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Sadler's Smokehouse Goes National

Innovative post-acquisition strategy paying off despite recession and category declines

(FRISCO, Texas) – Texas-based [Sadler's Smokehouse, Ltd.](#) announces it has doubled its distribution in 2009 and expanded into a national company since its 2007 acquisition by [Wholesome Holdings Group, LLC](#) and [Brazos Private Equity Partners, LLC](#).

A combination of new leadership, marketing strategy and packaging investment enabled the once regional company to bring its high quality smoked meats, dinners and other products to more than 7,200 retail stores nationwide, despite the recession that has driven the fully cooked category down eight percent recently.

Company leaders credit the growth to added marketing focus, teamwork with legacy management, key operational investments and a resistance to product development shortcuts and other cost-cutting methods more common with private equity acquisitions.

“When we joined forces with Harold Sadler and the Sadler family in 2007, we were attracted to the family’s top quality product and the widening consumer appeal of premium pit smoked meats and barbecue,” said Wholesome Holdings Chairman and CEO Terry O’Brien. “In the last two years, we’ve worked together to build an industry-leading team devoted to building the brand through innovation, national expansion and continual improvement.”

O’Brien, who agreed to step in as CEO at Sadler's, credits three key moves for unlocking the rapid distribution expansion. First, he and founder Harold Sadler invested countless long evenings before the acquisition discussing their views on how to run a company that consistently met extremely high standards for quality, customer service, food safety and value for today’s consumer. “Terry cuts no corners on the important things like quality,” said Harold Sadler.

Secondly, the pair committed to a \$2.5 million packaging investment to increase shelf life and provide an added layer of food safety most fully cooked food suppliers cannot offer. “I credit Brazos and our Board of Directors for supporting this investment immediately after our deal closed. Most private equity partners would not be so supportive so early on,” says O’Brien.

Lastly, O’Brien added key management members from top consumer companies such as Smithfield, ConAgra and Schwan’s, all handpicked to fit in with the existing expert team and family culture. New products were carefully researched in advance of development then honed to meet Sadler's high standards. Sadler’s broker network coverage was expanded from 4 states to 48 states and fully integrated with Sadler's marketing team.

“Our success has allowed us to turn our attention to making Sadler’s Smokehouse a much larger platform company and continue pursuing new acquisitions,” said O’Brien, who is recruiting a new CEO to allow him to move to Chairman of Sadler’s’ operating company. “As the credit markets ease and our brand expands, we see numerous acquisition opportunities. The key components will remain our people, our quality and our innovative approach. We believe we will be a winner in this marketplace.”

(more)

About Sadler's Smokehouse, Ltd.

Sadler's Smokehouse, Ltd. produces premium, pit smoked meats. Sadler's branded brisket, ribs, pork and turkey are prepared using the same pit smoking technique developed by the Sadler family in 1948 – up to 16 hours over natural hardwood coals. Sadler's meats, side dishes and other barbecue-related food items are distributed nationwide through major grocery retailers, foodservice distributors, national chain restaurants and other branded food processors. For more information visit www.sadlerssmokehouse.com.

About Wholesome Holdings Group, LLC

Since 2006, Wholesome Holdings Group, LLC together with partner Brazos Private Equity Partners has been one of the most active middle market acquirers in the food sector. Founded by veteran CEO Terry O'Brien, Wholesome Holdings Group combines strong equity and lender backing with real world operating expertise. The company has developed a reputation for working with legacy management teams on new strategies to push past temporary growth obstacles. Sometimes additional investments or add on acquisitions are required. The Wholesome Holdings Group family of companies includes Sadler's Smokehouse, Golden County Foods, Impact Confections and Melster Candies. For more information visit www.wholesomeholdings.com.

About Brazos Private Equity Partners, LLC

Brazos Private Equity Partners, LLC, is a Dallas-based private investment firm that specializes in leveraged acquisitions and recapitalizations of established, profitable companies with strong and proven management teams, predictable cash flows and significant growth potential. Brazos partners with management teams to invest in consumer, distribution, financial services, healthcare, manufacturing and media businesses. Since inception, Brazos has completed more than forty acquisitions representing in excess of \$1.5 billion in value. For additional information about Brazos, please visit the firm's website at www.brazosinv.com.

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