

If, after reading these, you would like to know more, or would like to explore options to improve the way that your supply chain works, then please contact either **Alan Stevenson** or **Rona Sutherland**, of SAOS, to whom you can talk in confidence.

Alternatively, if you are already working collaboratively and would like to shout about it, let us know and we will be pleased to promote you and your partners in our case study series.

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Collaboration Delivers Real Commercial Benefits

ADDING VALUE: QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Why collaborate? The question should really be why not? When we talk about collaboration, we simply mean working in partnership. You can be as competitive as you like, but there are always some areas where co-operating with others makes more sense.

We've produced a series of case study examples to illustrate where companies have worked with other partners in their supply chains for mutual benefit. That last bit is key. There has to be something in it for everyone involved, or it is not true collaboration. This doesn't mean that the benefits are necessarily shared equally by all partners, but it does mean that they're shared fairly, recognising the effort that each has contributed.

The series looks at how companies are working together to tackle business issues for mutual success. However, it's not easy to start collaborating with others if you are operating in a supply chain where there is very little trust and openness.

No collaborative processes will work, unless you can develop relationships based on trust, so we've also tried to include good practice examples of what other companies have done to develop the right sort of relationships and ensure the benefits are shared with everyone.

CASE STUDIES

Quality management is a method for ensuring that all the activities necessary to design, develop and produce a product are effective and efficient. Quality has three main components: quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement. It is vital to ensure that you agree a quality specification for your product with your customer in the first place, though, to ensure that you produce the right quality product!

Failure to meet customers' expectations can be hugely damaging if suppliers do not provide the right goods first time, on time, every time. This was of real concern to **Scottish Pig Producers**, as they considered the management requirements of producing naturally tender pork. Research showed that there are important aspects of meat quality that can be influenced by producers. For example, to minimise drip loss, feeding vitamin C the day prior to slaughter, can result in a 135% improvement in the water-holding capacity of pork. Scottish Pig Producers is working throughout the supply chain and with Quality Meat Scotland, to research factors affecting quality, develop systems to reduce variation and provide continuity and seek agreement with partners to make the necessary improvements.



“Produced and processed in Scotland is no longer sufficient to promote our product and satisfy consumers. We have to produce a product which is better than the rest and recognised by the retailer and consumer as such.”

Gordon McKen (Scottish Pig Producers Ltd)

Mackays recognises that to continue to develop and expand its high quality product range, it needs to ensure that it consistently gets the best ingredients. It works collaboratively with its local **Farmer Suppliers**, to ensure that everyone understands consumers' demands and what is critical in terms of berry preparation and delivery timing to maintain the high quality product standards. Fruit cleanliness is most important, so Mackays works in conjunction with farmers to inspect fruit in the field, prior to it being packed into containers for onward transport, freezing and storage. This results in farmers receiving better prices and avoiding rejections.

Highland Grain, working with the **Edrington Group** and **Tamdhu Maltings**, found that it is possible to produce malt which provides additional spirit yield and improved processability. Highland Grain streams the barley according to nitrogen content and dries down to 12% moisture. After drying, the barley is kept under a regime called warm storage, to increase its water sensitivity. The quality improvement benefits are clear - barley from Highland Grain has consistently provided improvement in spirit yield of 1% - 2%. Quality improvement procedures are recorded and maintained through various ISO standards.



Scampi has reached a mature phase in terms of its market position which can lead to price pressure competition in the market. **Coldwater Shellfish** sees an opportunity to grow the niche market for high quality scampi products, but this is dependent on ensuring quality standards are met by everyone in the chain. It views its drive to improve the quality of the catch through high quality specifications and knowledge sharing, as one of the reasons that it has survived in an extremely competitive market. The relationships that have been fostered with the fishing boats that supply Coldwater are fundamental to the success of the chain and the company has elected to sponsor its skippers in the North East of Scotland through the Responsible Fishing Scheme – a third party accreditation scheme run by the Seafood Authority.

“Despite the difficulties we face in forecasting and planning production we do meet our customer requirements but it is only because we work together that we are able to do this.”

Carl Briggs (Coldwater Shellfish)