

Case study - Ready Foods

March 2022 - Bangladesh



Ready Food is a small-sized food production company that was established in 2017 as a part of the organization - **READI**, and is headquartered in Uttara, Bangladesh. **Ready Foods** was set up with the intention to manufacture and offer nutritious food solutions to low-income populations in sub-district areas of Bangladesh and aims to do more to improve the diets of local communities. The company started production from the least developed state in Bangladesh, offering low prices and support to disadvantaged groups. Its initial main production line includes bread, cake and biscuits. Here you can read a summary of the learnings of Ready Foods, and the changes the company is currently making in terms of nutrition after completing the Nutrition Business Monitor activities.

Using the Nutrition Business Monitor

Mr. Nazrul Islam completed the Nutrition Business Monitor tool (NBM) in August 2021 with the help of the SUN Business Network (SBN). Nazrul found the experience of completing the tool positive and its content insightful for both himself and his team. He mentioned that it encouraged him to think of new ways to improve the company's business practices, particularly around the topic of nutrition.

However, Nazrul also expressed that he experienced some challenges while completing the tool. The requirement to log-in with personal details via a link to the tool platform was confusing and poor connectivity made it difficult to complete the tool online. He also shared his difficulty in understanding some of the indicators and recommendations in English, however mentioned that SBN played a role in assisting him which was helpful. Nazrul recommended for the tool to be translated into the local language in any country where the tool is being applied. This will ensure ease of use and understanding for companies filling it in. Otherwise he stresses that additional support to assist companies would be necessary.

Training on applying nutrition focus in your business

To follow-up after testing the NBM tool, Nazrul and his manager attended the 2-day capacity building training offered in September 2021, in Dhaka. Nazrul mentioned that his learnings from the training inspired the Ready foods team to start developing a new business model, centered around nutrition, with a more specific focus on tackling the issue of rising levels of obesity in Bangladesh.

That aside, he shared that his team greatly valued the training content covering marketing techniques and the opportunities it provided them to network and connect with like minded business personnel from other companies. He mentioned that he established connections with other SMEs and has discussed the possibility of purchasing raw materials from them and marketing food products to them.

To improve the training Nazrul suggests a longer training period of 3-5 days, with more one-on-one tailored support embedded. He also mentioned it would be useful to have a mentor present to provide guidance to the companies in using the training worksheets and in implementing the content.

Introducing Mr. Nazrul Islam

Mr. Nazrul Islam is the Managing Director of Ready Foods. He has completed the tool testing and has participated to the 2-day training. All information in this case study is based on an interview with him.

While working on a different field with a focus on social projects, Nazrul realised that good nutrition can drive progress and improve people's wellbeing. This is how the idea of Ready Foods was born. The company produces more than seven varieties of bakery items and sells them to factory workers around Dhaka city.

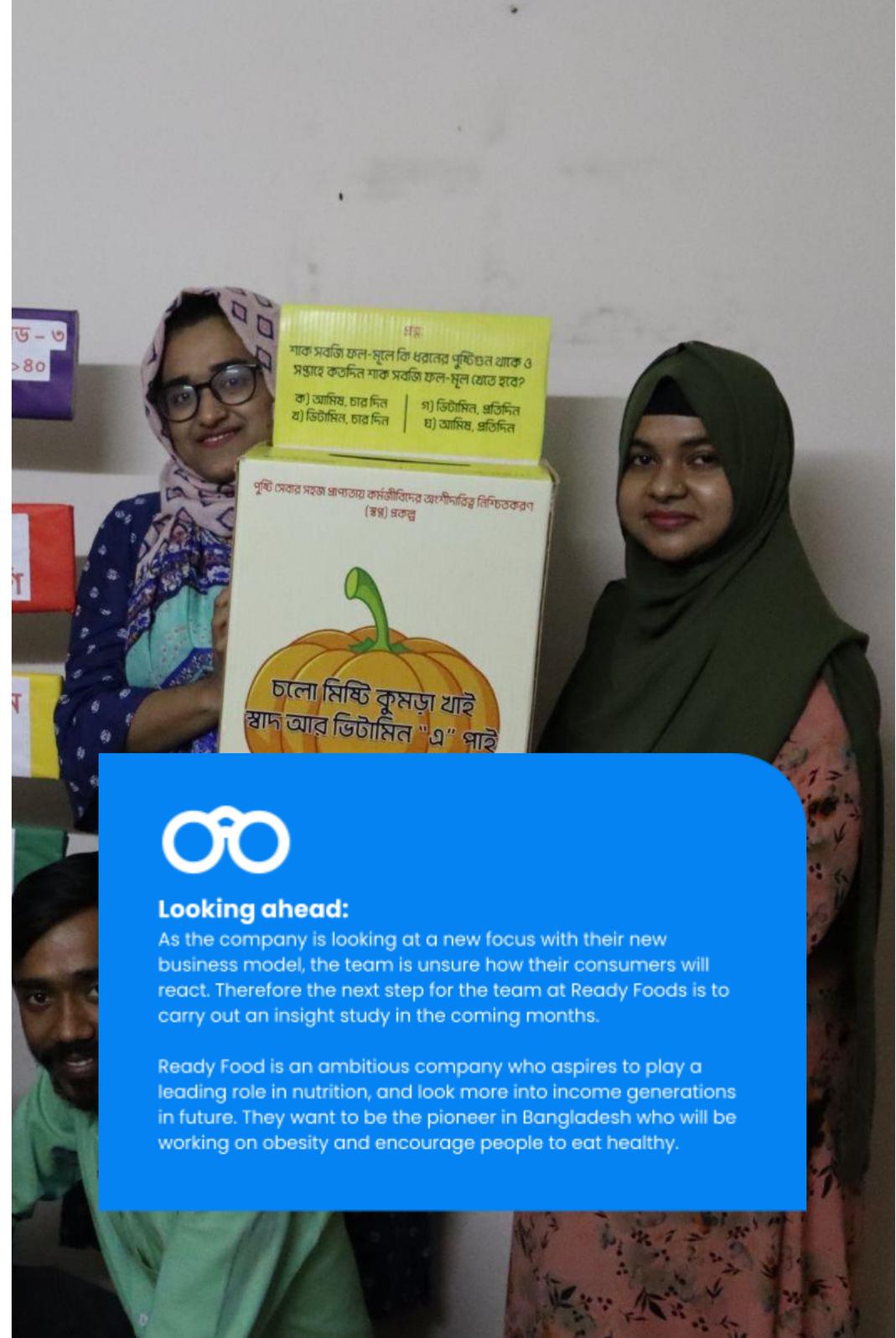


Learnings and implementation

Completing the NBM tool and attending the 2-day capacity building training was a great learning experience for the team at Ready foods. Based on their learnings, the team is now redesigning their business model to integrate an approach that focuses more on nutrition. The company has a goal to (1) reformulate their existing products (bread, cake and biscuits) to contain less calories, (2) use seasonal organic vegetables, (3) reduce sugar, (4) promote fiber rich, sugar free local cakes (pithas), (5) ensure that the food produced meets health and safety standards, (6) use healthier cooking processes like steaming instead of frying, and (7) serve roadside shops and pre-selected garments factories so that low income communities can be reached.

Conclusion

Nazrul and his team already showed a clear interest in creating a positive health impact on the lives of the people in Bangladesh. Currently the team is in the design and planning phase of their new business plan which includes a focus on reducing obesity- a non-communicable disease that is on the rise in Bangladeshi populations. Thanks to the NBM tool, and the training that Ready Foods received, they were able to move forward in this direction.



Looking ahead:

As the company is looking at a new focus with their new business model, the team is unsure how their consumers will react. Therefore the next step for the team at Ready Foods is to carry out an insight study in the coming months.

Ready Food is an ambitious company who aspires to play a leading role in nutrition, and look more into income generations in future. They want to be the pioneer in Bangladesh who will be working on obesity and encourage people to eat healthy.