Women in Agribusiness
Zahrock Khalfani Ahmedy
Founder and Managing Director, Rocky Products

Rocky Products
High-quality varieties of natural spice products

Challenge
Good chilies, spices, and pastes are hard to find. As Tanzania grows, there is a growing middle class eager to find new ways to spice up their home cooking.

Idea
Zahrock is a born chef. Armed with her mother’s recipes, she started cooking chili sauce for relatives and family friends. Her older sister was amazed by the taste and encouraged Zahrock (or Rocky as she’s also known) to package the sauce, so she could display them in her salon. As soon as her clients tasted the product, they demanded to buy more. In 1999, with only 30,000 Tanzanian shillings (USD 15) from her husband, Zahrock bought the raw materials needed to make 20 bottles of sauce, and then sold them at US$1 each for a total profit of $5. Since then, she hasn’t looked back and continues to expand her product line.

Business Model
Rocky Products specializes in processing high-quality varieties of natural spice products including garlic paste, spices, and pickles. Their products are organically produced and processed without preservatives.

Rocky Products buys high-quality ingredients to produce spice products (including dry spice mixes and sauces) that are organic and have health benefits, but also taste good. She makes a margin on each item and is able to channel a portion of that back into her business. Rocky Products delivers products to customers by order.

As a woman, I stand on what I believe I can and strive to keep learning to update my knowledge and skills.
ENTREPRENEUR INSIGHTS

1. **Running a business is like running a family.**
   Every business needs a lot of attention, and keep learning as you move ahead with the company.

2. **Keep a thick skin**
   The community around you will look at you differently as a bold woman in business. Neighbors and close relatives may think you are boasting when you talk about the company.

3. **Customers come first**
   Create and maintain your customer and financial networks by addressing each person’s needs as best you can, while keeping your business in mind.

WORKING WITH infoDev

Zahrock joined the Agribusiness Innovation Center in 2015, when she signed a royalty agreement. The AIC has provided a range of support services including coaching on business management, introduction to new market opportunities, guidance on standards and certifications, production improvements, access to finance support, staff coaching, etc. This support has helped her in negotiating supply contracts and recovering delinquent payments, all of which allowed Zahrock to expand her business.

BUSINESS FACTS

Currently, Zahrock’s products are available and retailed in major supermarkets in Tanzania, with 80% of products available in major supermarkets in Dar es Salaam.

Her products are also retailed in neighborhood food stores. Rocky’s major clients include restaurants and hotels.

KEY OUTCOMES

Over the last 10 years, Zahrock’s company has won several regional and national awards in the spices category at various exhibitions.

NEXT STEPS

Zahrock’s goal is to extend her reach into new markets in Tanzania, especially in emerging cities and major towns such as Morogoro, Mwanza, Arusha, Dodoma, Mbeya, and Iringa. To accomplish this, she plans to improve her packaging and expand her distribution channels.