

## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **RUTGERS FOOD INNOVATION CENTER ANNOUNCES INDUSTRY PARTNERS PROGRAM**

Food Industry Equipment to be Demonstrated in New Food Business Incubator

Bridgeton, NJ-- The Rutgers Food Innovation Center, a globally recognized food business incubation and economic development accelerator program, has created a *Food Industry Partners Program*. The program will enable food equipment suppliers and service providers to showcase their capabilities and technologies to hundreds of food businesses, who will be clients at the center's new food business incubator facility opening in July 2008. This university-based food incubator facility is the first of its kind in the country.

"Our Food Industry Partners Program will provide outstanding opportunities for suppliers of food preparation and processing equipment, in addition to providers of services and supplies to the food industry," said Lou Cooperhouse, director of the Food Innovation Center. "This agreement is a win-win situation because it is minimizing our cost of providing a wide variety of processing innovations for our many client companies, while providing industry suppliers with a unique opportunity to demonstrate their equipment and capabilities within our new USDA and FDA inspected food business incubator facility."

The Food Innovation Center provides business and technology expertise to food and agribusinesses in New Jersey and throughout the nation. Since 2001, these services have been provided to over 800 client companies, which include domestic and international food manufacturers and marketers, farmers and cooperatives, startup food companies and entrepreneurs, and retail and foodservice markets.

The Center is constructing its 23,000 sq. ft. incubator in Bridgeton, New Jersey, located in the hub of New Jersey's food processing and agricultural products industry, and within a six hour drive of approximately 60 million consumers. The new incubator will greatly expand its capabilities and enable the design, development, marketing, analysis, commercialization, and ongoing manufacture of products for sale to retail and foodservice markets. It will enable new companies to be formed, and provide a vast array of resources and technologies to existing food and agribusiness companies as well.

The new business incubator facility will house a unique spectrum of capabilities, all under one roof, supported by food industry professionals from the Food Innovation Center, resources from throughout Rutgers University, and strategic partners from across the nation. It will include a product development test kitchen, sensory analysis center, microbiology and chemistry analytical laboratories, distance learning education capabilities, market research and focus group observation capabilities, product commercialization capabilities, and a complete production area for shared-used food processing. Processing equipment will enable the production of a wide array of value-added products including precut fruits and vegetables, salad mixes, soups, sauces, jams, jellies, salsas, dips, spreads, salad dressings, sandwiches, side dishes, beverages, baked desserts, breads, cookies, dehydrated products, and cooked meat, poultry and seafood entrees. Clients will have access to state-of-the-art food processing and laboratory equipment that can be rented very inexpensively.

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“A full spectrum of processors will benefit from the incubator, from startups in need of basic small-scale processing capacity to sophisticated businesses in need of pilot or test market processing for the development of new products,” said Cooperhouse. “The small operator will gain access to equipment and services they could not likely afford to develop or buy on their own, and larger processors will be able to minimize their capital risks associated with new products and processes in test market, scale up or commercialization phases.”

Specific benefits of the Food Industry Partners Program include:

- . The Food Innovation Center incubator facility will serve as a “demonstration site” for the partner company:
  - Clients of the Food Innovation Center will become familiar with the partner company’s equipment, supplies or services, and will potentially desire to continue utilizing this once they have “graduated” from the incubator facility. Over 200 clients are anticipated to use the Food Innovation Center facility during the first three years.
  - The partner company would have the ability to bring in their own clients to use the equipment at the Food Innovation Center, who can potentially commercialize and market test products in the Center’s USDA and FDA inspected facility.
- . The partner company would have the ability to provide education and training on equipment use, sanitation, and R&D to clients of the Food Innovation Center. Complimentary office space will be available for this purpose on a monthly basis
- . Food Innovation Center staff and others from its resource network would be available to conduct scientific and applied research and coauthor articles with the partner company, if needed. This may include, for example, testing the sensory acceptability of various cooking procedures, testing the microbial reduction of various processing or sanitation procedures, testing the shelf life extension of various packaging options, etc.
- . The Food Innovation Center will issue a press release regarding each Food Industry Partner agreement, that would be posted on its website, detailing the specific equipment and/or services that have been made available to Rutgers, and identifying other equipment/services that the Partner company offers
- . Sales literature of the partner company will be made available in the Food Innovation Center’s resource library and available to its clients
- . The name of each Food Industry Partner will be acknowledged on a plaque in the lobby of the Food Innovation Center, and will be recognized at the center’s grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony, which will occur in September/October of 2008.

After only 7 years in operation, the Rutgers Food Innovation Center has been internationally recognized for its effective economic development efforts. During 2007, it was recognized as:

“Incubator of the Year” by the National Business Incubation Association (NBIA), in the services and manufacturing category, among incubators globally. The NBIA estimates that there are over 5,000 business incubators and small business support centers worldwide.

An “Innovative Program Model” by the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), in which it received a Partnership Award for “achievement as a model for community and economic development and jobs creation”

Previously, the Rutgers Food Innovation Center was recognized by USDA Rural Development as an “Agricultural Innovation Center Demonstration Program,” one of only ten centers with this designation in the United States. Center staff are invited to speak at about 10-20 regional and national presentations each year, as the Center has become a national model for regional economic development.

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The Food Innovation Center is an economic development outreach center of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. It has received funding from a diverse array of federal, state, and community agencies, demonstrating the tremendously strong support for the Center. This includes the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, United States Department of Agriculture, United States Economic Development Administration, State of New Jersey, New Jersey Casino Reinvestment Development Authority, New Jersey Commission on Science & Technology, New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Cumberland Empowerment Zone, and the City of Bridgeton, New Jersey.

More information about the Rutgers Food Innovation Center and its capabilities can be found at <http://foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/>. Information regarding its new 23,000 sq. ft. incubator facility can be found at <http://foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/incubatoroverview.html>

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