Mexico: Church’s health food branch launches new soy drink

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ADRA board studies agency s reorganization

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April 8, 2011 - Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico...Genaro Corral/IAD Staff

Alimentos Colpac, one of 15 health food branches in the Inter-American Division (IAD) based in Mexico launched its first liquid soy drink recently during a special ceremony in Guadalajara. The launch attracted health food managers and representatives from the American Soybean Association, Mexican Association of Soy Products as well as the international soy ingredient supplier company called Solae.

"I am very pleased that Alimentos Colpac has come to this special moment, marking a key moment in the history of the company, becoming the first branch of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Inter-America to be the first to have the liquid soy milk," said Joel Zukovski, General Manager of the Inter-American Health Food Company during the event, which took place at the Camino Real Hotel.

The soy drink, which is part of the Soyapac line of products made by Colpac and its four food factories in Mexico, is packaged in a Tetra Pak package. Tetra Pak is a Swedish company and world leader in multinational food processing and packaging.

The new product was also displayed at Mexico's national ANTAD Expo, one of the largest food products expos in Latin America. More than 50,000 buyers, managers and distributors were able to come in contact with the new product during the four-day exhibit Mar. 8-11, 2011.

Testing, researching, and marketing the new product was arduous work, said Jose Flores, manager of Colpac.

"It's wonderful to see this dream come true after spending more than two years testing the market, the taste and nutrition elements to come to this fine Soyapac product," Flores said.

The new Soyapac drink contains 1.8 times more calcium than cow's milk, contains omega 3 and 6, is fortified with vitamins and minerals and is cholesterol and lactose free.

As part of the new Soyapac launch, Colpac held a series of activities with a special mascot and games for over 500 children and their families in the city during the weekend of the event.

With only weeks of being officially in the market, Colpac leaders said preliminary sale figures show that the new drink is selling well in several supermarket chains. Plans are underway to reach other national supermarket chains in Mexico.

Other branches in Trinidad and Central America are already doing market research to introduce the new soy milk drink, Zukovski added.

Established more than 50 years ago, Colpac is the largest operating food company in Inter-America with more than 9 million dollars in sales last year. For decades, Colpac has been a leading seller of soy milk powder among other products.

For more information on Colpac and its products, visit www.colpac.com.mx

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The February action sparked comment across ADRA's far-flung international operation and its in-building staff, as well as with some church leaders and lay members. On March 23, ADRA board's top leaders Chairman Geoffrey Mbwana and Vice Chair Ella Simmons -- both vice presidents of the denomination -- indicated the directors would review the recent reorganization at the April 6 meeting.

"After much prayer and deliberation about the future of ADRA and its ministry, the board of directors voted to receive ADRA President Rudi Maier's report on the recent changes and will continue to move forward and work with management in the development of the strategic mission of ADRA," a statement released by the agency said in part.

In the statement, Mbwana said ADRA's "administration and the board do not anticipate any further staff reductions in the foreseeable future."

He added, "The board of directors takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that the Agency operates with utmost transparency and integrity in all matters. As ADRA moves forward, we want to provide the staff all the necessary resources to help meet the needs of the millions of vulnerable women, children, and men around the world whom we serve."

The report was received during an eight-hour board of directors meeting in which Adventist Church president and ADRA board member Ted N. C. Wilson participated. The 37-member ADRA board includes 12 of the world church's 13 division presidents, and other Adventist leaders with experience in overseas development projects.

Presentation of the report took 90 minutes, with the remaining time devoted to a discussion of the report and other board matters, Mbwana said. A financial report was due to be presented, Mbwana said after the meeting, but time did not permit it. ADRA spokesman John Torres said the agency would release an audited financial statement in June 2011.

The board meeting was followed by a session between Mbwana and Simmons with approximately 40 ADRA employees. The meeting, which was closed to reporters, saw the staffers wearing large, yellow buttons reading "I am ADRA. Committed to our agency."

In speaking with reporters from Adventist Review and Adventist News Network, Simmons noted that the board established two committees: one is a working committee to "consider the defining elements of ADRA" and the other a standing committee to oversee the group's bylaws.

Mbwana said new bylaws committee was deemed "appropriate" by the board since ADRA is "a dynamic organization."