisfactory income from the book sales although he worked in a region where 40 percent of the population had no formal education.²

In 1935, the Adventist Seminary inaugurated the Industrial Department of Superbom Products (Departamento Industrial de Produtos Superbom) that became an important factor of progress for the neighborhood and a strong promoter of the Adventist health message in the region.³ The health reform based on biblical principles was, from an early age, an important aspect of the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Through Ellen G. White's counsel, the Church was guided about the importance of the God-given health message and the relevance of keeping it linked to the gospel message.⁴ Ellen White mentioned that "the production of healthy food in factories for this purpose is one of the Lord's instruments to satisfy a need."⁵

The value of the health message could be witnessed through Superbom in the neighborhood of Capão Redondo. The presence of a food factory contributed to the growth of the population in the region, especially of the Adventist population who sought better living conditions there. The establishment of the factory was of great interest to Adventists who lived there, as they could work at the institution and at the same time eat its healthy products.⁶ However, the land in Capão Redondo neighborhood was not the best place for the creation of new industries due to its uneven and rugged terrain that made transportation and distribution of products very difficult. In addition, there was no electricity and the neighborhood was quite far from the railways. However, some factories operated in Capão Redondo. For example, the factory that produced Royal Jelly stood out. For this reason, the neighborhood of Capão Redondo was known for a long time as the "Capital of Royal Jelly."⁷

After considering the pros and cons, the church leaders decided to build the food factory in the region. One of the key factors in favor of that decision was that the arrival of new products on the market would contribute to promoting the Adventist healthy lifestyle. In addition, many Adventist families would benefit from job opportunities at the new factory.

The founder of this new food factory was Pastor Durval Stockler de Lima who in the past had a heart problem and was treated in the United States. During his treatment that was based on natural food and remedies, he realized that healthy eating helped him in his recovery. He testified that these products gave him a new life. Back in Brazil, he decided to start a small factory of wholesome and natural food that he called New Life.⁸ This, Pastor Stockler's commitment to sharing the good that healthy eating brought him, contributed to the creation of the food company New Life Health Food Products in 1957.⁹

Foundation

New Life, as it became known, was a food factory that had a very simple start.¹⁰ Its first headquarters was established in Pastor Durval's home located on Itapecerica da Serra Road, Km 23, Capão Redondo neighborhood. Its industrial activity began with the manufacture of Royal Jelly, which was the most typical product in the natural food market in that region. In a short time, Durval's small factory found its space in the market by producing 100 to 200 pots of Royal Jelly per day.¹¹

At the end of 1957, Pastor Durval formalized the operation of his company with the corporate registry entities, naming it New Life Health Food Products Ltda. The company's objectives were to use natural, organic food and convey the Gospel through its products.¹² Thus, its mission was simple and clear: to bring more health to the Adventist people and to other Brazilians.¹³

The first products, besides being produced in the house of Pastor Durval, were also distributed in the same place. The official commercialization of the royal jelly began on June 27, 1958. This product, which changed Pastor Durval's life, became so striking that people lined up at his door to buy it.¹⁴ Royal jelly was packaged in glass. The factory focused on the quality of production and sought the satisfaction of consumers from all social classes. Starting in 1960, the factory began to manufacture whole grains and granola.¹⁵ Besides this important addition, in order to better meet the public's growing demands, other products were introduced soon, such as Fumil, Germel, Soymilk, Levemil, and vegetable proteins, like vegetable meat in various forms.¹⁶

In its first years of operation, the company was very successful. The factory was widely recognized as an institution

that was committed to health.¹⁷

History

However, even with the growth previously experienced, in the early 1970s, New Life experienced a persistent financial crisis that made difficult its maintenance. In addition, in 1975, Pastor Durval retired and proposed to donate the factory to an Adventist organization that wanted to continue the business. He asked that he would be given 5 percent of the profit while he lived. The proposal was not accepted by the Adventist Church and shortly afterward the factory was sold to a non-Adventist gentleman named Gil Medeiros.¹⁸

The factory continued its production, although it was later offered again to the Church. On March 19, 1985, the Superbom, through deals carried out with the approval of the Food Company (Companhia de Alimentos) (an entity that managed the Adventist food industries in the South American Division territory), purchased all the New Life factory shares. With the purchase of New Life, Superbom expanded its sales in the market that appreciated the New Life's products. Because their packaging was simple, the final product prices were more affordable. The goal was to make good products available to consumers of all classes, including those with lower purchasing power, without reducing quality.¹⁹

Under the new management, New Life was able to continue its work. Its address was changed, starting to operate on Itapecerica Road, 23480, zip code 058858, in the city of Santo Amaro, in the state of São Paulo. Due to its expansion, and with the help of other Adventist companies, New Life sponsored several athletes, such as the marathon runner Eli Vieira, who at the age of 56 won the São Silvestre Race in his category in the years 1987 and 1988.²⁰ As the company focused on health promotion, it continually sponsored and supported other types of activities that promoted a healthy lifestyle.

Two years after the purchase of New Life, Superbom also went through a period of financial difficulties. For that reason, in August 1987, New Life ceased to be managed by Superbom and was placed under the management of the South American Division Food Company (Companhia de Alimentos da Divisão Sul Americana). Between July 1988 and July 1989, under the management of Gilson Borda, a South American Division administrator, New Life ranked as first in terms of financial growth among the Adventist Church food factories in the South American territory.²¹

However, as the 1990 approached, New Life faced again a serious financial crisis.²² As a result, on October 23, 1990, the Deliberative Council of Brazil College (Instituto Adventista de Ensino), located on Engenheiro Coelho (presently known as UNASP-EC), voted that the college takes over the factory and becomes responsible for its administration and production. According to Pastor Walter Boger, director of Brazil College, the arrival of New Life would be very beneficial to the educational institution, in addition to benefiting the surrounding region with faster and easier access to natural products.²³

After the transfer of New Life to Brazil College, Walter Boger organized the factory as a school department, so the students could work there and thus pay for their studies. With the new administration, production reached an average of 15 tons of products per month, being operated by a team of 38 employees. At that time, the company had a wide variety of products and, among them, the production of granola stood out.²⁴

Although there was a considerable improvement in the company's financial situation, a new crisis occurred in the following years and New Life was unable to maintain itself. Thus, the factory was declared bankrupt and ended its activities in July 1997.²⁵

Directors

Durval Stockler de Lima (1957-1975); Gil Medeiros (1976-1984); Rene Marquete (1985-1987); Gilson Z. Borda (1988-1990); Flávio Machado Pasini (1991-1997).

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