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Rutgers University Opens Food Innovation Center Incubator Facility

Oct 17, 2008



Rutgers University's New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) will officially open its 23,000-square-foot Food Innovation Center (FIC) business incubator and food-processing facility today in Bridgeton, N.J., the center of the state's agriculture sector. Center director Lou Cooperhouse described the opening as "a major new expansion" of the entity.

The facility features a product development test kitchen, focus group and sensory analysis capabilities, microbiology and chemistry analytical laboratories, state-of-the-art distance learning and education equipment, and a complete production area for shared-use food processing.

Robert M. Goodman, executive director of the Rutgers NJAES, said the "FIC is [now] well equipped to cultivate new businesses, provide technical and business support, act as a hub for continuing education, and promote collaborative research and learning opportunities."

Cooperhouse said the new business incubator facility "will greatly expand our capabilities and enable the design, development, marketing, analysis, commercialization, and ongoing manufacture of food products for sale to retail and foodservice markets. This new facility allows the FIC to provide business and technology expertise to small and mid-size food companies in New Jersey, and lets us utilize our outreach capacity to reach food and agribusinesses throughout the nation."

FIC clients include farmers and rural cooperatives, startup food companies, existing small and mid-sized food establishments, and retail and foodservice markets, including retailers interested in developing private label products, that want to purchase locally grown New Jersey products.

In a phone interview with Progressive Grocer, Cooperhouse said that the center focuses on perishable value-added products, including fresh-cut produce, and refrigerated prepared foods; hot processing, including frozen or refrigerated soups, stews, jams, jellies, and ciders; and dry processing, including breads, baked goods, and dehydrated products. He noted that the center often works on products encompassing all three areas.

Cooperhouse also said that the center is working on an online service to provide outreach to the food industry across the nation and globally. The introductory course of the service is slated to go live by January 2009, with future courses to follow during the balance of that year.

Since opening its doors in 2001, the award-winning FIC has been a catalyst for economic development in the state and surrounding region, and has helped over 1,000 companies and entrepreneurs, located in every county of New Jersey, with customized assistance and educational programs.

For more information visit www.foodinnovation.rutgers.edu.

In related news, the FIC will be the first food business incubator program in the country to include the NASA-developed AiroCide PPT air sanitation technology from Atlanta-based KES Science and Technology, Inc. for use in its facility. Because airborne cross-contamination is a threat to food safety, the chemical-free AiroCide system, which kills airborne mold, fungi, bacteria and viruses, in addition to removing volatile organic compounds (VOCs),

provides added protection to enhance quality assurance in the food-processing environment.

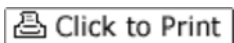
The patented technology, which is not a filter, complements results of filtration systems such as HEPA/MERV.

The AiroCide PPT system is used in the perishable food and beverages industries that include retail (grocery and floral), distribution (produce and floral), food and beverage, and analytical laboratories (tissue culture and food processing).

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