

## New business group promotes southern Ontario

A newly formed economic development group is hoping that more foreign food manufacturers will soon be setting up shop in southern Ontario.

Officially launched during SIAL Canada last month, the Ontario Food Cluster is made up of food manufacturers, associations and economic development agencies in southern Ontario — including the Greater Toronto Area, Guelph and Waterloo region. Its goal is to promote the area to international investors interested in expansion into North America.



The Ontario Food Cluster team includes (left to right): Bill Harvie, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA); Barb Maly, City of Guelph/Grow Guelph; Gerry Piszowski, from the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance; Mark Jonker, OMAFRA; John Swan, OMAFRA; and Bill Elliot of Canada's Technology Triangle.

According to Gerry Piszowski, vice-president of Business Development for the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance, the Cluster already represents manufacturing revenues of \$34 million per year from 2,500 food and beverage companies. Additional companies in the area will provide added job opportunities, more R&D potential, and greater opportunities for the region's primary producers.

Sue Bennett, director of University and Community Relations for the University of Guelph, notes too that the region already has a strong positive reputation for agri-food manufacturing, particularly in the premium and health food markets. "We already have producer support, plus there is skilled labour, raw materials, a great R&D base and a large retail market, among other benefits," she says.

Piszowski says the Cluster is now beginning to actively market the region to potential businesses at international shows such as SIAL Canada, at IFT this month and later at Anuga.

The effort will be a co-ordinated approach, with support from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, as well as the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. "We've assembled all the information and support to break down barriers for foreign companies," says Piszowski, noting that the Cluster will offer support in terms of due diligence, accessing government funding, R&D, and access to retail markets.

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