RUTGERS FOOD INNOVATION CENTER TO HOST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF FOOD BUSINESS INCUBATORS

FoodBIN 2008 Program to be Held in Partnership with Community Food Security Coalition National Conference on October 4-8, 2008 in Cherry Hill, NJ

Bridgeton, NJ - The Rutgers Food Innovation Center will host a major international conference and networking forum on best practices in food business incubation from October 4 through 8, 2008 in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Food Business Incubation Network 2008, or FoodBIN 2008, will attract a multitude of domestic and international government and university organizations, as well as community non-profits to New Jersey. Attendees will also be able to benefit from the 2008 national conference of the Community Food Security Coalition, which will be held concurrently.

Lou Cooperhouse, director of the Rutgers Food Innovation Center, stated “The FoodBIN conference has become the world's leading venue for advancing best practices in food business incubation, and for providing tools for entrepreneurship that benefit farmers, cooperatives and early-stage companies within regional economies.” Cooperhouse also added, “This conference provides great value to university, government and other private and public sector professionals with the information, education, advocacy and networking resources that are critically-needed by local food and agribusiness companies.” Andy Fisher, executive director of the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC), said “We are extremely excited to partner with the Rutgers Food Innovation Center and the FoodBIN network of incubator organizations, who will realize great synergy by attending our 12th Annual CFSC conference.” Fisher added, “The prior CFSC conference attracted almost 1,000 individuals who received tremendous value from the many topics of interest related to issues of importance to the food and agribusiness industry, including best practices in poverty alleviation and food sustainability.”

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This is the sixth annual conference for the Food Business Incubation Network. The first FoodBIN conference occurred in September 2002, and was also hosted by the Rutgers Food Innovation Center, which developed the concept for this network of food and agribusiness incubators. Due to the tremendous success and interest for this event, subsequent conferences were held in 2003 at Cornell University, 2004 at SUNY Morrisville, 2005 at Oregon State University, and 2007 at Iowa State University.

The Rutgers Food Innovation Center is a unique business incubation and economic development accelerator program, which provides business and technology expertise to small and mid-sized food and agribusinesses in New Jersey, and utilizes its outreach capacity to reach the food industry throughout the nation. Business and technology expertise has been provided to over 800 clients to date, that include farmers and cooperatives, startup food companies, existing small and mid-sized food establishments, and retail and foodservice markets that seek to purchase locally supplied products. The center is an off-campus research center of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

FoodBIN and CFSC conference attendees will be invited to visit the Rutgers Food Innovation Center’s new 23,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art incubator facility, located in Bridgeton, N.J. This new incubator facility, which will be completed during the summer of 2008, will greatly expand the Center’s capabilities and enable the design, development, marketing, analysis, commercialization, and ongoing manufacture of products for sale to retail and foodservice markets. The business incubator facility will enable new companies to be formed, and provide a vast array of resources and technologies to existing food and agribusiness companies as well.

After only seven years in operation, the Rutgers Food Innovation Center has been internationally and nationally recognized for its effective economic development efforts. It has been recognized as:

- The “Incubator of the Year” by the National Business Incubation Association, in the services and manufacturing category, among incubators globally in 2007.
- An “Innovative Program Model” by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, in which it received a Partnership Award in 2007, for “achievement as a model for community and economic development and jobs creation”

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• An “Agricultural Innovation Center Demonstration Program” by USDA Rural Development. The USDA awarded this designation to only ten centers in the US, based upon a “demonstrated track record of achieving value-added successes through its use of highly-qualified and experienced personnel, a well developed work plan with an emphasis on economic development and a commitment to community partnerships.”

The FoodBIN 2008 conference will run concurrently with the annual conference of the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC), enabling attendees to gain a wide array of valuable information for their constituents. The CFSC is a North American organization of social and economic justice, environmental, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, community development, labor, anti-poverty, anti-hunger, and other groups. The Coalition has 325 organizational members in 41 states, four Canadian provinces and the District of Columbia. It is dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food to all people at all times. It also seeks to develop self-reliance among all communities in obtaining their food and to create a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, and distributing foods that are regionally based and grounded in the principles of sustainability.

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