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Talking chicken

From humble beginnings, Bounty Agro Ventures has grown to leave a solid mark on the food products sector in the Philippines.

IMAGES JAMES ONA

Bounty Agro Ventures (BAVI) is the market leader of the rotisserie chicken industry, and the second largest broiler integrator in the Philippines carrying the brand Bounty Fresh. It has close to 1,400 company-owned stores selling about 100,000 roasted chickens every day. It is represented by three brands, namely Chooks-to-Go, Uling Roasters, and Reyal.

Today, BAVI is the banner company of the Bounty Group of companies, and it serves the traditional trade channels for live chicken, wet markets, supermarkets, and institutional accounts.

In 2008, BAVI entered the food retail sector with its first rotisserie brand, Chooks-to-Go. It was a tremendous success, grabbing market leadership in just two years. It continues to strengthen its top position with the introduction of a second brand, Uling Roasters, in 2013 and the third, latest brand, Reyal, in 2015.

Ronald Daniel Mascariñas is the man at the helm of BAVI. Since 2002, he has been the company's President and General Manager — leading the company through a period of great growth and expansion. Ronald has long had an interest in the food sector. He studied agriculture, specialising in poultry production, at the University of the Philippines, Los Baños, as a full-time scholar of the Coconut Federation. He also holds a Master in Management degree from the Asian Institute of Management, this time as a full-time >>

Bounty

Name Ronald Daniel Mascariñas
Company Bounty Agro Ventures
Position President & General Manager
HQ Pasig City, Philippines
Employees 850

scholar of Pure Foods Corporation. He completed a course at the International Law Institute in Washington DC on the rights and obligations of developing countries under the World Trade Organization.

Ronald's professional career in the poultry industry began straight out of college with Pure Foods Corporation, which at that time was owned by Ayala Corporation. San Miguel then acquired Pure Foods in 2001. "Back then it was expanding outside of the traditional processed meats business," Ronald recalls. "I was extremely lucky to join at the start-up phase and be involved in planning and construction, and my

"Evonik Nutrition & Care is glad to support Bounty Agro Ventures Inc. on carrying out and accomplishing its mission, and its commitment to the Filipino people to provide affordable and best-value food to the growing population in every neighbourhood." - Ms Norielyn D.Fajilan, Business Development Manager, Evonik-Degussa Industries

nineteen years in the company honed my management skills under the guidance of truly great leaders and mentors. I started as an Assistant Farm Manager and quickly climbed up the ranks.

I was looking after three business divisions as Senior Vice President when I left: Poultry, Food Service, and the fast food chain where I was President, Smokey's.

"The family who owned Tyson Agro Ventures, Inc. (now Bounty Fresh Foods, Inc.) asked me to lead a new company to grow their broiler business on the outskirts of the Philippines, help them transition to a highly professional organisation, and deliver a sustainable business to the next generation. Their mandate was very clear: "We want you to run the company the way you ran Pure Foods, hire your own management team, and set up the compensation



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system of your company'. That was how we started BAVI fifteen years ago.

"I experienced the gut-wrenching pressure inherent in a company take-over. The heavy burden of sustaining the livelihood of my people who were about to be displaced was suddenly on my shoulders. I simply couldn't turn my back on the hundreds of loyal people who spent the prime of their careers building the business of Pure Foods with me. I owed my professional success with Pure Foods largely to them. I knew their spouses,

children, and their beautiful dreams for their families. Among other options, the call of Tyson Agro Ventures, Inc. for professional help seemed an answered prayer to the burdens of that time.

"Almost everybody who was made redundant, but still wanted their jobs, came to work with me. In fact, most of my key managers and executives now are people from the previous company. I was able to protect the livelihood of these people and they all worked with a passion and fire I have never seen before."

Ronald's career in the food service industry has been impressive. In 2004, he was presented the Most Outstanding Alumnus in the field of Entrepreneurship award by his alma mater. He was also awarded a Plaque of Excellence by his peers in the poultry industry for his outstanding leadership as President of the Philippine Association of Broiler Integrators. Furthermore, he was awarded the Most Outstanding Professional for 2014 by Superbrands Marketing International. A year later, he was conferred the Communications and Leadership Award from Toastmasters International. This is the highest award that Toastmasters can bestow to a non-member. He encourages all of his employees to develop themselves through the Toastmasters program, even providing them with various incentives. >>

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“We have thirteen chapters of Toastmasters International across the country exclusively for our personnel,” Ronald explains. “Toastmasters International is run by passionate volunteers to develop the leadership and communication skills of people. It is typical for professionals who want to advance their careers to be involved in Toastmasters outside office hours. In BAVI, however, we do it during company time and shoulder all fees to encourage participation. We encourage people to develop their leadership and communication skills under the guidance of Toastmasters International. We reward them with salary increases ranging from 5 to 15 per cent for any advancement certification. The objective is to motivate people to invest time in their personal and professional development. It works for the company as well, because they develop self-confidence and become more productive employees.”

Throughout his time with BAVI, Ronald has experienced many proud moments. “Our first and most important milestone was being able to assemble the industry’s best talents under one roof. I had the privilege of choosing the most competent and trustworthy people in the industry. The reputation of the management team in the industry was the most important factor for the unprecedented growth of BAVI, as it attracted entrepreneurs to invest in facilities for the company. Trade distributors not only supported, but also aggressively promoted the brand Bounty Fresh. Bounty Fresh became a national brand overnight.”

The second milestone was the recognition of the Bounty Group in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as Asia’s ‘Best Poultry and Livestock Company’ in 2009. Bounty was the first Filipino company to have ever been bestowed



with the award, so it was a very proud moment for the entire company.

“Our next milestone was the recognition of Chooks-to-Go as a ‘super brand’ in 2012, cementing its position as the undisputed market leader for rotisserie chicken in the Philippines.”

BAVI’s latest milestone is the acknowledgement of its human resources management practices as a world-class system. The company passed the Investors in People assessment in 2014 and 2015. >>

“We encourage our people to develop their leadership and communication skills under the guidance of Toastmasters International.”

- Ronald Daniel Mascariña

“Working with an open-minded company that welcomes innovative ideas, products, and services and is bold enough to challenge the traditional way of doing business in the industry make suppliers like Maxion proud of what they are accomplishing today.”
- Mr Raymond P. Tagle, General Manager of Maxion Bioscience Inc.



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Moreover, Toastmasters International bestowed them with the Crystal Globe Award in 2015 and 2016 for BAVI's efforts in developing the leadership and communication skills of its entire workforce.

"The rotisserie business is now close to 60 per cent of total revenue, providing income stability to the highly volatile chicken commodity business."

Ronald shares that there are many factors that have made BAVI a great

success over the years, however, the one thing that stands out above everything else is the team behind the operations. "Our strongest asset and biggest advantage is our pool of passionate and talented people," he declares. "We invest greatly in the training of our employees.

"Last year, we spent the equivalent of three months of our peoples' salaries on training and development. It is our biggest investment to date, next only to the building of rotisserie stores. We consulted with an organisation

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from the United Kingdom, Investors in People (IIP), and opened up our company for them to audit and also mentor us on our human resources management practices. Our aim was to get our system on par with world-class people-management standards. We are now in our third year working with them and they continually audit our operations. In 2014, we were awarded with the first standard accreditation and much to our surprise, BAVI was the only Asian company nominated as a finalist for best practices in people management at the IIP Awards Night in London. We were truly honored to receive such recognition.

"Last year we earned our bronze accreditation and this year we are working towards silver accreditation. Of course the accreditation part is of secondary importance to us. What really matters is the process of complying with world-class people management-standards. IIP periodically checks the entire organisation's alignment with the company's mission, vision, and values. IIP wants each employee to be fully engaged in growing the enterprise. The company started as a highly technical enterprise. We were experts in producing chicken, processing, and food safety. But with the change in business direction towards retail, which requires huge organisation, people management is now at the core of our business, and we focus on building that strength with the help of organisations like IIP.

"Building the right workplace culture is a work in progress for us, and we

believe it is starting to seep through the organisation. We now attract top talents from the best schools in the country, and this is a very important factor for the company's long-term competitiveness and sustainability. We appreciate that even people outside the organisation are starting to recognise that BAVI provides solid professional growth and personal development to employees."

Early on, BAVI commissioned a UK-based company, Renoir Consulting, to help set up a sound management control system for the retail business Chooks-to-Go. That was the company's first big investment in business management.

BAVI is now realising the benefits of such investment in soft assets. Renoir not only set up its management control system; more importantly, the company trained BAVI's people how to do the same for other operations. BAVI now has systems in place ensuring strict compliance to operating standards, food safety, and continuous innovation.

The core values important to BAVI are honesty, fairness, meeting its commitments, innovation, teamwork, as well as professional and personal development. Ronald says he finds great satisfaction in seeing his employees grow and become valuable members of society. "To see young people who started with us now having their own families is a wonderful thing," he shares.

"I want to see them further develop and become more productive, so they can all afford to send their kids to good >>

"Bounty's openness to innovation and technologies is exactly the reason why Adisseo continuously searches for solutions that will help our top-notch customers be ahead of the pack. Their success is also our success — it's like adding a colourful feather to Adisseo's cap." - Mr Francois Pellet, Managing Director, Adisseo Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd.



schools and own their dream houses. I am truly grateful to all our employees who toiled and built this company brick by brick to its respectable position today. We've grown the business, established new brands, and these unsung people were there to execute business plans every step of the way. I am glad that in this journey, our people developed themselves and allowed the company to be in a position to provide them with a decent livelihood."

The same core values are observed in working with business partners across the supply chain. "We work with

"Novus' vision is to help feed the world affordable, wholesome food and achieve a better quality of life. The partnership with Bounty Agro Ventures Inc. shows that we are in the same mind in helping build a better world." - Dr Von Richard M. Ebron, Regional Sales Director, Philippines and Viet Nam, Novus International Pte Ltd

"The only way for us to grow and sustain the business is to ensure that everybody in the supply chain is happy." - Ronald Daniel Mascariñas

suppliers all the time," he states. "We don't own production facilities — the billions of pesos worth of facilities are investments from entrepreneurs across the country. Hundreds of broiler contract growers invest from around PHP1 million to over PHP100 million to grow chicken for us. Toll dressers invest from PHP30 to PHP150 million to dress and process chicken exclusively for BAVI. Toll millers invest from PHP10 million to PHP100 million in feed mills to produce feeds for our contract growers. Likewise, hatchery toll partners invest millions to hatch day-old chicks.

"Truckers invest millions in fleets of trucks to deliver day-old chicks, harvest live birds from our contract growers, and deliver dressed chicken to

thousands of stores and customers every day. We assist investors in securing loans from banks, designing facilities and training them to efficiently run their farms and plants. The business structure allows small entrepreneurs across the country to actively participate in big business. They fuel the growth of BAVI over the years.

"The management team's solid reputation of competence, trustworthiness, and fairness is the basic pre-requisite in building the business. Our pool of highly trained technical specialists oversees the conduct of our partners' day-to-day operations to ensure adherence to operating and safety standards. It is critical that all facets of the supply chain are efficient for our

partners to get a significant return on their investments.

"The only way for us to grow and sustain the business is to ensure that everyone in the supply chain is happy. We always advise everybody involved in the business upfront that there is no perfect situation. Problems will always arise. What we guarantee is that any problem will be resolved fairly with the interest of both the company and the business partner treated equally."

It is not just people-related challenges that Ronald and his team have to deal with. The Philippines is visited by an average of twenty-six typhoons every year and these can wreak havoc on facilities. "Every year, some of the facilities around the country are devastated by typhoons or floods," Ronald explains. "These calamities can be devastating to our business

partners and can lead to bankruptcy. It is during these times that our business partners see and feel the support of their big brother BAVI. We waive penalties and extend financial assistance to our partners to help them rebuild their facilities and help them continue their business."

Ronald's leadership style revolves around the basic principle of fairness, and that is a dictum that's also been instilled in his management team. "All leaders in the company should not only lead but inspire their people," he says. "We encourage them to make prompt, fair decisions and to listen carefully to the wants and needs of their team. We patiently mentor and coach our people to bring the best out of everybody in the organisation. It's a work in progress for us, but we keep reminding people that these are the leadership traits we want to develop."

Looking forward, Ronald has big plans to ensure BAVI sustains its growth. The retail business will continue to be a priority because of the huge opportunities it presents, and BAVI will continue to launch more retail brands.

Geographic expansion is also in the works, particularly tapping into the international marketplace. BAVI will have stores in Malaysia and Indonesia by the end of this year. "This is the first time we will be venturing outside the country," Ronald says. "So it's all very exciting — there is a lot of worldwide interest in our brands, which is fantastic." The future certainly looks promising for BAVI. ■

"Working with Asia's best like Bounty Agro Ventures, Inc. not only makes us proud, but also encourages us to do our best in every aspect of the business." - Carmelo Conlu, General Manager of Good Harvest Flavors and Spice Corp.

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**An Appreciation to
Mr. Ronald Mascariñas**

(President, General Manager & CEO of Bounty Agro-Ventures Inc.)

for his

Remarkable Leadership & Business Dedication

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