

# WHOLE FOODS, whole people

**W**hole Foods Market is the largest natural food retailer in the world with more than 360 stores and approximately \$12 billion in annual sales. With operations located primarily in the United States and also in Canada and the United Kingdom, Whole Foods sells natural and organic food products that include produce, meat, poultry, seafood, grocery products, baked and prepared goods, many drinks such as beer and wine, cheese, floral products, and pet products. The origin of the company dates to 1978 when John Mackey and his girlfriend used \$45,000 in borrowed funds to start a small natural food store then named SaferWay. The store was located in Austin, Texas. John and his girlfriend lived in the space over the store (without a shower) because they were "kicked out" of their apartment for storing food products in it.

In 1980, Mackey developed a partnership with Craig Weller and Mark Skiles, merging SaferWay with Weller's and Skiles's Clarksville Natural Grocer to create the Whole Foods Market. Its first store opened in 1980 with 12,500 square feet and

19 employees. This was a very large health food store relative to others at that time. There was a devastating flood in Austin within a year of its opening and the store was heavily damaged.

Much of its inventory was ruined and its equipment was damaged. The total losses were approximately \$400,000, and the company had no insurance. Interestingly, customers and neighbors helped the staff of the store to repair and clean up the damage. Creditors, vendors, and investors all partnered to help the store reopen only 28 days after the flood. With their assistance, Whole Foods survived this devastating natural disaster.

Whole Foods started to expand in 1984 when it opened its first store outside of Austin. The new store was located in Houston, followed by another store in Dallas and one in New Orleans. It also began acquiring other companies that sold natural foods, which helped to increase its expansion into new areas of the United States. In 2007, it expanded into international markets by opening its first Whole Foods branded store in London, England. (In 2004, it acquired a small natural foods company in the United Kingdom, Fresh & Wild, but did not

**WHOLE  
FOODS<sup>®</sup>**  
M A R K E T

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