NEWS RELEASE

New Jersey Incubation Leader Elected to Board of International Association

BRIDGETON, N.J.—Lou Cooperhouse, director of the Rutgers Food Innovation Center (FIC) in Bridgeton, N.J., has been elected to the board of directors of the National Business Incubation Association (NBIA). His three-year term begins Oct. 1.

A 16-member voting board of directors, made up of representatives from leading business incubation programs worldwide, governs NBIA, an Athens, Ohio-based organization advancing business incubation and entrepreneurship around the world. NBIA estimates that there are about 7,000 business incubators and small business support centers globally, including over 1,400 in North America.

“I would like to further opportunities in which business incubators can create synergy in their operations and services through domestic and international collaborations, particularly among incubators that are focused on the food and agribusiness sectors,” Cooperhouse said. “I believe this particular industry cluster will see some dramatic growth in the years ahead, as food business incubation is increasingly recognized as a catalyst for regional economic development and a means for combating food poverty and malnutrition, and creating higher-paying jobs for farmers and food industry entrepreneurs.”
Established in 2001, the Rutgers FIC has served more than 800 clients throughout New Jersey under the leadership of Cooperhouse and his staff, who have secured over $12 million in grants since the Center’s inception. Under construction is a 23,000-square-foot, fully grant-funded facility in Bridgeton N.J., scheduled to open this summer. This new business incubator facility will expand its capabilities and enable the design, development, marketing, analysis, commercialization, and ongoing manufacture of products for sale to retail and foodservice markets.

In 2007, the FIC, an off-campus research and extension center of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, received NBIA’s Incubator of the Year award in the services and manufacturing category, among business incubators globally.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (USDA CSREES) has recognized the Food Innovation Center as a national “Innovative Program Model,” in which it received the USDA CSREES Partnership Award for “achievement as a model for community and economic development and jobs creation.” The USDA Rural Development has also recognized the Center as an “Agricultural Innovation Center Demonstration Program,” one of 10 such centers with this designation in the U.S. Furthermore, in May 2007, the Food Innovation Center was the recipient of The Rutgers Presidential Award for Research in Service to New Jersey for “contributions to the health and economic well-being of communities across New Jersey.”

Business incubation programs like the Food Innovation Center catalyze the process of starting and growing companies by providing entrepreneurs with the expertise, networks and tools they need to make their ventures successful. NBIA estimates that in 2005 alone, North American incubators assisted more than 27,000 start-up companies that provided
full-time employment for more than 100,000 workers and generated annual revenue of more than $17 billion.

Five years ago, Cooperhouse organized the first international conference of food business incubators. This conference will be held again in New Jersey, Oct. 4-8, 2008, in collaboration with the annual conference of the Community Food Security Coalition. More information can be found at http://foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/FoodBIN.html.

Cooperhouse is actively involved with the New Jersey Business Incubation Network, serving as its president in 2005-2006. In addition, he currently serves on the Board of Directors of the New Jersey Food Processors Association and on the Editorial Advisory Board of Fresh Cut magazine, and was appointed recently to the New Jersey-Israel Commission. An NBIA member since 2002, Cooperhouse has made presentations at three NBIA conferences.

Established in 1985, NBIA provides industry professionals with information, education, advocacy and networking resources to bring excellence to the process of assisting early-stage companies. The association provides thousands of professionals with the information, education, advocacy and networking resources to bring excellence to the process of assisting early-stage companies. Further information can be found at http://www.nbia.org.

Further information about the Rutgers Food Innovation Center can be found at http://www.foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/.

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