



Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Remarks by Lou Cooperhouse – October 17, 2008

Introductory Remarks

Welcome to the brand new home of the Rutgers Food Innovation Center! Today we celebrate the grand opening of our 23,000 sq. ft. business incubator and food processing facility. We are so thankful to so many of you, who have been with us *every step* of the way, so that this day would finally come. My name is Lou Cooperhouse, and I am the Director of the Rutgers Food Innovation Center

Today marks the culmination of an idea that began about 10 years ago. An idea about a new and novel program of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station – for the creation of a Center that would serve as a catalyst for economic growth to food and agricultural businesses in our state. The timing for such a Center couldn't happen soon enough. New Jersey is now recognized as the most urbanized state in the country. And over the past few decades, the South Jersey region, in particular, has been economically hard hit --- due to loss of farmland to development, high labor costs, high fuel costs, regulatory obstacles, and many other issues. Furthermore, it has become increasingly complex for food and agricultural industries to compete today, as significant industry consolidation has occurred, buying decisions are no longer made locally, consumers are demanding increasingly differentiated and innovative products, and large competitors have only gotten larger. Addressing the needs of the agricultural and food industries is key to the economic well-being of South Jersey, and the entire state, as the entire food and agricultural sector is an \$82 billion business in New Jersey.

We created the Food Innovation Center over 7 years ago to make such a difference, and we opened with rented office space located less than a mile away from here. Early on, we conducted an extensive feasibility study to better understand industry needs, and develop our first incubator strategy. We subsequently conducted a national benchmarking study, via a team of MBA students from the Rutgers Business School Team Consulting Program in Newark, so that we could learn about best practices, programs and services that we should offer to our clients, and means in which we could ultimately become financially self-sustaining. Early on, we also created an Advisory Board, led by our chairman Al Murray of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. Our Board included an outstanding team of leaders from federal, state, and community agencies, as well as leadership from each of the various agricultural sectors in our state, food industry trade associations, and representation from our clients as well.

With this resource network in place, which we continually broaden, we've been able to provide assistance to over 1,000 companies and entrepreneurs since 2001, located in every county of New Jersey. We've also begun to attract domestic and international companies that are looking to come to New Jersey to establish their businesses, primarily because of the services of our Center.



Our clients have included farmers, who we've diligently assisted with exploratory feasibility studies, and the actual creation of new businesses based on value-added agricultural products. Our clients have also included food startups, and we've helped these entrepreneurs with their challenges, such as market research, financing, technology, regulations, sales development, and other infrastructure requirements. In addition, our clients have included established food companies, who are seeking to enter new markets, introduce new products and processes, access new technologies, upgrade quality assurance capabilities, and expand and improve their operations. And recently, we have also begun to target retail and Food Service Establishments as well, including farmers markets throughout the state, so that we can identify new opportunities for the food and agricultural industry to get direct access to the market, and identify new opportunities for the marketplace so that it can better source local products that consumers are seeking.

We are very pleased that our Center has been nationally and internationally recognized for our efforts, even without this tremendous facility which you see here today. This recognition includes an award we received last year from the NBIA – the National Business Incubation Association – in which our Center was named the “Incubator of the Year” in the services and manufacturing category. The NBIA is an organization that represents the approximately 7,000 business incubators that exist worldwide.

But now, with this new facility, our program can go to a critically-needed new phase, as we desperately need the physical space in which we can help our clients with so many of their requirements. Our new 23,000 sq. ft. business incubator and food processing facility will greatly expand our capabilities and enable the design, development, marketing, analysis, commercialization, and ongoing manufacture of food products for sale to retail and foodservice markets. This facility will be USDA- and FDA-inspected and enable the production of a variety of value-added agricultural and food products, such as fresh-cut vegetables and fruits in convenient consumer packaging, soups, sauces, jams, jellies, beverages,... pies, cakes, breads, and seasoning blends..., and entrees and side dishes. It is comprised of distinct shared-use processing and packaging areas, as well as blast chilling and freezing, and finished good storage in the refrigerated, frozen, and ambient states. We look forward to showing these capabilities to you, as we will have guided and self-guided tours at the conclusion of this event.

Our new facility contains an array of services and capabilities, which we believe is unlike any other incubator anywhere. In this new facility, which cost almost \$8 million to build, we can assist farmers, startups, and established food companies through every aspect of their business process, literally from concept... to commercialization. This enables a company to go to the marketplace and prove the viability of their business idea with little to no capital expenditures of their own. Our a la carte services can be utilized for business or consumer research, new product or process development, sensory analysis, microbiological and analytical chemistry testing, and ongoing food processing. Clients simply pay for the services that they need, and plant processing fees are based on a minimum usage of just one day, and are dependent on the equipment and services that will be needed by the client. We will begin serving clients starting next month.



Before I conclude this introduction to our Center, I want to thank the most important people that have led to our success - our Food Innovation Center team. This is the most amazing and outstanding team of professionals, who bring tremendous industry knowledge from a broad array of disciplines. This team is so entrepreneurial themselves – and has worn so many hats as our Center has evolved to where it is today, and we are all prepared to take FIC to the next plateau. Our full-time employees, who I'll list in order of their longevity with our Center, includes Bernadette Gill, Diane Holtaway and Julie Elmer, who started on the same day, Sho Islam, Regina Plaire, Dianne Carbonetta, and Bruce Masters. Our team also includes Tom Orton, a Professor in Plant Science and part of our Rutgers Cooperative Extension network. In addition, our team includes a number of part-time professionals that we utilize, including George Sansiveri, Carol Coren, Beth Feehan, Bonne Blader, Donna Schaffner, Casey Roberts, and Willie Robbins. I'd also like to acknowledge Anne Ingegno and Pat Bzdek, who have so helpful to us with our many administrative needs, from their offices up in New Brunswick. We're also excited that we have partnered with Woodstown High School, and are about to begin a partnership with Bridgeton High School, to provide experiential learning opportunities primarily to high school seniors, who are assisting us with our many business and technical needs.

And of course, a very special and key member of our team is Margaret (also known as Peggy) Brennan-Tonetta, who is Director of Economic Development at the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, and who has the longest tenure with the Food Innovation Center, as she is a founder of this program and has been with this program from its very beginning. Peggy will be introducing each of the speakers in our program, so you'll have the opportunity to hear from her shortly. Peggy and/or I have also authored every capital grant and almost every operating grant that our Center has received to date. We're pleased to say that this has resulted in over \$11million in grants we've received, from over 25 individual applications, which occurred primarily over the past 5 years. We're pleased to say, that with a great deal of perseverance, this facility was constructed entirely with grants, and carries no debt.

Our FIC team has made such a difference in the businesses and in the lives of so many of our clients. If you don't mind, can each of the team members whose name I mentioned please stand. Thank you team!

Our federal-state-community partnership is the reason that we are all here today, and we are so grateful. This partnership all begins with the tremendous vision, leadership, and support from Rutgers University and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. And now it is my pleasure to introduce Robert M. Goodman. Dr. Goodman is executive dean of agriculture and natural resources at Rutgers, the executive dean of the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, and he is also the executive director of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, which is the parent organization of the Food Innovation Center. In all of those roles, he has been a keen supporter of the Food Innovation Center and the construction of this new facility. We're extremely thankful for his support and I am delighted to introduce him today. Please welcome Dean Bob Goodman.



Introduction of Bridgeton Mayor Jim Begley

Thank you so much President McCormick. It is now my pleasure to introduce the other hosting organization for today's ceremony – the City of Bridgeton, New Jersey. We have had such tremendous support from the City of Bridgeton, which originated with Mayor Michael Pirolli and has continued on seamlessly with Mayor Jim Begley. We are fortunate to be in a city that has such a rich heritage in the food industry, and we are so pleased that Bridgeton has chosen to commemorate this park that we are in, which extends past the tree line and includes about 31 acres in total, as one of two Food Business Parks in the City. It is our goal that our clients that graduate from our Food Innovation Center will create new businesses in this park, in other parts of the City, and in the surrounding region. In fact, a national study conducted by the National Business Incubation Association demonstrated that 84% of all incubator graduates establish businesses in their community. It is now my pleasure to introduce Bridgeton Mayor Jim Begley.

Conclusion Speech

Next on our agenda is the ribbon cutting ceremony, which will be followed by a tour of our facility, which can be either guided by a member of our staff, or self-guided if your time is limited. Just inside our front door are maps and a facility description, and our staff will meet you there and we'll try to have tours leave about every 5 minutes. During your tour, please take time to notice in the conference room of our facility the wall that commemorates each of the 9 partner agencies that spoke to us today.

You will also notice a plaque on the wall, which will be used to honor donors of equipment to our facility. We are so grateful for the donations we've received thus far – this includes sophisticated air filtration equipment, which you will see in each processing room that has been donated by KES Science and Technology, and our entire sanitation infrastructure which was donated by the Rochester Midland Corporation. We look forward to other partnerships in the future, in which our Center can serve as a demonstration of best practices in the food industry.

Please enjoy the wonderful selection of foods from our Garden State, which originate from a number of the clients that we have served. Their names are listed on the menu inside your booklet, and we so thankful to each of them.

I'd like to next ask our speakers to join us for the ribbon cutting ceremony.

On behalf of Rutgers University and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, we would like to thank each of you for taking time out of your busy schedule today.