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---- CANADIAN FOOD COMPANIES NEED TO FIND NEW EXPORT MARKETS

Margaret Hudson, president & CEO, Burnbrae Farms

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PICTURED: Mayumi Bae, The Plant Based Workshop. Photo by Picnic Creative

Food Processor

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Food Processor

welcome

Publisher's Message

The Packaging World is Changing... and for the Better!



Smart packaging, connected packaging, digital packaging, Al-driven packaging are all terms we are hearing a lot more about these days. If those within the industry struggle to

articulate the distinctions, how can brands, retailers, and consumers be expected to grasp the possibilities?

As AI reshapes design, streamlines production, and unlocks new ways to engage consumers, the fundamental question remains: how does packaging become smarter and more meaningful? In an era of relentless technological advancement, few innovations hold as much disruptive potential as generative AI (GenAI). While industries have experienced waves of automation and AI-driven change, the design and packaging landscape now stands at a crossroads. The infusion of GenAl into design processes is set to revolutionise how packaging is conceived, developed, and brought to market.

Companies that are early adopters of AI-driven design processes stand to gain a significant competitive edge. Faster time-to-market, increased personalisation, and more efficient innovation cycles will allow businesses to stay ahead of rapidly shifting consumer demands. The packaging industry, where consumer experience and brand identity are increasingly tied to sustainable, eye-catching designs, is primed for this AI-driven disruption.

The future of packaging is about the seamless integration of the physical and the digital, automation and human touch, progress and responsibility. Technologies that assist consumers in navigating stores or making purchase decisions must be supported by thoughtful packaging design. Elements like store lighting, finishes, and QR code placement can enhance or hinder engagement.

Building on this, the seamless integration of technology into packaging isn't just about convenience — it's about ensuring accessibility for all.

The dynamics of design and sustainability are shifting significantly with increasing challenges such as supply chain disruptions and heightened consumer scrutiny and growing emphasis on efficiency and transparency in packaging design. As the focus on circular design becomes more prevalent, organisations are beginning to prioritise the reusability of their packaging - not only to enhance supply chain efficiency but also to align with consumer expectations in a circular economy.

Frank Yeo,

Food Processor

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Cover Photography: courtesy of Burnbrae Farms



Publisher: Western Food Processor Magazine is published four times a year by Mercury Publications Limited.

Head Office: 675 Berry Street, Unit L Winnipeg, Manitoba R3H1A7 Telephone (204) 954-2085 Fax (204) 954-2057 e-mail: mp@mercurvpublications..ca website: www.mercurypublications..ca

Associate Publications:

Eastern Hotelier Western Grocer Western Hotelier. Bar & Beverage Business, C-Store Canada, and Western Restaurant News

Financé par le gouvernement du Canada

Editorial: The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without written consent of publisher Photo credits not given unless requested in writing along with photo submission.

CPM Sales Agreement #40062509. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Dept 675 Berry Street, Unit L Winnipeg, Manitoba R3H 1A7 email: circulation@mercurypublications.ca

Annual subscription rate \$47.00

Printed in Canada

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A Major Step Toward Strengthening Canada's Eco-Friendly Supply Chain Amid Trade Uncertainty

Eco Guardian has opened its state-of-theart manufacturing facility in Ontario, set to be fully operational in Q4 2025. This strategic expansion enhances Eco Guardian's ability to produce high-quality, compostable, and recyclable paper cups and bowls in Canada, reducing dependency on foreign imports and reinforcing the 'Made in Canada' movement.



"With increasing global trade uncertainties, businesses across Canada are looking for reliable, locally sourced solutions," said Anil Abrol, president & CEO of Eco Guardian. "This new facility will ensure that Canadian businesses have direct access to high-quality, eco-friendly, Made-in-Canada packaging without the risk of cost increases due to tariffs and supply chain disruptions associated with overseas imports."

Eco Guardian's facility will produce 100% compostable and recyclable paper products, meeting the highest environmental standards. The company is committed to reducing carbon footprints by leveraging sustainable raw materials, cutting-edge manufacturing processes, and responsible sourcing practices.

In addition to paper cups and bowls, Eco Guardian's manufacturing facility will have the capability to produce custom-designed food packaging solutions. This includes burger boxes, fry boxes, paper trays, and more, catering to foodservice providers and retailers looking for environmentally friendly, Made-in-Canada alternatives.



Mercury Content in Tuna Can be Reduced with New Packaging Solution

Fish is a high-quality source of protein, containing omega-3 fatty acids and many other beneficial nutrients. However, the accumulation of toxic mercury also makes fish consumption a concern, of which tuna is particularly susceptible. Researchers from Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden have come up with a novel approach to packaging canned tuna infused in the water-based solution of amino acid cysteine. It was shown to remove up to 35 per cent of the accumulated mercury in canned tuna, significantly reducing human exposure to mercury via food.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mercury is one of the ten most harmful chemicals for humans. Exposure can damage the central nervous system, with fetuses and young children being particularly sensitive to the effects. That is why dietary recommendations for pregnant women advise caution with tuna consumption.

"Our study shows that there are alternative approaches to addressing mercury contamination in tuna, rather than just limiting consumption. Our goal is to improve food safety and contribute to enhanced human health, as well as to better utilise food that is currently under certain restrictions," says Mehdi Abdollahi, associate professor at the Department of Life Sciences at Chalmers and coordinator of a project called Detoxpak.

The concept of so-called active packaging is to develop materials, for example a liquid inside a can, that interact with food during storage for instance, to increase the shelf life. However, this concept has never previously been used to improve food safety.



Mehdi Abdollahi

In a previous study, the researchers investigated the possibility of coating packages with thiolated silica to capture mercury from canned fish. What they observed, was that the forces binding the mercury within the tuna tissue prevented it from being released.

Proteins in tuna tissues, particularly sulfur-containing amino acids, strongly bind and accumulate mercury due to the strong interactions involving thiol groups from these amino acids. "By knowing that, we decided to add one of them, cysteine, to a water solution in which fish meat can be immersed. We believed this would allow some of the mercury to be drawn out and instead bind to the solution and be discarded. Further research is needed to take care of the removed mercury," says Przemysaw Strachowski, first author, and at the time of study, a postdoc at the Department of Life Sciences at Chalmers.

CCCA APPOINTS SERGE DESGAGNÉS AS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Canadian Corrugated & Containerboard Association has appointed Serge Desgagnés as the new executive director. Desgagnés has a long-standing history with the CCCA, having served as a board member for many years, representing Kruger Packaging L.P.

Packaging Environmental Council (PPEC) and the International Corrugated Case Association (ICCA). His

national and international industry experience will bring a strong knowledge and insight to the association.



Desgagnés brings considerable insight to the sector through his distinguished career spanning 45 years. The majority of his career was built at Kruger in varying roles. Most recently, he was vice-president of sales and marketing at Kruger. He has a degree in marketing and sales from The University of Montreal. Desgagnés served for many years on the boards of the CCCA, Paper & Paperboard



Serge Desgagnés





8 WFP

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processing news



Richardson Announces Major Expansion of Granola Packaging Capabilities at South Sioux City Oat **Processing Facility**

Richardson International Limited has announced a significant expansion project at its South Sioux City, Nebraska oat mill and processing facility. The investment will more than double the site's granola packaging capabilities, enabling Richardson to increase production and better meet evolving



customer needs. The project will incorporate the latest advancements in automation technology creating efficient capacity while prioritizing food safety and quality assurance. These enhancements reflect Richardson's commitment to maintaining the highest industry standards.

Work on the expansion is set to begin immediately for completion by the first quarter of 2026. The initiative represents further commitment to Richardson's broader

strategy of continuous improvement and operational excellence.

"We're very pleased to be making this investment at South Sioux City as a further commitment to our customers, plant staff, and the city," said Rob Bielik (vice-president, milling operations, Richardson International). "Richardson is proud to have one of the most efficient oat supply chains in North America — from origination to the manufacture of finished products. This expansion is the next chapter in our continued evolution."

Protein Industries Canada Announces Robert Hunter as New CFO

Protein Industries Canada Board of Directors announced Robert Hunter as the new CEO, following a national search. Robert assumed the position of CEO on January 15, 2025 and replaced Frank Hart who has been interim CEO since August 2024.

Hunter brings more than 20 years of experience in the agriculture food sector, holding positions with Maple Leaf Foods, the Canola Council of Canada, and CropLife International. Throughout his career Robert has been a passionate advocate for agriculture while

living and working in Asia, Europe, and North America. He has gained a global perspective on food systems and implemented sectorwide strategies that promote sustainable trade, innovation, and economic growth. "On behalf of the board of



Robert Hunter

directors, I am pleased to welcome Robert Hunter as the new CEO of Protein Industries Canada." Chair of the board Tyler Groeneveld

said. "Robert brings a wealth of experience and expertise, and we are confident in his ability to lead Protein Industries Canada into our next chapter. Under Robert's leadership we will focus on further supporting the scale-up and competitiveness of Canadian companies, anchoring Canada's position as an agriculture and food production powerhouse."



"As the CEO of **Protein Industries** Canada, I am eager to further advance Canada as a global leader of high-value ingredients and food

products," Hunter said. "As a life-long supporter of Canada's agriculture sector I firmly believe in Canada's potential to lead in this area and look forward to accelerating the competitiveness of the Canadian plant protein sector."

Hunter will be based out of Toronto, Ont. Protein Industries Canada's head office remains in Regina, Sask., with staff located throughout Canada.

Nutri Group Acquires a Saint-Hyacinthe Technopole Building in Olivier-Chalifoux Industrial Park

Nutri Group, one of Canada's leading egg graders and processors, is announcing a strategic investment to solidify its presence in Saint Hyacinthe. The company has just acquired, from Saint-Hyacinthe Technopole, the industrial building located at 6525 Picard Street, next to its current facilities, in the Olivier Chalifoux industrial park.

The approximately 83,150-square-foot building will be used to carry out a large part of the development activities that will enable Nutri Group to strengthen its position as a producer of simple and healthy foods for the Québec and Canadian markets.

"Our goal is to become the company with the most beloved egg offering by Canadian consumers, recognized for its distinctive products, the performance of its operations and its cutting-edge technology," said Nutri Group's CEO Sébastien Léveillé.



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Cell Factories Boost Finland's Food Exports - Report Lists Eight Measures to Renew the Food System and Realize Growth Potential



Cellular agriculture is a rapidly developing and promising food production method. It can accelerate building a sustainable and profitable food system in Finland and the whole Europe. VTT Technical Research Center of Finland, Natural Resources Institute Finland and University of Helsinki have investigated the current state of cellular agriculture and listed eight recommendations for policymakers at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Business Finland. The most urgent measures include investments in production-scale infrastructures and expediting and streamlining EU's regulatory process.

Cellular agriculture involves the use of cell cultures, such as microbial, algae, plant, insect, or animal cells, and bioreactors for food production. Cell factories produce various ingredients, such as proteins and fats, for the food and feed industries. Additionally, cell

cultures can produce ingredients for products like coffee and cocoa, whose traditional cultivation is becoming challenging due to climate change. "The future food system will be based on the interplay between modern agriculture and cellular agriculture, utilizing circular economy

solutions. This development brings many new business opportunities for Finland and the food system actors. We must identify the necessary change paths and ensure that measures consider the entire chain, from farmers to consumers and other stakeholders," says State Secretary Päivi Nerg from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Cellular agriculture is a strategically important sector that, in addition to economic growth, increases food self-sufficiency, resilience, and strategic autonomy of individual countries

Cellular agriculture is a strategically important sector that, in addition to

economic growth, increases food self-sufficiency, resilience, and strategic autonomy of individual countries like Finland, but also the EU. The market volume forecast is promising, and the report estimates the export potential for Finland to be €500-1000 million by 2035. In addition, significant infrastructure investments open opportunities for billions in exports of equipment, technology, and expertise.

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Vytal Filtration Technologies Acquires General Filtration, Further Enhancing Product Portfolio and Strengthening Market Position

VYTAL Filtration Technologies, a leader in innovative filtration solutions, has acquired General Filtration, a trusted name in industrial filtration with over 65 years experience in the brewing, food GENERAL /YTAL and beverage, water treatment, chemical, power generation, mining, and petrochemical markets. This strategic acquisition solidifies VYTAL's position as a comprehensive provider of filtration solutions, further extending its reach into the food & beverage industry. The integration of General Filtration's renowned products into VYTAL's portfolio offers customers a seamless blend of innovative filtration options. Moving forward, General Filtration will operate as General Filtration, A Vytal Company. Together, the companies look forward to delivering enhanced value through a unified commitment to excellence and problem-solving in the filtration industry. The announcement marks a significant step forward in VYTAL's growth strategy, reinforcing its dedication to advancing filtration technologies across industries.



Umyum Food Inc Successfully Closes \$6million Raise to Establish Their Clean-Label Plant-based Food Platform

UMYUM Food Inc has announced the successful close of their capital raise.

The \$6M investment will support the brand's pursuit as a leading innovator in the food space. It will also boost the company's expansion across multiple food categories through their proprietary clean-label plant based food platform.

UMYUM has established itself in the retail market across Canada. In December 2024, select products were introduced into regions of the US market. A proven portfolio of artisanal rinded cheeses, soft cheeses, and gourmet butter skus has set the foundation for growing innovation and valuable brand opportunities that will roll out in 2025.

"The introduction of new plant-based products is usually established within a single food category and then remains in that particular category. We're taking an unconventional path," says Katherine Corden, co-founder & CEO of UMYUM Food Inc. "Our approach lets us tackle multiple food categories with clean, whole-food ingredients that deliver on taste, texture, and functionality. This investment helps us bring exceptional plant-based food choices and enjoyment to more people, whether that is in the sectors we are already in or emergent categories that we are yet to explore."











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Lassonde Industries Inc. Announces Its O4 and Fiscal 2024 Results

"Lassonde delivered another guarter of strong profitable growth to conclude 2024 on a positive note," said Vince Timpano, chief executive officer of Lassonde Industries Inc. "Solid fourth quarter results were driven by the contribution of Summer Garden, higher sales volume in our U.S. business resulting from our build-back plan as well as top-line growth in Canada driven by price adjustments to offset inflation related

to orange juice and by product innovation launched throughout the year."

Fourth Quarter Highlights:

• Sales of \$738.1 million. Excluding a \$9.1 million favourable foreign exchange impact and sales from the Acquired Entities [2], sales were up \$64.5 million (10.7%) from the same

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quarter last year, essentially due to higher sales volumes, mainly in the U.S., and to the favourable impact of selling price adjustments in Canada, mainly for private label products.

• Gross profit of \$192.9 million (26.1% of sales). Excluding gross profit from the Acquired Entities2, gross profit was up \$16.0 million from the same guarter last year. This net increase results mainly from the following items:

- A favourable impact of an increase in sales volume.

- A favourable impact of selling price adjustments to offset the higher costs of certain inputs, essentially for orange juice and orange concentrates.

- A decrease in the Corporation's conversion costs, a portion of which results from operational improvements, including the impact of the ongoing insourcing of manufacturing for certain products sold by the Corporation's U.S. beverage business units.

• Operating profit of \$43.0 million. Excluding the contribution from the Acquired Entities2, operating profit was up \$2.1 million from the same quarter last year. This net increase results mainly from the following items:

- Higher gross profit.

- \$9.2 million increase in transportation costs incurred to deliver products to clients and in finished goods warehousing costs, essentially in the U.S.

- \$0.6 million in losses on capital assets in 2024 compared to a \$1.5 million gain in 2023 related to business optimization: and

- \$1.9 million increase in expenses related to the multi-year strategy ("Strategy") and the implementation of new key systems as the Corporation continues to invest in its deployment.

• Excluding items impacting comparability but including the Acquired Entities2, adjusted EBITDA1 was \$79.6 million (10.8% of sales), up \$27.0 million from the same quarter last year.

• Profit attributable to the Corporation's shareholders of \$27.1 million, resulting in EPS of \$3.97, up 29.0% from the same guarter in 2023. Excluding the contribution from the Acquired Entities2 and the impact of additional financial expenses, net of taxes, related to the Summer Garden acquisition, profit attributable to the Corporation's shareholders was up \$3.4 million.



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processing news

With the federal election underway, Food

Food and Beverage Canada Calls on all Federal Parties to Back Canada's Largest Manufacturing Industry and Strengthen Canada's Food System

economic activity across the country.

WASTEWATER

and Beverage Canada (FBC-ABC) is calling on Employing more than 320,000 Canadians all political parties to commit to a strong over 8,000 companies — it is the largest future-focused plan for Canada's food and manufacturing employer in the country. It beverage manufacturing industry — a vital also serves as the single largest purchaser of industry that feeds Canadians, sustains farmers, Canadian agricultural products, transforming strengthens rural communities, and drives goods into the safe, high-guality, and nutritious



products Canadians rely on every day. These companies have chosen to establish in Canada, hire Canadians, support local communities, and reinvest in our economy but they can't do it alone.

"Our message to all federal parties is simple: you cannot designate food and beverage manufacturing as a part of Canada's critical infrastructure and then fail to invest in it," said Kristina Farrel, CEO of FBC-ABC. "The next government must act decisively and quickly to help us enhance our competitiveness, incentivize innovation, and build the resilient, secure food system Canadians expect and deserve."

Despite its foundational role in food security and economic growth, the industry continues to be chronically under-supported, even as global pressures intensify. From inflation and labour shortages to supply chain disruptions and rising input costs, many manufacturers have been forced to pause capital investments and delay expansions threatening the future growth of Canada's food system.

"Food and Beverage manufacturing is more than an economic contributor — it is a core strategic asset, essential to our national food security," said Farrell. "We call on all parties to stand with Canadian food and beverage manufacturers, and to demonstrate that support through real, concrete commitments as we work to feed Canadians every day."

According to Michael Mikulak, ED, Food & Beverage Manitoba, "The size, scale, and significance of Canada's food processing sector cannot be overstated. Beyond its vital contributions to our economy and workforce, the simple truth remains — people need to eat. That's why it's essential we safeguard the companies and processors who work tirelessly to deliver safe, high quality, and delicious food to Canadians.

We remain closely engaged with Food and Beverage Canada and our provincial counterparts to ensure the sector's voice is heard and its interests protected. While Canada has so far avoided the latest round of tariff announcements (at the time of publication), we know the situation can shift quickly. We are actively monitoring developments and remain ready to respond to any changes that may impact our industry. We stand with Food and Beverage Canada in urging the federal government to recognize and support the vital role our industry plays in the lives of Canadians and the strength of our economy."



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regulatory affairs



From left to right: Andrew Paris, African Nova Scotian Affairs, Alison Graham, Council member for the Town of Truro, Shelly DeViller, Colchester Food Network, Deb Pryor (back), Council member for the Town of Truro, Ian McGrath (back), Council member for the Town of Truro, Cathy Hinton (front), Mayor of Truro, Christine Blair (front), Mayor of Colchester County, Dr. Heather Bruce, Faculty of Agriculture with Dalhousie University, and Kody Blois, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Member of Parliament for Kings-Hants.

Government of Canada Announces Support for Local Food Infrastructure Projects Across Canada

Kody Blois, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and Member of Parliament for Kings-Hants, on behalf of the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, visited the Town of Truro and announced up to \$5.6 million to support 87 new projects across Canada under the Small Scale Projects component of the Local Food Infrastructure Fund (LFIF).

As part of the \$62.9-million announcement in Budget 2024, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is delivering the renewed LFIF, which mobilizes \$42.7 million to support production-focused projects. The program aims to improve community food security and resilience through the purchase and installation of infrastructure. This support will help increase access and availability of local, nutritious and culturally appropriate food, with a priority focus on equitydeserving groups within communities.

The Small Scale Projects component provides grant funding between \$25,000 and \$100,000 to support infrastructure projects, such as a community garden with an irrigation system, a greenhouse with solar panels, or a food forest. A second Small Scale Projects intake is expected to take place in fall 2025.

Governments Investing in Ontario's **Dairy Processing Sector**

The governments of Canada and Ontario are investing up to \$7.18 million through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP) in 70 projects across the province to enhance and modernize dairy processing capacity and food safety. The funding from this initiative, which is cost-shared by the dairy sector, is expected to

generate approximately \$22 million in total capital investments, while reinforcing the supply of safe, high-quality Ontario milk on store shelves. The Dairy Processing Modern-

ization Initiative is over 90% subscribed and still accepting applications from cow, goat, sheep and water buffalo milk processors. Successful applicants can receive up to \$200,000 in cost-shared funding to enhance processing efficiency and food



safety in their facilities. The funding can be used to help cover the costs of new or refurbished equipment, one-time training and more.

Examples of projects include:

- Four All Ice Cream in Waterloo receiving up to \$200,000 for a walk-in cooler with blast freezer/refrigeration capabilities, a pasteurizer with accessories, and a plate-heat exchanger to increase productivity and meet demand.
- Max and Lion Production in Peel Region receiving up to \$119,692 to increase production capacity, improve product quality, reduce waste, and improve monitoring and traceability with a liquid filler machine, a high-pressure homogenizer for kefir production, and a new metal detector.
- Ontario Water Buffalo Co. in Hastings County receiving up to \$53,925 to increase production and improve food safety through the acquisition of a batch freezer, heat combination machine, and a pasteurizer.
- Sargent Family Dairy in Durham Region receiving up to \$40,609 to *improve efficiency and reduce manual strain through the purchase* and installation of a mechanical curd mill and a cream separator.

Sustainable CAP is a 5-year, \$3.5-billion investment by federal, provincial and territorial governments to strengthen competitiveness, innovation, and resiliency of Canada's agriculture, agri-food and agribased products sector. This includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5-billion commitment cost-shared 60% federally and 40% provincially/territorially for programs designed and delivered by provinces and territories.

Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Agriculture Meet to Discuss **Evolving Canada-United States Trading Relationship**



The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Honourable Ron Kostyshyn, Manitoba Minister of Agriculture, met with their colleagues, provincial and territorial Ministers of Agriculture, as part of ongoing discussions related to the impacts and potential responses to unjustified tariffs being implemented by the United States.

Following their meeting of February 7, 2025, ministers reaffirmed their commitment in taking a united ' Team Canada' approach to support the agriculture and agri-food sector in response to tariffs being levied by the United States.

The agriculture and agri-food sector play a vital role in the Canadian economy, creating jobs, and feeding millions both domestically and abroad. Ministers discussed various coordinated approaches to help Canadian agri-food producers and processors diversify international trade as well as to boost internal trade options. Ministers noted the importance of utilizing the suite of business risk management (BRM) programs to meet the current and future needs of producers.

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Fazer Introduces Unique Taste the Future Snacks Powered By Solein Protein Made Out Of Thin Air

Fazer, a Finnish food experience company, is bringing a unique innovation to Future Food-Tech event in San Francisco and introduces its groundbreaking Taste the Future products, a chocolate snack bar and oat drinks, powered by Solein. This pioneering ingredient is produced through a fermentation process that uses thin air and electricity as its main resources. The United States is the second country in the world where Solein® can be sold



Fazer offers the participants at the Future Food-Tech event a unique opportunity to taste products that include Solein, which is a protein produced out of thin air. It is made by Solar Foods, a Finnish food technology company, which is on a mission to revolutionise global food production. By producing protein from thin air, Solar Foods aims to address global food availability challenges by minimising resource use and environmental impact.

"We are excited to introduce edge-cutting innovations through the Taste the Future products, reinforcing our commitment to innovating the future of food and developing sustainable food solutions that meet the needs of future generations," says Heli Anttila, VP, new product development at Fazer Confectionery.

The United States is the second country in the world where Solein can be consumed. Solar Foods has a food approval process in progress for Europe and is expected to be received by the end of 2026.

20 WFP

Dried Veggies, Legumes Could be Key to Improving Plant-Based Meat Alternatives

Plant-based meat substitutes are popular with people who want to reduce their meat consumption or who choose a vegan diet. However, concerns persist about the products becoming dry when cooked and lacking the mouth feel associated with real meat. Enter Dr. Alejandro Marangoni, who has developed two sustainable, low-cost solutions for ensuring these alternatives retain oil when cooked and have the texture we associate with ground beef.

"People like their burgers and meat

to be juicy," even with plant-based products, said Marangoni, a professor of food science and Canada Research Chair Food, Health and Aging at the University of Guelph. What is missing is the connective tissue or gristle that holds fat in place in meat. "Plant-based products don't have that" and, as a result, any added oil simply leaks out during cooking.

The first step in Marangoni's research was to understand how connective tissue holds fat. He and his team used computed tomography at the Canadian Light Source (CLS) at the University of Saskatchewan to produce 3D images of both raw and cooked meat tissue, "and it looks remarkably like a sponge, an open-cell foam" with fat contained within the voids.

As a replacement, the researchers used small pieces of carrot, broccoli and asparagus that were freeze dried to remove moisture and then filled with different oils, "and it worked extremely well." Using this method, "all you're eating is a dried piece of vegetable and natural oil." Their results were published in a recent issue of Current Research in Food Science.

A second paper, published in February in Future Foods, outlines another approach using a gel made of pea starch, chickpea flour and oil that, when added to plant-based products, provided the "chew" and oil retention of meat. "We added enough (gel) to turn lean ground meat into medium ground meat, and the properties were identical," said Marangoni.

Both methods work equally well producing meat-like chew and moistness, and Marangoni said that in his own taste testing of products, "there was no weird flavour or weird texture."

In terms of sustainability, he said the gel material "is very beneficial." The extraction of pea protein leaves large amounts of starch as a byproduct. By using that starch to make the gel, "we close the loop on total utilization of a pea or lentil." Canada is the largest producer of peas and lentils in the world.

Marangoni added that the natural ingredients he has used help "simplify the label" of plant-based products that are often criticized for being ultra processed.

There are no patents on their work, and he hopes food manufacturers will use his discoveries to create products that more closely resemble meat and that will appeal to those considering meat alternatives. "We're just very interested in having people try it out."

Marangoni said using CLS imaging technology is "critical and essential to the development of our products" as it allows greater understanding of ingredients and their interactions. There is more work to be done, he added. "There are still a lot of mysteries associated with plant proteins and the way they behave in plant-based food products."







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Nutriterra Total Omega-3 Receives Health Canada Approval as Plant-Based Dietary Supplement

Nutriterra Total Omega-3 has received Health Canada approval as an ingredient in dietary supplements. Health Canada's Natural and Non-prescription Health Products Directorate (NNHPD) issued a product license, Natural Product Number (NPN) 80136254, which authorizes it to be marketed and sold as a novel, canola-based total omega-3 oil with the following health claims: Supports heart health and cardiovascular function; Supports normal brain function; Source of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) for maintaining good health; Source of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) for maintaining good health; Source of an essential fatty acid for the maintenance of good health; Source of omega-3 fatty acids for the maintenance of good health.



This Health Canada approval follows the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granting Nutriterra New Dietary Ingredient status in 2021. Having previously obtained food and feed approvals in Australia and New Zealand, the US, and Canada, the company is progressing with additional regulatory applications in other key markets around the world.



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A Different Breed

The generational strength of **Burnbrae Farms**

Redge as of late. But some companies have the breadth — and experience — to help weather any storm that may arise. Such is the case with Burnbrae Farms, the largest family-owned and operated egg business in Canada.



Family matters

"As a sixth-generation, Canadian family business, we take pride in our heritage," says Margaret Hudson, president & CEO, Burnbrae Farms. "Our values and sustainability practices are built on a foundation of more than 130 years. As a family business, we take the long view when making decisions, which has been a key area of strength for us. We are less concerned with quarterly results but rather building on a legacy that we expect to continue on for generations to come."

This "long view" was behind the company's decision in 1996 to acquire three grading facilities and a further processing plant in Winnipeg. In 2000, the company acquired a farm just south of Winnipeg and started producing eggs there. In 2001, the purchase of a grading station in Calgary provided further expansion, as did the purchase of another

Burnbrae's Ralos solar-powered farm runs on clean power provided by the roof-mounted solar panels.

grading facility in Duncan, B.C. in 2007.

"The western market is incredibly important to Burnbrae Farms," says Hudson. "While we are a national company, we have a strong footprint of grading and processing facilities, as well as farms, within Western Canada, and we have a local and regional presence that our customers recognize and support."

Today, Burnbrae Farms is the largest vertically integrated, family-owned egg producer and processor in Canada. The company has over 1,700 employees, eight egg-grading locations, three further processing plants, seven wholly owned farms, and a number of joint-venture operations across the country.



Margaret Hudson, president & CEO, Burnbrae Farms

Accent on innovation

Similar to its geographical expansion across Canada, Burnbrae Farms has also grown its product offerings. Recent additions include specialty egg products in both its shell portfolio (e.g. omega-3, free range, organic, free run, and dark yolk) and its value-added portfolio (e.g. liquid, omelettes, and patties).

The company is also reporting faster growth in specific areas of retail (such as more open housing systems for free run and free range and from birds fed enhanced diets like dark yolk and omega-3). Specialty eggs (omega 3, omega plus, organic, free run and free range) are growing "exponentially" and now represent approximately 20% of the business.

"We're also seeing increased desire from our customers



Terrabrae is made in Winnipeg and now has a national listing at Canadian Tire, and is available at select Loblaws banners, all Sheridan Nurseries and select Costco's.



In its ongoing effort to invest in the company and seek out ways to continually improve the portfolio and product mix, Burnbrae Farms is constantly adding to the mix.

Recent product launches include Naturegg Solar Free Range and Naturegg Omega Plus Solar Free Range. Eggs in both of these product lines are produced on farms powered through solar energy, this is

consistent with Burnbrae's efforts to source products through more energy efficient means.

Burnbrae Farms has also begun using waste eggshell material in animal feed and other new products. The newly launched TerraBrae Eggshell Soil Enhancer is made with approximately 350 eggshells, so it's naturally derived and cycled back into the earth.



While Burnbrae is a national company, they have a strong footprint of grading and processing facilities, as well as farms, within Western Canada.



To bring you the best quality possible, a great deal of precision and care goes into the production of every Burnbrae egg.

The Threat of AI

As Canada's largest egg producer and supplier, Burnbrae Farm's has generational expertise at the ready in the event of market disruptions. As such, the company is paying particular attention to the recent rise in Avian Influenza. The company says that due to Canada's use of production quota and good biosecurity practices, B.C. has been the only province to date to have been seriously impacted by AI. The province has lost approximately 30% of its laying flocks between last October and March of this year.

"Because AI has had limited impacts on Canadian egg farmers in other parts of the country, the system has been able to move eggs into B.C. from other provinces, limiting the shortages and price escalation in this province," says Hudson. "However, the processed product market has been impacted by the high prices in the U.S., as our breaking plants are dependent on the U.S. markets for part of our supply. We could see prices of processed products increase both in foodservice operators and at retail."

A Golden Era

As of 2025, Burnbrae Farms has seven family members who are actively involved in the business. It truly is the definition of a multi-generational, family-owned company.

Although founded in 1891, the company's core values have been passed down through each generation. And those values have been adhered to throughout this time.

"While the Hudson family is primarily involved in providing strategic direction and overall leadership, we have many highly qualified, longstanding, motivated and talented colleagues who work alongside the family to keep the business moving forward," says Hudson.

Hudson states that egg consumption is on the rise, as more and more people view the humble egg as "a nutritional powerhouse and a perfect protein." And Burnbrae Farms is well positioned to capitalize on the growing popularity of this trend, while honouring those practices that have helped make it the leading company it is today.

"We believe that sustaining this entrepreneurial spirit and focus on caring for our family, our employees, the communities we serve, and the planet, will ensure our business success well into the future," concludes Hudson. WFP







Proudly providing quality eggs and egg products in Western Canada to retail stores, food service operators and processors since 1996. Today we're a sixth-generation family business providing Canadians with premium quality eggs and innovative egg products.



Hudson Family



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Revitalizing Canada's Food **Processing Industry**

A Personal Perspective

By Charlotte Langley

s someone who has worked closely with Canada's food industry, I have seen firsthand how much potential we have in processing our own raw materials into finished goods. We are a nation rich in agricultural resources, yet we often fail to capture the full economic value of what we produce. Instead of keeping production local, we export raw materials and import finished products, losing jobs, innovation, and economic security along the way. One of the least engaged and least owned areas of our economy is food processing — an industry that could and should be a cornerstone of Canadian economic strength.

So, how do we make food processing attractive again? The answer is simple: we build systems that care for workers, invest in infrastructure, and create opportunities that make this industry sustainable and desirable. When we prioritize people — through fair wages, paid leaves, healthcare, mental health support, and training programs — we don't just improve the lives of workers; we strengthen the entire economy.





Commentary

Investing in the Workforce: The Key to Strengthening Our Economy

For too long, food processing has struggled with high turnover, labor shortages, and a reputation for being a lowwage, high-burnout industry. If we want to change this, we need to invest in the workforce and in the systems that make this industry valuable to both workers and the economy.

Paid Leave and Health Care:

A healthy workforce is a productive workforce. By ensuring workers have access to healthcare and paid leave, we improve retention, reduce absenteeism, and create more stability in the industry. When employees feel secure in their jobs, they invest more in their work, leading to higher efficiency and betterquality products.

Improvement Models and **Skill Development:**

Innovation in food processing doesn't happen in a vacuum. By providing training, technology upgrades, and pathways for career growth, we empower workers to be part of the industry's evolution. Skilled workers create higher-guality goods, making Canadian products more competitive in both domestic and international markets.

Fair Wages and Economic

Incentives: Paying workers fairly isn't just a moral obligation; it's an economic necessity. Fair wages stimulate local economies, increase consumer spending, and reduce reliance on social support systems. When people earn a living wage, they reinvest in their communities, further strengthening our economic foundation.

Mental Health Resources and Workplace Culture:

Food processing is a demanding industry. If we want people to stay, we need to create environments that support their well-being. Providing mental health resources, safe working conditions, and a positive workplace culture helps reduce turnover and ensures long-term industry stability.

By reinvesting in food processing, we don't just create jobs — we create higher-value goods that boost our economy.

Langley Foods and the Role of Smaller Co-Packers

At Langley Foods, we recognize that large-scale change happens when businesses work together. That's why we are actively collaborating with smaller co-packers to find solutions that keep production local, innovative, and economically viable. By supporting smaller processors, we help decentralize food production, making the industry more resilient and better able to respond to market demands.

Covered Bridge Chips: A Model of Perseverance and Value Creation

A shining example of what's possible in Canadian food processing is Covered Bridge Chips. This family-run business has faced challenges, but through perseverance, worker investment, and community support, they have built a thriving brand that delivers both economic and social value.

Just one year ago, Covered Bridge Chips experienced a devastating loss when a fire destroyed their factory. For many businesses, this could have meant the end, but Covered Bridge proved that resilience and collaboration can keep an industry moving forward. With the help of small co-packers, industry partners, and their dedicated team, they were able to continue production while rebuilding their facility. This extraordinary display of strength and solidarity is a testament to what is possible when the industry supports its own.

Covered Bridge Chips doesn't just make great snacks they create jobs, strengthen their local economy, and prove that Canadian processing can be both profitable and sustainable. Their journey is a powerful reminder that investing in people and partnerships leads to long-term success, even in the face of adversity.

Building a Stronger Economy Through Food Processing

By reinvesting in food processing, we don't just create jobs — we create higher-value goods that boost our economy. When we process our own raw materials, we increase the worth of our agricultural sector, keep profits within our borders, and strengthen our economic resilience. Canadianmade food products should be known for their quality, innovation, and ethical production standards. If we put in the work now — through fair labour practices, workforce investment, and industry support — food processing can become one of Canada's greatest economic strengths.

It's time to change the narrative. It's time to make food processing an industry that people want to work in, that communities benefit from, and that our economy depends on. The path forward is clear: invest in people, invest in infrastructure, and keep production local. Canada has everything it needs to be a leader in food processing — it's time we take ownership of it. WFP



Manitoba food processors are adopting an all-hands-on-deck strategy in the face of current economic uncertainties.

By the Numbers anitoba's food and beverage industry is vastly diverse with an impact that extends far beyond The industry is comprised of 386 food and beverage its direct contribution. manufacturing facilities. Meat and beverage manufacturing facilities along with grain and oilseed processing account for over 50 per cent of the province's food processing facilities.

A 2023 data from Statistics Canada, lists the food and beverage processing industry as the largest sector in the province, accounting for more than 32 per cent of provincial total manufacturing sales. In the same year, the food processing According to a data from Statistics Canada in 2024, the sector employed 17,715 people in Manitoba and created vast majority (92 per cent) of Manitoba's food processors over 37,200 jobs in the province, including indirect jobs. have less than 100 employees. 19 per cent of the province's

Provincial Focus: Manitoba



Manufacturers and retailers are proudly displaying the Manitoba Made logo. It's an amazing show of support for our local businesses, our province, and Canada as a whole.

food processors are micro-enterprises (one to four employees), 73 per cent are small-sized (five to 99 employees), six per cent are medium-sized (100 to 499 employees), and two per cent are large businesses (over



executive director. Food

and Beveraae Manitoba.

500 employees).

The industry consists of a number of categories including meat and meat products, bakery products, beverage, dairy products, seafood, egg products, fruit and vegetables, grains and oilseed products, honey, and other food products.

35 per cent of the food processors are located in Winnipeg, 31 per cent are in the southern regions, eighteen per cent are in the western regions, while 14 per cent are found in the Eastern-Interlake region, and two per cent are in the north.

Adopting a Cautious Approach

Manitoba's food processing industry has adopted a cautious approach in the recent months, given the uncertainties and turbulence that often follow announcements from the current US administration.

"Approaches vary depending on their scale of exports and the complexity of supply chains. Some members have adopted an all-hands-on-deck strategy by actively developing contingency plans and exploring alternative export options," says Michael Mikulak, executive director of Food and Beverage Manitoba.

"Others, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, are taking a more cautious stance, closely monitoring government and industry association statements before making decisions."

Food and Beverage Manitoba is an industry-led, not-forprofit association dedicated to promoting Manitoba's vibrant food and beverage industry, and ensuring they have the resources, strength, and conditions needed to succeed.

"At Food and Beverage Manitoba, we continue to see a steady number of startups and entrepreneurs exploring new food products for grocery stores and farmers' markets," shares Ron Nebre, marketing and communications manager of Food and Beverage Manitoba.

"However, uncertainty looms over trade and supply chains, with conditions that could shift dramatically within a month. For instance, proposed aluminum tariffs would directly impact manufacturers relying on canned packaging," adds Mikulak.

"As part of a nationwide network of provincial food industry associations, we are closely monitoring these developments and working to ensure our industry receives the support and resources needed to navigate these challenges."

Tough Decisions in the Face of a Crisis

So, how does the current tariffs and economic uncertainties affect Manitoba food processors? Mikulak says it's a textbook example of the saying 'never let a crisis go to waste'.

"Our members are being forced to reassess every aspect of their supply chain to mitigate the potential impact of tariffs. Packaging, for instance — whether aluminum cans or other materials — requires careful evaluation," he adds.



Fortunately, the government is working to break down interprovincial trade barriers, which would help reduce costs and open new domestic opportunities for our members.



Cultivate 2025: Innovation for the Food Industry

Food and Beverage Manitoba's Cultivate Sustainability Conference and Trade Show is all about innovation and sustainability for agri-food and agri-food processors. Since 2022, Cultivate have hosted over 750 delegates — ranging from business leaders, policy makers, food and beverage innovators, and industry movers and shakers.

This year's Cultivate Sustainability Conference dived into impactful discussions about key topics like transformational technology, reducing food waste, and sustainable packaging design.

PRAIRIE RESEARCH KITCHEN



RRC Polytech's Prairie Research Kitchen helps food manufacturers bring new ideas to the table using our experience in chefdriven, science-backed applied research.

From compostable packaging projects to co-product diversion efforts to the latest in plant-based food innovation, our work enables partners to expand their research capabilities while working toward sustainability goals.

Partner with us to explore:

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- Ingredient applications and prototypes
- Food co-product reduction through redirection and reformulation
- Process improvements
- Packaging selection and shelf-life testing

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At RRC Polytech, we're part of a larger research network that has grown considerably over the last 20 years. From life sciences to digital transformation to advanced manufacturing, we continue expanding capacity to keep you in front of what's ahead. We are focused on developing and exploring leading-edge technology to determine how it can be used to your advantage.

Food processing and development often involves the intersection of our many areas of expertise. By combining our resources, we can approach complex problems from multiple angles and expedite results. Our teams are eager to collaborate and help find the solutions you need.

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rrc.ca/research-kitchen

"Many essential ingredients simply aren't grown in Manitoba and must be sourced elsewhere. Exploring alternative export markets, such as the EU, is also becoming increasingly important. Fortunately, the government is working to break down interprovincial trade barriers,



and communications

manager, Food and

Beverage Manitoba.

which would help reduce costs and open new domestic opportunities for our members. A stronger, more connected food industry benefits all of Canada."

In the next few months — or even year food processors are anticipated to make many tough decisions. "Finding new sources for packaging and ingredients, exploring alternative export markets, and even reassessing planned equipment upgrades. Every aspect of business planning now requires a fresh look," notes Mikulak.

"Adding to the challenge is the unpredictable nature of the U.S. administration, making it incredibly difficult to plan with

confidence, even a year into the future."

Every Cloud has a Silver Lining

It may be all doom and gloom in the current economic landscape, but one can always find a bright side despite uncertainties. Food processors can find assurance in the provincial government's strong commitment to its 'Buy Local, Support Manitoba' initiative given the current tariffs and economic uncertainties.



Manitoba food processors, such as Bothwell Cheese, can find assurance in the provincial government's strong commitment to its 'Buy Local, Support Manitoba' initiative given the current tariffs and economic uncertainties.

"If there's a silver lining to these announcements, it's that they've sparked a greater awareness to the importance of buying local," concludes Nebre. "More people are sharing their love for the quality and taste of Manitobamade products, and we're seeing manufacturers and retailers proudly display the Manitoba Made logo. It's an amazing show of support for our local businesses, our province, and Canada as a whole." WFP

Become a member of Food & Beverage Manitoba

Now, more than ever, local businesses need to stand together.

With economic uncertainty shaking industries everywhere, now is the time to strengthen your voice and connect with a community that has your back. By joining FABMb, you're not just becoming a member—you're gaining a seat at the table where decisions are made and solutions are created.

We believe in the power of Manitoba's local food industry, and we're here to make sure your concerns are heard. From advocacy to strategic planning, we provide the tools and support to help you navigate challenges and seize new opportunities.

Now more than ever, working together is the key to thriving.

Join us today and be part of a stronger future for local food foodbeveragemb.ca

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Commentary

Added Value is Always in the Mix for Partners of RRC Polytech's Prairie Research Kitchen

he ability to adapt, diversify and innovate has never been more critical to the success of an SME (small or medium-sized enterprise). Investing in the future and avoiding setbacks, even with rising costs and tightening margins, is imperative for companies to grow and thrive. Product development and process improvements pave the way to new or changing markets that positively impact the bottom line.

Enter the cost-effective problem-solvers at Red River College Polytechnic (RRC Polytech)'s Prairie Research Kitchen (PRK) who work with their organizations involved in food production, food processing and culinary application through applied research projects that address client-specific challenges. Partners retain control of any resulting intellectual property (IP).



Recognizing that time and money are rarely unlimited and using knowledge gained through a decade of experience, Manitoba's only Technology Access Centre (TAC) that blends food science and culinary arts is committed to leveraging available resources and adding value at every stage of the project. Value is presented in many forms.

communications officer, college and public relations, RRC Polytech.

As part of the TAC's goals, PRK engages students from the College's Culinary Arts, Life Sciences and School of Indigenous Education programs. The industry

leaders of tomorrow provide extra hands in the research process and inject their creativity and perspective. Embracing traditional ways of knowing and exploring Indigenous plants and foods is a core commitment of the PRK research team that enhances all partnerships and academic engagements.

PRK has worked on numerous sustainability projects to reduce waste through co-product utilization by adding nutritional value or new functionality to previously discarded material such as spent grains from the coffee and brewing process and less desirable or 'ugly' vegetables.

A unique advantage of working with PRK is the ability to collaborate internally with other specialized areas of the college. PRK is the front door for the food

SINCE 1959 ECKERTMACHINES

By Kevin Olszewski - Communications Officer, College and Public Relations, RRC Polytech



industry to access the entire institution's wealth of experience and equipment. For example, PRK has teamed up with the Technology Access Centre for Aerospace and Manufacturing (TACAM) to help improve a client's hydroponic growing system prototype and project-test the use of robotics in the foodservice industry.

Funding to undertake projects is now available through RRC Polytech's Digital Technology Transformation Initiative to encourage a shift to automation and greener tech.

"We are excited to introduce this new program to food manufacturers and partners interested in identifying and testing digital technology aimed at boosting efficiencies or creating safer food systems," says Mavis McRae, director, Prairie Research Kitchen.

Innovation begins with the belief that anything is possible, but even the best and brightest need support to see their dreams become reality. Whether you're an entrepreneur with a game-changing idea; an established brand looking to branch out or create training for staff; or another critical supporting link in the supply chain that feeds the world — PRK makes it easy and affordable to connect with the resources you need to drive your business forward. WFP



Commentary

By Doug Hart, president of Hart & Associates Management Consultants Ltd.

Canadian Food Companies Need to Find New Export Markets

ith some exceptions, Canada's trade relations with the US have been relatively smooth and reliable for many years. Canada's trade with the US was guided by trade agreements starting with GATT in 1948. GATT, signed by 23 countries, brought international tariffs down from the 20% level to about 5% for many products for the signing countries.

Later agreements specifically dealing with US-Canadian trade were the Canada-US FTA was signed in 1989, NAFTA in 1994 and CUSMA in 2020. These agreements provided rules, guidelines and stability to Canadian-US trade allowing companies to make long term export plans including plant and investment decisions. The CUSMA agreement allowed for a review in 2026. Clearly, Trump does not abide by trade provisions.

Trade agreements were based on a recognition that reduced or zero tariffs benefit participating countries by encouraging innovation, enhancing productivity and efficiencies and leveraging countries' comparative advantages. However, the Trump administration has thrown out long-established trading practices with its on-again, off-again tariff threats with Canada.

Then on April 2, Trump imposed high world-wide tariffs. For Canada, this announcement spared tariffs on across-the-board products but kept 10% tariffs on Canadian steel, aluminum and a crippling 25% tariff on autos.

It is understandable that Canadian food companies like to sell to the US market given its size and proximity. Total Canadian food and beverage revenues reached \$156.5 billion in 2022 with exports accounting for \$54.3 billion or 35% of this total. Most of these exports, 77% or \$41.8 billion, go to the US.

The April 2 pronouncement allowed Canadian food products to enter the US under the existing CUSMA provisions. However, this too could change. Fully expect Trump to demand major concessions from Canada on the agri-food industry as part of his push for a renewed trade deal. Chaos will likely continue for some time. The US tariff threats to Canadian exports, including agri-food products, has shown that access to the US market is not assured. Canadian food companies need to forge relationships with new export customers as well as more fully compete in the Canadian market to be successful.

I conducted interviews with a selection of Canadian food

companies to identify what their next steps might be if tariffs on their US exports were imposed. Some of the larger domestic food companies felt it might be possible for them to set up some of their production in the US, however, this would be very costly and could take considerable time. Some mid-size and definitely smaller Canadian food companies that export to the US would be very vulnerable to a permanent US tariff as setting up a US facility would be beyond their financial capability. Given that about 92% of Canada's 8,500 food processors have fewer than 100 employees (however, not all export), a permanent tariff on food exports to the US would be very damaging to the Canadian food processing sector.

Summary of Canadian Trade Agreements

The following provides a brief overview on some of the key elements of three main agreements of the 15 Canada has in place now. This outline also provides a perspective of the size of these three important trading regions for the reader. The population of the three active trade agreements covered below totals 999 million!

The key elements and value of a trade agreement include tariff reductions, streamlining customs, trade facilitation, rules of origins, product specific rules, origin quotas and countries obligations. These agreements make trading with member countries significantly easier.

Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)

Canada entered into the CETA agreement provisionally in 2017 with 27 countries. It is provisional as 10 countries have yet to ratify the agreement. The larger holdout countries are Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Poland. The larger countries that are in the CETA agreement are Austria,

2

Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. Just because a country is not a signatory to CETA, does not mean you cannot export to them. For example, the tariff rate for food products imported

to Italy is 5.24%. So, the entire EU is open for you.

CETA is a big market. The total population of CETA countries is 448.4 million. The population of the ratified countries is 237 million. The EU has a total of 4.7 million people working in the food industry generating €1.2 trillion in revenues per year. The EU imported €158.6 billion worth of agri-food in 2022.

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

Canada entered into the CPTPP agreement with 10 countries and was ratified in December, 2018. The five largest countries in the CPTPP are Mexico, Japan, Vietnam, Peru and Malaysia with a combined population of 425 million. The total population of all 10 CPTPP countries is 483 million. In addition, the UK will formally be recognized as a member of CPTPP once ratified by all CPTPP members.



wines, and spirits.



Canada entered a Trade Continuity Agreement with the UK in April, 2021 after UK's exit from the EU. This agreement essentially carries over Canada's trading benefits it had with the UK when the UK was in CETA. This agreement gives Canada



UK is imported, primarily from the EU. South Africa and Morocco. The main food imported to the UK are fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, dairy, beverages, processed foods, and specialized/global foods.

must start.

While the US will remain an important export market for Canadian food processors, the actions of the US government clearly demonstrates that Canadian companies need to start selling to new markets such as the EU, South-east Asia and other world markets. After fully evaluating your opportunities in specific foreign markets you need to:

1. Determine how to best sell to these export markets 2. Develop effective and actionable plans with budgets and timelines.

Be prepared to do a lot of hard work. But start now! WFP

Douglas is president of Hart & Associates Management Consultants Ltd., a firm that has been providing business development services to the food and aariculture industry across Canada for over 30 years. Hart & Asso ciates provides clients with business plans, marketing and strategic plans, feasibility studies, export marketing and market research to help companies improve their sales, profit and organizational performance.

A trade agreement does not necessarily mean a "free trade" agreement. For example, Japan and Vietnam have high tariffs for beef and pork and some processed foods.

Key products imported by CPTPP countries include pulses, fruits, vegetables, grains, cereals, animal feeds, maple syrup,

Canada-United Kingdom Trade Continuity Agreement (Canada-UK TCA)

preferential access to the UK market with a population of 68 million.

The UK's food and beverage manufacturing sector generates sales of £35.1 billion per year. Approximately 42% of the food consumed in the

Entering new export markets isn't easy or quick — but you

3. Set export objectives and goals

4. Develop an export strategy and an export marketing plan and act on it.



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Unwrapping Sustainability

Eco-Friendly Solutions for Food Packaging

S priority in Canada, driven by consumer demand, government regulations, and corporate commitments to reducing environmental impact. Consumers are actively choosing brands that prioritize environmental responsibility, and governments worldwide are enforcing stricter packaging regulations to curb plastic waste. In consumers, or elsewhere in the environment. In response, the Canadian government has introduced strict regulations, and businesses are adapting by developing more sustainable options. However, challenges remain, particularly in balancing food safety, cost, and recyclability across different provinces with varying management systems. One of the most critical areas for improvement when it

For food processors, the challenge is clear: reduce comes to sustainability in food processing is packaging. environmental impact while maintaining food safety, Canada is one of the leading nations in regulating singleproduct shelf life, and cost efficiency. One of the biggest use plastics and promoting sustainable packaging, with environmental concerns in food processing is packaging initiatives like the single-use plastics ban, and provincial waste, with plastic packaging alone making up nearly half Extended Producer Responsibility Programs (EPR) of all plastic waste in Canada. According to a report from that require manufacturers to take responsibility for the Environment and Climate Change Canada, only about 9% recycling and disposal of their packaging. While the shift of plastic waste is recycled, while the rest ends up in landfills, to sustainable packaging in food processing is gaining

Committing to Sustainability

By Martha Beach-Yeo



Sustainable packaging is one of the most significant areas of impact in food processing, and the demand for recycle-ready, compostable, low-carbon solutions is ever-growing.

momentum, manufacturers in Canada still face several hurdles, including the cost of sustainable materials, food safety and shelf life, recycling and compost infrastructure gaps and consumer education on how to properly dispose of packaging.

Despite these challenges, Canadian food processors are finding that sustainable packaging offers significant benefits. One company leading the charge is Maple Leaf Foods, a major player in Canada's food processing sector. Under the leadership of Dr. Randall Huffman, chief food safety and sustainability officer, Maple Leaf Foods has made sustainability a core part of its business strategy. With ambitious packaging reduction targets and innovative solutions, the company serves as a model for the industry and aims to become the most sustainable protein company in the world. In addition to sustainable packaging the company focuses on reducing food waste, optimizing water and energy use, and sourcing responsibly raised animal

proteins. Their environmental initiatives also include investing in renewable energy projects and working towards a 50% reduction in food waste by 2030. The company is the first major food company in the world to be carbon neutral.

With a Ph.D. in Meat and Animal Science, Dr. Huffman has extensive expertise in food safety, environmentally stewardship, and responsible sourcing. He oversees initiatives focused on minimizing waste, improving

Dr. Randall Huffman, chief food safety and sustainability officer, Maple Leaf Foods.

energy efficiency, and advancing sustainable packaging solutions, while collaborating with industry partners, policy makers, and sustainability organizations to drive meaningful changes beyond Maple Leaf Foods, reinforcing the company's commitment to a more sustainable food system. Speaking at the company's annual Food Safety Symposium, he stated, "we must have and open mind about the things that we are learning, to listen to the critics of our industry and people who think the food system should change. We need to embrace change." An advocate for industry wide collaboration, Dr. Huffman emphasizes that food processors must work together to create scalable, sustainable packaging solutions that meet regulatory requirements across Canada's diverse provinces.

A key pillar of Maple Leaf Foods' sustainability strategy is its commitment to 100% sustainable packaging. The company is actively reducing plastic use, switching to



recyclable and compostable materials, and designing packaging that minimizes environmental impact. One of their major innovations is the Halopack, a vacuum skin package made from 90% recycled paperboard, which cuts plastic use by 83% compared to conventional trays.

The company is also actively testing compostable meat packaging options that maintain freshness while breaking down naturally — a major challenge as packaging must still provide adequate barrier protection against moisture oxygen and contaminants. Another initiative is it's use of paper-based and fibre-based packaging, These materials not only reduce plastic waste but also align with Canada's EPR programs. Through these initiatives and perspectives, Maple Leaf Foods has exemplified an overarching commitment to integrating sustainability into all facets of the company's operations. Maple Leaf Foods' commitment to sustainability demonstrates that change is possible, but the industry still has work to do.

As the demand for sustainable packaging grows, Canadian businesses are looking for reliable, locally sourced solutions to reduce their environmental impact.

Sustainability is not just about reducing emissions or using recvclable materials — it's about ensuring the long-term vitality of your business.

Eco Guardian, a leader in eco-friendly food packaging, is taking a major step forward with the launch of a state-ofthe-art manufacturing facility in Ontario, set to be operational by Q4 2025. This expansion will significantly strengthen Canada's sustainable supply chain by reducing dependence on foreign imports and providing businesses with high-quality, 100% compostable and recyclable packaging options. With a production capacity of nearly 2 billion cups annually, Eco Guardian's facility will manufacture paper cups and bowls using FSC-certified paper,

also for employees, communities, and consumers.

has made

Maple Leaf Foods

sustainability a

core part of its

business strategy.

FEEDING A GREENER FUTURE:

Embracing Sustainable Innovation and Collaboration in Food Processing

Nelson-Jameson Inc., a leading supplier to the food industry, has embraced a holistic approach to sustainability, integrating environmental, social and governance considerations into its operations. According to Matt Bartkowiak, VP of corporate responsibility and development at Nelson Jameson, the company had significantly reduced its environmental footprint by embracing digital documentation, cutting tens of thousands of pages of paper waste. Additionally, they work closely with suppliers to promote sustainable sourcing, food safety, and ethical labour practices throughout the supply chain. The key, Bartkowiak emphasizes, is collaboration. "We encourage our suppliers to find solutions that offer multiple benefits — reducing waste and ensuring product safety, cutting water use and maintaining quality. By keeping the conversation going, we can drive meaningful innovation."

With sustainable packaging being one of the most significant areas of impact in food processing, and the demand for recycle-ready, compostable, low-carbon solutions growing, processors must balance environmental benefits with performance safety and cost, says Bartkowiak. "We are excited to see further development and use of more sustainable packaging solutions, and we hope to work with our suppliers and manufacturers to expand those offerings,"

says Bartkowiak. "We've also seen an increased diversity of flexible packaging options that have resonated with customers." However, for food processors switching to more sustainable practices isn't as simple as choosing new materials. Bartkowiak says the shift requires balancing environmental responsibility with cost, regulatory compliance, and operational efficiency. "Food safety is non-negotiable," says Bartkowiak, "Whether optimizing energy and water usage in a production facility or transitioning to eco-friendly packaging there is no room for compromise when it comes to public health and responsible production."

For Nelson-Jameson, sustainability efforts extend beyond just reducing its own environmental impact. "We align ourselves with global sustainability targets, including United Nations

Matt Bartkowiak, VP of corporate responsibility and development at Nelson Jameson.

Sustainable Development Goals, and work with our suppliers and manufacturers to promote food safety, responsible sourcing, and labour practices throughout the supply chain." Sustainability in food processing is not just about shortterm solutions, explains Bartkowiak, its about creating long-term resilience for businesses, communities, and the environment, which means developing practices that reduce carbon footprints, minimize waste and optimize resource use while also ensuring financial and operational viability. For food processors looking to enhance their sustainability efforts, Bartkowiak advises taking a comprehensive view of the concept, "Sustainability is not just about reducing emissions or using recyclable materials — it's about ensuring the long-term vitality of your business, That means integrating ethical practices, regulatory compliance, and operational efficiency into your sustainability strategy." By aligning business goals with sustainability principles, food processors can achieve lasting benefits — not just for the environment, but

"Sustainability is often thought of as a singular goal, but in reality, it's a multifaceted approach," says Bartkowiak. "It's about ensuring the long-term vitality of a business — integrating ethical sourcing, regulatory compliance, operational efficiency, and environmental responsibility into a unified strategy." Looking ahead, food processors will need to continue innovation, adopting new materials and technologies, and refining their supply chain practices.

compostable linings, and bamboo paper. These materials meet the highest environmental standards, supporting businesses in their transition away from single-use plastics. The investment comes at a crucial time as foodservice providers, retailers, and distributors navigate rising costs, supply chain disruptions, and increasing consumer demand for greener alternatives.

Eco Guardian's expansion reflects a larger shift in the food packaging industry — one that prioritize sustainability, innovation, and local production. As Canada continues to implement policies aimed at reducing waste, companies

are also seeing a strong business case for sustainable packaging, with studies showing that Canadian consumers increasingly prefer brands with eco-friendly packaging and are willing to pay more for those products. Major retailers are prioritizing suppliers that reduce plastic waste, making sustainability a competitive advantage. With federal regulations tightening, companies that transition early can avoid compliance risks and potential fines. Additionally, lightweighting and switching to recyclable materials can lower material and shipping costs, improving profitability over time. Sustainable packaging isn't just good for the planet — it's smart business!

Transitioning to sustainable packaging may seem daunting for some food processors, but even taking small steps can show big change. When it comes to sustainable packaging, less is more. Reducing the quantity of packaging material not only lowers costs but also the environmental impact excessive packaging is a common pitfall, and cutting back can be a simple yet effective first step. When choosing materials, consider the options and their strengths and weaknesses, and assess what works best for the product's requirements, from shipping and usage to final disposal. Keep in mind the end-of-life of the packaging and if it can be reused, recycled or composted easily. While sustainable options can be slightly more costly, prices are gradually coming down as demand increases, and the investment should pay off in the long run, especially with more consumers willing to pay a premium for products that align with their values, **WFP**

Commentary

Fostering Trust in Food Labels

While Consumers Seek to Buy Canadian

anadians have been clear that they want to support Canadian businesses and buy Canadian products now, more than ever. The Government of Canada is working with provinces, territories, and industry associations to promote clear, transparent and accurate product labelling.

Help Consumers Spot Products with Canadian Input

As members of Canada's food industry, you have a critical role to play during this time. This includes considering

Evelyn Soo, executive

director, food safety and consumer

protection directorate.

using the voluntary "Product of Canada" or "Made in Canada" claims on food labels to make it easy for consumers to spot products with Canadian input.

When using these claims, it is important to follow the guidance in the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) Industry Labelling Tool to ensure your label is accurate and not misleading. For example, if you use the "Made in Canada" claim it should be gualified, such as "Made in Canada from domestic and imported ingredients."

Ensure Canadian Origin Claims are Used in Compliance with **Canada's Food Laws**

The CFIA has recently seen an increase in complaints related to country of origin claims on food labels or in advertisements, including some related to "Product of Canada" and "Made in Canada".

Accurate "Made in Canada" and "Product of Canada" labelling fosters a fair marketplace, builds trust, and strengthens consumer confidence in Canadian businesses. Every member of Canada's food industry can do their part in ensuring that the products you sell in Canada meets Canada's legislative requirements.

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Accurate "Made in Canada" and "Product of Canada" labelling fosters a fair marketplace, builds trust, and strengthens consumer confidence in Canadian businesses.

False or misleading claims about origin are against Canada's food laws and can damage consumer confidence. The CFIA is reinforcing its commitment to a transparent and trustworthy market and will take the appropriate enforcement action to protect Canadian consumers and industry from misleading claims when non-compliance is found.

The Government of Canada remains committed to supporting industry and providing businesses with tools and resources to help them succeed, so if you have any questions you can contact us through our online AskCFIA service. We also take labelling issues seriously and want to know about products that are labelled in a misleading manner. You can report concerns to the CFIA through our food complaint or concern web page.

We know you are also consumers, and our quick reference guide on how to identify Canadian food can help you spot the different words or symbols you may find while grocery shopping — some mean the food has Canadian content, while others mean it meets a Canadian standard for quality, or organic content. WFP

By: Nate Blum, CEO of BlüMilo and the Sorghum United Foundation

sorghum can even be used to make gluten-free beer. It's also used to brew traditional beers, particularly in Africa where it's referred to as opaque beer due to its cloudiness.

Extruded Products

Sorghum's versatility extends to various snack foods and baked goods.

Gluten-Free Foods and Beverages

Sorghum is an excellent grain for people with gluten

allergies or celiac disease. It can be used to substitute for

gluten-containing foods such as wheat, barley, and rye

without compromising on taste and versatility. It can be

used to make bread, pasta, flour, cookies, and many other

tasty foods. Anything that can be made from wheat flour,

sorghum can supplement. The ideas are endless. In fact,

Snack Foods

One of the fastest growing markets for sorghum in food processing is the snack food industry. Sorghum can be popped like popcorn, providing a nutty flavor and satisfying crunch. A lot of high-end restaurants are using popped sorghum to give salads a little crunch. For the stuff that doesn't pop, I add some olive oil and flavoring to make a tasty snack similar to corn nuts but with an easier crunch.

It can be flaked and used to make cereals and porridge or be incorporated in cereal bars and granola. Whole sorghum grains can be cooked and eaten as hot porridge, similar to oats or grits. Some companies have started to make puffs from sorghum that resemble one of the most popular snack foods—Cheetos. One such company based in San Diego, Chasin' Dreams Farm, has created crunchy ancient grain puffs using farmed sorghum and avocado oil, available in four flavors. Sorghum can be roasted and incorporated into granola or energy bars, used as a salad topper, or combined with nuts and raisins for a delicious trail mix.

Baked Goods

Sorghum can be ground into flour and used to make just about any baked goods you can think of, including cookies, noodles, pancakes, waffles, bread, cake, muffins, brownies, scones, and pasta. Not only are these foods super tasty, but they are all gluten-free. Sorghum pasta and noodles can be used to make a variety of delicious dishes, like pasta salad, stir fry, lasagna, spaghetti, and more.

Sorghum can give cakes, muffins, brownies, pancakes, and other dessert foods a nutty flavor with a hint of sweetness. It pairs well with dessert toppings like chocolate, nuts, and raisins, which enhances the rich flavour. Sorghum can even be used in pie crusts and tarts, adding a delicate, sweet flavour that works well with fruit or custard fillings.

Pre-Cooked Microwave Meals

People who prefer the convenience of simply heating pre-cooked microwaveable meals can enjoy sorghum along with it. Pre-cooked whole-grain sorghum can be used to replace rice and pasta in microwaveable dishes. From stews to soups, stir fry's and grain bowls, sorghum's versatility in pre-cooked microwaveable meals provides taste and convenience.

Syrup

or waffles.

Unlike sugar-based syrup, sorghum syrup retains a higher nutritive value. In fact, back in the 19th century, doctors sometimes prescribed sorghum syrup for medicinal purposes to help patients get essential vitamins and minerals. This is great for anyone who is healthconscious and wants to substitute their high-sugar syrup and sweeteners with sorghum.

Parboiled

Whole-grain sorghum can be used like rice, with a similar chewy texture to quinoa. It's ideal for ready-made meals, which are much more convenient than cooking sorghum from raw. Although rice typically takes a couple of minutes to cook, raw sorghum can take up to an hour on the stove, making parboiled sorghum more advantageous for heating and eating quickly. However, an instant cooker will come in handy if you prefer to cook raw sorghum from scratch. Once parboiled, I've seen sorghum products that are vacuum sealed and shelf-stable for up to two years.

Animal Feed

forage options are limited.

Conclusion

Sorghum stands out as an incredibly versatile and sustainable crop perfectly suited for modern food processing needs. Its rich nutritional profile, glutenfree nature, and adaptability to different climates make it an excellent choice for various food products. As both a nutrient-Foundation. rich food and a sustainable agriculture option, sorghum holds immense potential to meet the growing demands of health-conscious consumers and environmentally aware producers. WFP

The Various Ways Sorghum Can Be Used for Food Processing

• orghum is a versatile, sustainable crop that can be grown as grain, forage, or a sweet crop. It's one of U the top five cereals in the world and is widely used in food processing. It offers numerous benefits for human and animal health while also being more environmentally friendly to grow compared to other grains. Sorghum can be used for food processing in various ways. Generally, whatever you can do with other grains, you can do with sorghum.

Sorghum's Rich Nutritional Profile

Sorghum boasts a rich nutritional profile that outshines many other grains that currently make up the majority of our diets, hence why it's becoming increasingly more popular in the food processing industry.

It's an excellent source of plant-based protein, fibre, antioxidants like phenolic acids and flavonoids, and essential vitamins and minerals like iron, calcium, and B-vitamins. Sorghum is naturally gluten-free, low in nickel, and a non-GMO crop, making it suitable for various dietary preferences like gluten allergies or people with nickel allergies.

The antioxidants present in sorghum are beneficial for reducing inflammation, protecting cells from free-radical damage, and boosting the immune system. Sorghum is high in plant-based protein, making it ideal for vegans and vegetarians looking to boost their protein intake through healthy grains. Its high fibre content is great for digestion and supports gut health.

Beyond its nutritional benefits, sorghum has a mild nutty and sweet flavour that makes it a valuable ingredient in various sweet and savoury dishes.

Sorghum can be processed into a syrup, a healthy sweetener that has been used for centuries. It has a hearty taste similar to molasses but not as sweet as honey or maple syrup. Sorghum syrup usually comes from sweet sorghum due to the juicier stalk. It's made by feeding the harvested stalks through a press, straining it to remove impurities, and cooking it until it thickens and turns a dark, rich color. Sorghum syrup can be used to sweeten baked sorghum goods and is commonly enjoyed on pancakes

Sorghum is used in the production of animal feed due to its high nutritional profile. It's well known that sorghum is a highly nutritious addition to various types of animal feed, including poultry, swine, and ruminants. Sorghum's nutritional composition is similar to corn but with higher levels of protein and energy. Most parts of the plant, including stalks, grains, and leaves, can be utilized as animal feed ingredients. It's also more environmentally friendly and sustainable to grow compared to corn, thanks to its low production cost and stable yields. Sorghum stalks

can be used as forage or silage for livestock, especially in regions where other

Nate Blum, CEO of BlüMilo and the Sorghum United

Cellular Agriculture By Robin Brunet ••| ••|

> HARD CELL

Cellular agriculture has achieved breakthroughs — but faces challenges towards commercialization

Prairies Economic Development Canada's (PrairiesCan) announcement in March that it will invest over \$1.8 million to accelerate value-added agriculture across Alberta is regarded as a breakthrough for the cellular agriculture industry in this country.

Specifically, PrairiesCan will invest \$1 million in New Harvest Canada to "advance a more resilient food production system through cellular agriculture practices, which are emerging technologies that allow for producing food from cells."

Yadira Tejeda Saldana, director of responsible research & innovation – Canada, at Edmonton-based New Harvest, says, "This is our first public funding since we established ourselves as a non-profit entity in this country, and it's a validation of our attempt to

Yadira Tejeda Saldana, director of responsible research & innovation at New Harvest Canada.

enhance our food supply chain and diversify our economy." Founded in the U.S. in 2004, New Harvest is the world's longest-running organization dedicated to advancing the field of

Although only a handful of cell aq companies operate in Canada, Health Canada has assessed some food ingredients produced from cellular agriculture methods and established a framework whereby cell-cultivated meat products can be assessed.

cellular agriculture, by supporting open, public cultured meat research intended to take products out of the lab and into society

New Harvest in fact coined the term cellular agriculture (or, `cell aq') in 2015, to describe the use of biotechnologies such as tissue engineering, molecular biology, and synthetic biology, to produce agricultural products with just the cells of and not the entire host organism.

While this may sound like science fiction, cell ag has moved far beyond the theoretical stage. NASA in 2001 began conducting cultured meat experiments with the hope that astronauts could grow meat instead of transport it. In

and established a framework whereby cell-cultivated meat products can be assessed.

This, combined with the PrairiesCan announcement, is a promising start to making cell ag a viable addition to Canada's food chain. But Isha Datar, executive director at New Harvest Canada, stresses that it's only a start. "Our industry suffered when some companies said they would

make cell-cultivated meat commercial within a few years, and when that didn't happen, investment suffered," she says. "Moving forward, we need to augment government support not with investors who expect quick results, but bio-tech-focused investors who think in the long term."

The ultimate goal for New Harvest, Datar adds, "Would be to develop a food and pharma grade facility to

Isha Datar. executive director at New Harvest Canada.

advance production capabilities," with outcomes that could benefit the pharmaceutical industry as well.

Saldana dispels the notion that cell-cultivated meat would replace the traditional meat industry: "It's only meant to fill the gap between what traditional farming can produce to feed a steadily rising world population." She adds that Canada is the ideal incubator to support commercialization research, given that it's a leader in alternative proteins production and has a global reputation as a supplier of safe and high-quality products.

"Moving forward, we need to augment government support not with investors who expect guick results, but bio-tech-focused investors who think in the long term."

2013, a hamburger patty was created in the Netherlands from tissue grown outside of an animal. In 2020, the world's first commercial sale of cell-cultured chicken occurred at a Singapore restaurant, courtesy of U.S. firm Eat Just.

A regulatory breakthrough was achieved in 2022, when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration concluded that the cultured meats created by Upside Foods were safe to eat; approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture followed some months later.

But Saldana points out that "what remains is to make cell ag products affordable, and the infrastructure to make this happen doesn't exist, which is why our organization has funded a lot of early academic research, created textbooks, and helped lay the groundwork for commercialization."

Although only a handful of cell ag companies operate in Canada, Health Canada has assessed some food ingredients produced from cellular agriculture methods

As more governments press forward with plans to mitigate climate change, investment in cellular agriculture may well enjoy a renaissance.

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New Harvest dispels the notion that cell-cultivated meat would replace the traditional meat industry.

Those expecting a guicker bang for their taxpayer buck may take solace from the fact that cell ag development is not confined to meat; instead, start-ups are currently working on making animal-free milk, egg whites, and many other products.

dairy products; the animal-free milk contains the milk fats, two whey proteins and four casein proteins found in traditional cow milk, and Opalia plans to partner with companies that use milk for a wide range of products, not only including food, but also cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.

In Toronto, Ardra Inc. employs technology based on engineering biology and precision fermentation to design and construct benign microorganisms that convert sugar into natural and novel ingredients. One such ingredient is heme, usually the red coloured, iron-carrying compound in blood that is also responsible for meaty taste; Ardra's animal-free heme is a flavour and food colour ingredient, an iron supplement, and a media component for cultured meats.

Also in Toronto, Liven Proteins Corp. is a precision fermentation company making animal-free functional protein ingredients by upcycling agriculture and food industry byproducts; it is currently focusing on collagen ingredients to provide animal-free and affordable solutions for specialty nutrition.

Mamaghani says, "Canada has a relatively small start-up ecosystem that is risk-adverse to funding, but this will change as achievements continue to be made in the cell ag realm."

For her part, Datar is cautiously optimistic about the future. "I hope in the next five years there's a common knowledge about our strength in the food sector. A lot of elements need to work in our favour."

With the human population expected to reach 10 billion by

With the human population expected to reach 10 billion by 2050, feeding a growing population sustainably is rapidly becoming a priority.

One such firm is Montreal-based Genuine Taste, which creates cultivated fat as an ingredient to improve the texture, taste, and nutrition of alternative meats. The company has a proven scaffolding technology that increases

Pooya Mamaghani, CTO of Genuine Taste

the yield of cultivated fat, making industrial-scale production of this ingredient feasible.

Pooya Mamaghani, CTO of Genuine Taste, says, "We focus on beef fat because the taste of beef is the hardest of meats to mimic. We've achieved some scaling up and established a solid cell line, plus we've gotten good support from both human and pet food manufacturers. We'll be launching pet food trials in the next 12-18 months several years from now."

Meanwhile, Opalia Inc. of Montreal cultivates cow mammary cells in a bioreactor to create milk and other

first, followed by human food trials 2050, feeding a growing population sustainably is rapidly becoming a priority. And as more governments press forward with plans to mitigate climate change, investment in cellular agriculture may well enjoy a renaissance. WFP

Investing in Women, Feeding the Future

mall Scale Food Processor Association is committed to supporting Canada's food and beverage entrepreneurs. A key outcome of its Venture-Capital Ready program, which provided training to help women secure investment and scale their businesses, is the success of participants like BC-based Melissa L'Heureux-Haché and her brand, VEGAIN. Their achievements highlight the positive impact of women entrepreneurs on the food industry and underscore the need for continued targeted support. Building on this momentum, SSFPA is expanding its support with the launch of its Agrifood Enterprise Management System, a new resource offering essential business management tools to help entrepreneurs navigate industry challenges and grow their businesses.

Women-led businesses are a driving force in Canada's food industry, making up more than 50% of small food enterprises. However, these entrepreneurs face significant challenges when it comes to financing. Women-led businesses receive less than 4% of venture capital funding, and often encounter higher borrowing costs and stricter lending criteria than their male counterparts (WEKH, 2024). Yet, research shows that investing in women entrepreneurs pays off; women-led businesses perform 63% better, generate

Hannah Messineo (She, Her, Elle), communications coordinator, Small Scale Food Processor Association.

35% higher returns, and are 11% more likely to incorporate sustainability and diversity initiatives than their male peers (First Round Capital, 2016).

Small Scale Food Processor Association (SSFPA), an industry association providing resources and training to Canadian food processors, sought to address these challenges by launching Venture-Capital Ready: Investment Training for Women Entrepreneurs (VC Ready). VC Ready provides comprehensive training that improves access to investment for women in the food industry. "Supporting women-led businesses can drive economic growth," says Program Manager Janet Dean. "That's why SSFPA created the Venture-Capital Ready program — to help women-led food businesses unlock their potential for growth."

VC Ready has already proven its impact through success stories like Melissa L'Heureux-Haché, co-founder of VEGAIN. As a vegan for over ten years, Melissa was looking for plant-

By: Hanna Messineo, Communications Coordinator, Small Scale Food Processor Association.

How SSFPA is **Driving Innovation in** the Food Industry

based protein options that didn't compromise on taste or quality. With her partner, Edon, she developed VEGAIN, a vegan sports nutrition brand that caters to athletes looking to optimize their performance. As they've worked to grow VEGAIN, Melissa has faced stigma as a woman entrepreneur. Says Melissa, "People often look at Edon as the authority, rather than me. It happens in business meetings, at financial institutions — unfortunately, it's gotten to the point where we've turned down opportunities because it actually impacts my ability to work with someone."

Through VC Ready, Melissa polished her pitch and mastered the investor Q&A — an area of the investment process that women statistically struggle with. Says Melissa, "It was really impactful to learn the statistics on women earning investment. Knowing that women are more likely to be asked negativeleaning questions, to be put on the defensive; the acknowledgement that I am spoken to differently as a woman entrepreneur has helped me not take it personally, and work to get ahead of it." Now, as VEGAIN launches its first round of equity crowdfunding, Melissa is putting her new skills to good use. "Getting so much practice in a group setting with live feedback was incredibly valuable. Now, I've got this new set of skills, and they're coming in handy a lot quicker than I expected!"

The interest in VC Ready across Canada has highlighted the growing need for targeted resources for food entrepreneurs. While VC Ready was developed to assist entrepreneurs at the investment stage of their business, SSFPA recognized there was still a critical gap for tools to assist starting and growing businesses.

To address this gap, SSFPA is thrilled to announce its newest resource: the Agrifood Enterprise Management System (AEMS). Launching this spring, AEMS is a comprehensive suite of business management tools built specifically for food and beverage entrepreneurs. AEMS currently includes a Food Business Planner, Food Production Planner, Food Safety Planner, Inventory Management, Food Business Management, and Resource Library. Through an SSFPA membership, members will have access not only to the AEMS platform, but also a host of other exclusive resources and benefits.

With AEMS, SSFPA is furthering its commitment to supporting food and beverage entrepreneurs at all stages. By equipping businesses with tools designed for their unique challenges, SSFPA aims to empower more small and medium-sized businesses to thrive, bolstering Canada's local food system. **WFP**

Investment Training for Women Entrepreneurs

To learn more about AEMS, including pricing and partnership opportunities, please visit our website at ssfpa.net. Venture-Capital Ready is funded through the Government of Canada's WES Inclusive Venture Capital Initiative.

Plantiful Opportunities

Canada's Crop-growing Abilities Make it the Ideal Hub for Plant Protein Innovations

anadian consumers don't see adding plant-based foods in their diet as an allor-nothing process any longer — the flexitarian movement is the way forward for many. Those who choose to eat meat may also want to eat more plant-based foods for a variety of reasons including accessing a greater range of nutrients, concerns about the environment or reducing food costs.

As Canadians consider adding more plant-based products to their shopping cart, they can rest assured that their home and native land is also the home of many protein-based crops that grow well in the diverse climates across the country. This means Canada is well positioned to become a plant-basket of increasingly flexible and in-demand ingredients in addition to being part of the Great Plains bread-basket.

Robert Hunter, CEO with Protein Industries Canada says no other country can grow the "pantry of crops" Canada can.

Alternate Proteins

By Ronda Payne

Robert Hunter, CEO with Protein Industries Canada.

Big Picture Pulses

She adds that eating pulses has been part of other cultures for centuries and North America is just beginning to catch up on using them to establish healthier diets. Healthy soils and healthy diets aren't even the full picture for pulses. They can also improve affordability and enhance other ingredients to improve texture and performance.

In the U.S., where egg prices have skyrocketed, pulses can be a new option.

"We're seeing a really big opportunity for pulse crops to help [as an egg substitute]," Dutton says. "Providing alternatives that are cost-effective and functional."

She also sees the dairy alternatives space as a new window for pulses to enter.

"We can provide the most sustainable crops, but we can also provide that in an ingredient package that a processor might be looking for, from a trusted country."

"We have just a huge variety of crops that grow extremely well, and of high guality, in Canada," he says. "The ability for us to have this wide scope of crops in Canada, that's what I find really exciting. It's a whole plethora of opportunities."

Canada can deliver on nationwide, as well as international, food processor demands for plant-based ingredients focused on health, functionality, taste and sustainability.

"This country can provide that," Hunter says. "We can provide the most sustainable crops, but we can also provide that in an ingredient package that a processor might be looking for, from a trusted country."

Ingredients That Help the Land

One of those Canadian ingredient providers is Saskatoon, Saskatchewan-based Lovingly Made Ingredients which purchases pulse

Heidi Dutton, co-owner of Lovingly Made.

protein starches, fibres and flours. The company also makes rusks, textured proteins, crisps and snacks from pulse crops that have had the protein removed.

crops from Canadian farmers to make

Heidi Dutton, co-owner of Lovingly Made, says the game-changing aspect of pulses is that they are a nitrogen fixer of the soil for farmers. This is what makes them more sustainable than other crops.

"When a farmer grows a pulse crop, they don't have to put any artificial fertilizers down," she says. "Pulse crops are really the avenue to make our farmers

more efficient and to make our people healthy." Peas and fava beans both fix nitrogen for the soil, but

fava beans even more so.

Saskatchewan-based Lovingly Made Ingredients purchases pulse crops from Canadian farmers to make protein starches, fibres and flours.

Lovingly Made produces snacks from pulse crops that have had the protein removed.

"Ice creams. We're seeing pulse crops playing a larger role in alt dairy," she says. "There's a few products now on store shelves. You're going to see a lot of alt dairy coming down the pike."

While these would be substitute products that replace another product consumers choose, the role for ingredient enhancements is even larger. Hybrid meat products will include sausages and other animal proteins that contain a plant-based ingredient, like pea flours.

"Historically, we just had pure plant-based meat in the market," Dutton says. "But now, we're seeing a lot more hybrid products where peas can be incorporated into meat products. We're seeing them being incorporated into sausage, we're seeing them being incorporated into coatings and breadings."

She says not only can peas be blended with ground beef to give it the additional nutrients from a vegetable, but a

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"You see front-of-packaging labelling about how many grams of protein," Hunter says.

And, because other cultures are ahead of North America in their consumption of pulses as Dutton notes, the opportunity to sell Canadian plant-based ingredients to other markets is significant.

"In the Asian market, the idea of eating plant-based protein is not new," Hunter says. "It's been part of their diet for millennia. Now what we're seeing is how they are sourcing, tweaking, creating more functionality. It's accessing that and giving them more opportunities."

Alternative proteins may have originated with tofu, so cultures familiar with it are embracing the new options pulses provide. If using pulse flours allows rice noodles to stay firmer, longer, there's a market. It's a matter of functionality along with familiarity.

"Some of our members are doing some great things with the byproducts," he says. "It's not just the protein that's going to create that value, it's the whole seed."

hamburger patty made this way would be more affordable and it won't shrink when it's cooked. It will stay juicy.

If You Build It...

Technologies and innovation are going to bring these crops from Canadian fields into an overabundance of products.

"Where Protein Industries Canada is really trying to drive that, is investing in the R&D and the innovation that's seeing those products being tied to the food industry," Hunter says. "That's building on our understanding of our core products. We know wheat, we know things like canola meal, so how do we then take that knowledge and make it accessible to customers or countries?"

Sneaking in the Veg

For typical North Americans, however, there still may be something of a learning curve. As Dutton explains, some people may see the addition of pea protein in their hot dog as a filler, while others understand the potential and appreciate the nutritional addition, recognizing the purpose behind the addition.

"We all can eat more vegetables to be more healthy," she says. "That's where the pea comes into play. You're feeding me more vegetables. That's awesome. If I can feed my six-year-old more peas when he sits down to eat a sausage, I'm happy about that."

And when that happens, Hunter sees it as a massive benefit to Canada.

"This industry has the potential to be a \$25 billion industry for Canada by 2035," he says.

This value comes from plant-protein products as well as those that come from the post-protein removal like fibres and starches.

"Some of our members are doing some great things with the byproducts," he says. "It's not just the protein that's going to create that value, it's the whole seed."

The rising demand isn't just about adding more plantbased ingredients either. It's delivering cleaner ingredients for products and those that are protein-enriched.

Eating pulses has been part of other cultures for centuries and North America is just beginning to catch up on using them to establish healthier diets.

In snacks, these ingredients can provide the satisfaction of crunch and flavour, but there's more to it than empty calories.

"We make a really nice line of high protein crisps," Dutton says. "Those allow companies to have an ingredient that's wonderfully crunchy, but also high protein."

Plant-based foods will continue to rise in popularity with consumers seeking them out for a range of reasons. Incorporating Canadian pulses into products will not only meet this demand but will also support Canadian farmers. WFP

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StarLITE-R STILL: Sidel's New High Production Speed 100% rPET Lightweight Bottle Base for Still Products

StarLITE-R STILL is a new bottle base that employs Sidel's patented technology to ensure 100% recycled PET (rPET) integration, lightweighting, and high-speed production for water, juices, milk, and edible oil from 0.25L up to 2.5L.

"Mainstream food and beverage manufacturers are seeking designs that range from simple, lightweight options to more aesthetic shapes with optimised weights, yet all compatible with high-speed production," comments Mikael Derrien, manager packaging innovations at Sidel.

"They aim to reduce production costs through lightweighting, lower blowing pressures, and reduced energy consumption, while also striving to minimise their carbon footprint in response to regulatory pressures and consumer demand."

"Today there are bottle bases on the market suitable for lightweight designs and high production speeds,

however, they're designed for virgin PET bottles. Sidel's StarLITE-R STILL is the only solution on the market specifically developed to address recycled PET that achieves the high performance necessary in this competitive market space."

Balancing production speed, material type, and bottle weight presents a complex challenge for manufacturers in maintaining high performance, but the StarLITE®-R STILL overcomes these with precise bottle base shaping and efficient material distribution.

Its innovative design can also be seamlessly retrofitted onto existing production lines ensuring versatility and the solution requires a low blowing pressure, further enhancing its sustainability credentials.

For more information: www.sidel.com

INDCO High Speed Floor Mount Dispersers Are Ideal for Viscous Materials

INDCO HS series floor mounted high-speed dispersers are ideal for mixing a wide range of products in production batches of up to 200 gallons. With a mechanical pulley control or a variable frequency drive to vary to speed, and motors from 5 to 20 HP, these mixers have the power and versatility to handle a wide range of material viscosities.

All models are equipped with a 316 stainless

steel shaft, and a 304SS dispersion blade (size

determined by motor HP). Industrial models feature

enamel painted carbon steel frames. Epoxy coated

or all stainless-steel construction can be quoted for

custom applications. Pre-lubricated heavy-duty ball

bearings ensure smooth operation and eliminate

maintenance. A pneumatic cylinder lift mechanism

raises and lowers the blade for batch changeover.

Holder capacity is 55-gallon drum — with capacity

to 200 gallons for larger horsepower models if vessel

height is less than 40 inches. TEFC and EP motors are available.

A protective shaft guard, which prevents harm to operators while dispersing at high speed, is included with each model. An optional digital tachometer — 0-10,000 rpm, (not explosion proof) is available to more accurately determine speed. INDCO HS series floor mounted, variable speed, high-speed dispersers are ideal for a wide range of material viscosities, so they can be used in a vast assortment of industries and applications.

For more information: www.INDCO.com

Nilfisk Introduces the CS7500 Combination Sweeper-Scrubber

Nilfisk has launched the CS7500 Combination Sweeper-Scrubber, a groundbreaking solution in industrial cleaning that redefines efficiency, user accessibility and sustainability. Engineered for maximum performance in diverse environments, the CS7500 features an intuitive touchscreen with multilingual support and ergonomic design that makes it easy to operate. This innovative cleaning machine is compact and ultra-maneuverable for excellent performance in tight spaces. Equipped with proprietary Nilfisk technology, it optimizes water, detergent and energy use for costeffective, eco-friendly operation.

Usability is at the core of the CS7500 Combination Sweeper-Scrubber's design, ensuring accessibility for operators of all skill levels. Onboard training videos, guided maintenance and a customizable touchscreen with multilingual support streamline the learning process to help even first-time users operate the machine with confidence. An adjustable seat, steering wheel and three-touchpoint entry enhance comfort and accessibility, while the intuitive ClearView design improves visibility for safer, more precise cleaning.

With a compact design, this machine delivers the smallest aisle turn radius on the market, making it ideal for tight, crowded spaces. Its cleaning speed of 5.6 mph helps to reduce cleaning time and increase productivity. Advanced features like indoor mapping provide proof of cleaning, saving time and ensuring performance precision by eliminating the need for manual reporting. The CS7500 also helps to lower the total cost of ownership through stressfree maintenance, extended serviceability via the Nilfisk Service Network, and efficient setup and post-cleaning processes.

For more information:https:// www.nilfisk.com/en-ca/professional/ campaigns/nilfisk-cs7500-a-new-formulafor-the-cleaning-experience/

Harpak-ULMA Introduces the FM400 Horizontal Flow Packaging Powerhouse

Harpak-ULMA, a leader in smart, connected packaging solutions, has introduced the FM400 horizontal flow wrap packaging machine. Designed to address the rigorous demands of high-speed Modified Atmosphere Packaging (MAP) for fresh food applications, the FM400 sets a new benchmark in speed, sanitation, and versatility, capable of producing up to 150 packs per minute. Its MAP technology extends product freshness and shelf life by ensuring airtight packaging integrity.

At the core of the FM400's design is its Long-Dwell sealing head, featuring an advanced orbital movement mechanism that delivers impeccable hermetic seals at exceptional speeds. Engineered for strict sanitation standards, the FM400 boasts a stainless-steel body and vertical plate construction, allowing for rigorous cleaning with hot water and chemicals. Its external electronic components, rated IP66 or higher, provide superior water and dust protection, ensuring long-term durability in challenging environments.

The FM400's modular design and versatility extend through multiple configuration options, including top reel, bottom reel, and side seal versions. It supports a variety of barrier films, such as laminates and shrink films, allowing businesses to package diverse products efficiently while enhancing product presentation and protection. With a state-of-the-art 10-inch color touchscreen powered by an Industrial PC, operators enjoy an intuitive interface with customizable on-screen help and navigation. Optional consumption analysis tools provide valuable insights into energy and material usage, helping producers optimize cost and sustainability initiatives.

Seamless connectivity with MES, ERP, and SCADA systems synchronizes packaging operations with broader production workflows, enabling enhanced visibility and data-driven decisionmaking. Remote service capabilities minimize operational interruptions, while Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE) monitoring proactively addresses maintenance needs to maximize uptime. Optional features like the online residual oxygen analysis system ensure precise atmosphere control for sensitive products, while the "Easy-Tape" automatic reel change system reduces downtime and labour requirements. Automatic feeding systems further streamline product handling to maintain consistent high-speed packaging performance.

For more information:https://www.harpak-ulma.com/ equipment/FM400

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TOSS Seal and Cut Bands **Combine Precision and Efficiency** for Food Packaging Applications

Transforming food packaging with customizable heat sealing technology TOSS Machine Components, Inc. is revolutionizing packaging processes with its advanced seal and cut heat seal bands. Designed to address the specific needs of the food packaging industry, TOSS seal and cut bands provide unparalleled precision, efficiency, and customization. They are ideal for applications such as sealing bags and

pouches for snacks, coffee, and other food products to ensure freshness.

Three key offerings — Beaded Bands, T-Profile Bands, and Custom Seal-Cut (CSC) Bands — stand out for their ability to deliver consistent, reliable seals while cutting polymeric films in a single process. Each band incorporates unique design features and cutting-edge technology tailored to various applications. The Beaded Band design

includes tapered edges, eliminating sharp and high-

temperature outer edges for safer handling and consistent performance. The bead itself retains more heat than adjacent edges, enabling precise cutting without overheating the sealed areas. Additionally, the space behind the bead is designed to avoid contact with the underlayment backing material, preventing heat loss and ensuring efficient operation. This band is ideal for high-cycle processes in industries like food packaging, where reduced material waste is paramount and dependable seals ensure product integrity and freshness.

The T-Profile Band provides a greater mass per unit length and therefore is able to retain more heat, making it effective for cutting through thicker film stacks or multi-layered films. Featuring a sharp cutting edge and a relieved back design, this band minimizes contact with underlayment backing, ensuring efficient heat distribution.

For more information, contact info@tossheatseal.com or visit https://www.tossheatseal.com/

Weighpack Introduces New Swifty Bagger S-3600 Duplex Servo, High-Speed Pre-Made Pouch Bagger with Twin Infeed and Dual Filling Stations

WeighPack Systems, a leader in engineering and manufacturing primary packaging machinery, proudly announces the release of the Swifty Bagger S-3600 Duplex Servo, a new powerful addition to its high-performance Swifty Bagger pre-made pouch filling machine family.

Designed to maximize productivity, flexibility, and ease of use, the Swifty Bagger S-3600 sets a new standard for high-speed pouch bagging, capable of opening, filling and sealing up to 70 pre-made pouches per minute or 4,200 pouches per hour. Equipped with twin pouch infeed conveyors and dual fill stations, this advanced bagger seamlessly handles liquids, solids, and powders with high speed and precision.

As part of the trusted Swifty Bagger family, the S-3600 features a unique straight-line design, allowing operators full visibility of the bag opening, filling, and sealing processes. This operator-friendly layout reduces the need for additional personnel, simplifies servicing, and makes cleaning a breeze, ensuring uninterrupted productivity.

The Swifty Bagger family also offers seamless integration with printers, allowing businesses to efficiently add QR codes, expiration dates, or custom branding directly onto pouches, enhancing flexibility and operational efficiency.

For more information:https://www.weighpack.com/ pouch-filling-machines/

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