

Because Bo Jackson's life is public, his products are under a magnifying glass even more than other private labels.

# Bo Jackson Signature Foods

When you've been named ESPN's Greatest Athlete of All Time, and you decide to put your name on a product, you want to ensure that it is of a caliber worthy of that name — not only in quality and taste, but also in sustainability. How do you do that? *Bo knows*. (For more on Bo Jackson's personal attention to products on which he puts his name, see *QA's* cover profile, *Bo Knows Meat* at <http://bit.ly/2m9C1Q6>.)

"It is extremely important to me and my team that all of our manufacturer partners not only have the capabilities to

produce a quality product for my Bo Jackson Signature Foods line, but that they also have the similar business ethics as we do at VEJ Holdings," Jackson said. Jensen Meat of San Diego, Calif., for example, "has a very robust sustainability policy and is shown in multiple facets of their company," he said.

Additionally, having spent the last 30 years giving back to the community, he said, "Philanthropy is not only a part of our company, but it is a part of me. We decided to create a social responsibility pro-

gram under my private label; we are in the midst of rolling out the program and have chosen several community tie-ins related to two sectors: military veterans and school-based nutritional programs, both from a national and local perspective."

Jackson's company requires a lot from its suppliers. "I have personally visited each and every one of my suppliers' plants and their corporate offices and met, not only their executives, but everyone from shipping to QC to the CEO and everyone in between, which is just as important to me as the number of audits and/or certifications that they have passed or have. I want to know who they are as business people; do they have the same principals or ethics that I have," he said.

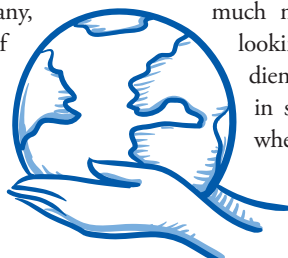
Jackson strongly believes that customers care about the sustainability of the company's product, processes and/or supply chain. "In fact, with the advances of technology, to include the Internet, customers are so much more engaged in looking up the ingredients that are used in specific products, where the product

is produced, or where the ingredients came from. So it is important to be transparent. Period." he said, adding, "Then you add in the fact that I am celebrity, well, that is another level of complexity that only others in my shoes can understand."

Because his life is public, Jackson's products are under a magnifying glass even more than other private labels, and they are compared to other celebrity-created or celebrity-endorsed products. "The one difference about my food line versus other products I have endorsed over the last 30 years, is that I personally worked with our manufacturers to create new innovative products that I wanted to create, or chosen blends that made sense for my brand," he said.

As such, he is not simply "endorsing" other people's products, he said, he "created" his products. "It was a labor of love, from the ideation stage to prototyping to bench samples to final production samples, and then every call or meeting thereafter."

When asked what the maxim "One World. One Health. One Future." means to his company, Jackson said, "As a celebrity, as a family man, and as an entrepreneur, it is important that the legacy that I leave goes far beyond what I did on the baseball or football fields. 'One World. One Health. One Future' — now that is six powerful words



and that is related to what I have said many times, ‘Set your goals high, and don’t stop till you get there.’” It is the company’s mantra every time it hits a roadblock in staying true to its core values, which are not always the least

expensive route or even that which others would take. “In my life, it isn’t even possible for me not to think of life as One World. One Health. One Future,” he said.

Every day the number of cus-

tomers who are looking for sustainable solutions grow, and that is at the top of everyone’s mind who is a part of the Bo Jackson Signature Food brand, he said. “That is one of the reasons I enjoy what I do: It is the chal-

lenge of doing what we did an hour ago even better the next time, because someone else with another company and/or brand has already improved upon what we just did and is challenging us to be better or to do more.”

## Jensen Meat

### JENSEN MEAT PRODUCES BO JACKSON'S LINE OF BEEF BURGERS, BO'S BURGERS.

“Sustainability is ultimately about making more efficient use of resources, and cutting waste – not only for the good of the earth and society, it’s also good business practice,” said Jensen Meat President and CEO Abel Olivera. “We try to be strategic about how we do this, so that our company can do its part within the larger picture of our children’s future and the planet they’re going to inherit.”

Recycling is an obvious part of Jensen’s sustainability initiatives, but there are others that affect the company, such as employee engagement, supply chain practices, operational efficiency, resource consumption and waste, philanthropy, packaging, and facility design. When Jensen renovated and moved into a new facility, it asked its marketing company, Designapolis, to translate the Bo’s Burgers brand to the offices. “Wherever possible, they considered environmental consciousness into the sourcing, design, and production decisions they made,” Olivera said. For example, to reduce indoor pollution, low VOC paint was used for the office walls; FLOR tiles, which are made from 100% recycled fibers and are 95% manufactured in the U.S., were used to reduce the carbon footprint of importing products from overseas.

Another example of Jensen’s initiatives is Green Marketing & Reduced Motor Vehicle Pollution: To emphasize its commitment to sustainability, the company added a brand-wrapped, cutting-edge electric Toyota Prius to its fleet. “Dubbed the Jensenmobile, our VP of executive accounts drives it daily in



her two-hour commute and sponsored events. It’s a tangible silent way we show our commitment to environmental sustainability,” he said.

The company measures its sustainability actions and success through key indicators, including reduction of operating costs and increased asset value; water and energy conservation; safe, healthy, and productive work environments; reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and reduced waste sent to landfills.

Jensen also ensures its own suppliers follow sustainability practices. For example, with the growing demand in the U.S. for grass-fed beef, Jensen conducted a great deal of research, then partnered with Montana’s non-profit American Prairie Reserve (APR). Through APR, Jensen helps support wildlife-friendly ranching and large-scale conservation while being provided with access to domestic, naturally-raised, grass-fed beef for its restaurants, retail outlets, and food distributors.

“Jensen’s business model thrives on transparency – from the ranch to consumers’ tables, so working with ranchers dedicated to raising non-grain-fed, steroid-free cattle in the Great Plains is a natural fit,” Olivera

said. “It’s a real win-win for ranchers and conservation as well as our customers, who get great-tasting beef they can feel extra good about consuming.”

Jensen sees a rapidly growing group of consumers looking to buy sustainable solutions, and it expects them to read labels, ask questions about what’s in its patties, and use the Internet to compare products. As such, the company promotes its sustainability actions to consumers through some of its Green Marketing on product packaging, advertising, social media, etc. “We believe in transparency and in giving them all the information they need so they can make informed decisions about what they purchase and ultimately feed their families,” Olivera said. “We look to see how we can provide them with environmentally superior products and a greater view of our company’s environmental impact.”

Additionally, he said, “We do it because we believe it’s the ethical thing to do; yet we’re careful because customers are smart and can smell ‘Greenwash.’ Some of our products come in packaging that uses an environmental friendly green color and says ‘grass-fed, grass-finished and hormone-free,’ but at the end of the day, it’s about giving shoppers what they want. It’s not just about using the latest buzzwords because that alone won’t make it environmentally or socially responsible and our customers will know this,” he explained.

“Ultimately, sustainability is about adding value to our business with people, planet, and sound business decisions in mind,” Olivera said.