



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Daniel Prefontaine

Our Saskatchewan food industry is at the forefront of change. Over the past year, we have seen an increase in products that stretch our taste buds and minds for new innovative solutions. The province, as a whole, has experienced unprecedented growth and change. We have seen increases in population, immigration, diversity and new business that all have a positive impact on our food industry. Consumers are seeking new adventures, experiences and health through the food they consume.

For the Food Centre, we feel the murmurs created by these activities drive our industry. Last year was one of our best years for new product development with many spicy sensations hitting the retail market. We have also seen in the last year; a shift to designing foods that meet a populations' quest for wellness through their daily bread.

Since the start of the Food Centre, one of its primary goals was to be a organization where innovation is envisioned, nurtured and flourished for the benefit of our provincial food processing community. The Food Centre captured that philosophy by collaborating with Western Economic Diversification, Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan, Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture to bring the first R&D twin screw extruder to our province. The project was in development for three years and focuses on opportunities that advance innovation in the strategic area of cereal crops, pulses, specialty crops and bio products. Innovation advances our industry, its people and provides a pathway for growth and the desire to seek knowledge.

In 2008, the Food Centre launched new courses in food safety, starting with the HACCP & Food Safety Certificate Program, an online training course to provide flexible training through the internet. It assists food processors in the development of new, trained HACCP coordinators to meet industry regulatory requirements for national and international trade. Listeria was at the forefront of the industry as Canada dealt with a major outbreak. The Food Centre, in partnership with Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, developed and delivered seminars across the province to provide processors with information on its sources, control methods and testing to ensure our industry was up to date.

The Centre brings forward new programs through partnership arrangements with Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, the Agri Value Program, Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan, Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Saskatchewan, Western Economic Diversification and the National Research Council (IRAP). These partnerships provide funding for projects that address industry's current needs and enable them to stay competitive in a global market.

The Food Centre continues to be a leader in innovation, value added food development and commercialization of knowledge for the agri-food sector. The Centre's role as an incubator provides operational support and interim processing for start-up companies and expansion to new markets for existing operations.

The Food Centre continues to connect with the industry to identify areas of growth, new opportunities and challenges. The Centre will continue to build on our expertise, developing highly qualified people, focus on our strengths and assist in expanding or diversity for agricultural based products. Our industry is supported by the strength of innovative individuals, cooperative partnerships, and the enthusiasm of our clientele. We look forward to growing the relations built in 2008 and the opportunities ahead in 2009.