6 Selecting a seasoning supplier
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6.1 Introduction
Supplier selection is about the establishment of a business relationship between two companies; for it to be successful requires that both parties gain from the relationship. Since all relationships have an element of risk to both parties, it is important to ensure that the risk/reward ratio is acceptable to each party for the relationship to flourish.

In a seasoner/customer relationship, any decision by the customer places at risk the product, brand name, product image and, ultimately, the company and reputation. The reward is the sales that occur as a result of the characterization or differentiation of the product created by the critical, key ingredients – the seasoning – purchased from the seasoner. The seasoner, or supplier, risks investment, development time, and possibly opportunity (to sell to another customer), in return for the reward of achieving projected sales volumes and revenues (and profits) for the seasoning developed.

The relationship must therefore be based on trust and mutuality of benefit. These can only occur from a clear understanding of what each party expects from the other. The critical factor for success is the ability of the customer to define his or her needs accurately. The customer must, therefore, have a thorough understanding of wants and expectations. Clear definition of wants and needs by the customer is a solid investment, since it will ultimately facilitate evaluation of the degree to which these wants and needs are met by the product(s) offered by the seasoner. Furthermore, the seasoner is provided with a fuller understanding of just what characterizes the product(s) that are being developed.

In this chapter the evaluation of customer needs will be explored, and then the various elements important in assessing potential, and current, suppliers shall be discussed.

6.2 Evaluation of customer needs

6.2.1 Introduction
No supplier should be approached until the customers needs (i.e. wants, expectations, objectives, goals, etc.) are clearly defined. Tangibly, this
requires as detailed a brief as is possible to prepare, for discussion with the supplier. In the majority of cases where supplier/customer relationships have deteriorated, a primary factor has been inadequate initial briefing, resulting in prolonged development without achieving customer satisfaction, and indeed, generating frustration for both sides.

In addition to understanding the supplier's informational needs for an effective development exercise, the customer should also input, as fully as possible, any of the product's process constraints to ensure that the end seasoning formulation retains the characteristics desired for the final product in which it is used.

Other factors that can affect the seasoning supplier's ability to deliver what the customer seeks are shelf-life constraints and other final product ingredients that could mask, modify or otherwise act antagonistically with the components of the seasoning. The customer must weigh the risks of jeopardizing secrecy by disclosing these factors to the supplier against the need for perfection in the end product. The seasoning supplier needs to have a very clear understanding of the process requirements that the formulation will have to endure in order to ensure that the desired flavour, colour and other characteristics to be imparted by the seasoning are retained in the end product. The supplies must also have clear information about the other ingredients to which the seasoning will be exposed in order to assess the possibility of interactions that may alter the end product, or have impact upon its shelf-life. These factors influence the choice of seasoning components, developmental time required, and ultimately costs, and are therefore integral to the supplier selection process.

6.2.2 Development of new product concepts

Supplier performance during the development cycle is totally dependent on the quality and depth of the initial brief, or initial product specification. The amount of development time that a supplier will invest in a new product is determined by the potential reward that the organisation will receive for this new product, and for the totality of products being produced, or hoped for, with the specific customer. The customer, therefore, should be aware of the relative value of the potential order(s) to the supplier, and the availability and scope of the supplier's development resources (facilities and personnel).

Part of the process will involve negotiations between customer and supplier to determine who will be responsible for development costs. This, in turn, is related to the degree of protection desired by the customer for exclusivity or in terms of product uniqueness. Most suppliers provide development services but are naturally inclined to invest heavily only when the potential return is deemed significant and justifiable against the