

Food News

January 2024

Agriculture and Irrigation News

Alberta's Food Processing Development Centre (FPDC): Bringing ideas to market for 40 years!

In 1984, the FPDC opened for business as a 2,800 square metre facility and in this year we're celebrating 40 years helping agri-food businesses develop and bring food and beverage products to market.



Today, the FPDC is a 6,000 square metre facility. We have a culinary lab, product development and analytical laboratories, and a commercial pilot plant with more than \$20 million in specialized food processing equipment. Our facility meets federal food-regulation requirements, which allows client companies to prepare products for sale within Canada and internationally.



The FPDC has more than 40 team members with a range of expertise. They include food scientists, product development and food processing technologists, food safety and business development specialists, and administrative support.



Food, beverage and ingredient companies of all sizes work with us as clients on a fee-for-service basis. Our team provides support with:

- industry-driven research
- product and process development
- scale-up
- interim processing to introduce a product to market before graduating to Alberta's Agrivalue Business Processing Incubator, their own facility or a partnership with a co-packer.

For the past four decades, the FPDC has played an important role driving economic growth and change in our agri-food industry by helping start-ups to well-known food companies make products and expand into new markets. Our research partnerships with food companies and post-secondaries have inspired innovation and growth in the agri-food industry. To honour this legacy, we will be hosting anniversary-related events and projects this year.



Stay tuned to Food News to find out what's happening. In the meantime, [learn more about the FPCD and take virtual tours](#).

Alberta salsa company red hot with help from FPDC

Red House Salsa is a thriving small business that's turning up the heat in the condiment category. Located in St. Albert, the company was founded in 2016 by Mary Burch, a passionate food enthusiast and entrepreneur. It all began with Burch gifting jars of homemade salsa to family, friends, and teachers then discovering success at a farmers' market.

As the popularity of her salsas grew, so did the orders. After outgrowing her home kitchen, Burch ramped up production by renting a commercial kitchen in a church. But she quickly realized she needed to scale up to satisfy demand. That's when she heard about Alberta's Food Processing Development Centre (FPDC) in Leduc.



The FPDC works with start-ups and established food companies on a fee-for-service basis to help them develop recipes, scale up production and introduce products to new markets. As clients, companies like Red House Salsa receive product development support from food scientists and technologists in a laboratory or test kitchen – also known as benchtop development. Then technicians teach clients how to use the equipment in the pilot plant to process products for sale to consumers.

Since the facility is licensed and inspected by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, clients can process safe, consistent and fully traceable products for sale in Canada and internationally. For Burch, this was a big change as it meant more paperwork and protocols. "Moving from a commercial kitchen with a provincial licence to a federally licensed facility can be overwhelming," says Burch. "My FPDC support team made the transition easier. I've learned so much from them and other clients at the facility."

Since working with the FPDC, Burch has gone from hand lading salsa into 800 jars a day to producing about 8,000 jars in three days. "It would be nearly impossible to produce enough salsa to meet our current orders if I was still working out of a community kitchen with only friends and family to help," says Burch. "I'm grateful for the expert advice I receive from food scientists and technicians at the FPDC. With their help, I've learned how to scale up my recipes and use the facility for interim processing four or five times a year."

Burch adds, "Interim processing allows small food companies to grow without the burden of large capital expenditures for equipment and facilities." While working with the FPDC, clients can prepare to transition to Alberta's Agrivalue Processing Business Incubator, their own facility, or a partnership with a co-packer. Clients also receive coaching and help identifying programs, services and resources to build their business.

With assistance from the FPDC, Red House Salsa now offers a diverse product line through more than 80 retailers across Alberta and British Columbia. "We have salsas that cater to every taste, whether you prefer mild, garlicky or a spicy kick," says Burch. "Each one is crafted with precision using fresh, locally sourced ingredients to achieve the perfect balance of heat and flavour." By supporting local farmers and businesses and producing high quality sustainable products, Red House Salsa has earned a loyal customer base.



The FPDC has helped small food companies like Red House Salsa bring ideas to market for 40 years. "I highly recommend working with the FPDC," says Burch. "It's given me the business knowledge, food processing experience and confidence to turn up the heat and take Red House Salsa to the next level."

Boost your bottom line through effective production scheduling

Have you ever pondered how your ability to manage your production schedule affects your performance and profitability as a food manufacturer? Or, have you ever had to cancel production because your raw materials didn't arrive on time, you were short labour, or those sales orders didn't materialize?

You will achieve higher profitability and resolve these concerns through thoughtful sales forecasting and production scheduling. When you plan for production, you will utilize resources more effectively, reduce lead times and improve overall efficiency. A production schedule can help you:

- meet customer demand and delivery deadlines
- decrease costs for raw materials, labour and production setup
- optimize equipment use
- shorten lead times
- minimize inventory levels while avoiding stockouts
- improve overall efficiency and productivity
- enhance relationships with staff by scheduling work in advance and managing expectations.

To start developing the schedule, you will need to determine how much product to produce and when to produce it. There are a few ways to do this. You can look at historical sales information, market trends and established orders. Then map out your processes:

- identify the raw materials you need and the timeline to order them
- collect all the necessary paperwork for your food safety plans
- determine the equipment and staff you will use for the production run
- identify any bottlenecks and a plan to minimize them.

The next step is to figure out deadlines and use the information above to plan the schedule with tools that meet your company's scale and needs. You can add more details as they become available. Then communicate the schedule and implementation plan to your staff or manufacturing partner. Make sure to keep them informed if there are any changes.

With an effective production schedule, your food business will remain competitive and boost its bottom line.

Webinars, events and programs

Agriculture and Irrigation Workshop Introduction to 3D Food Printing

January 10, 2024 – 9:00 a.m.

3D Food Printing (3DFP) is an exciting new technology that offers customizable food preparation and manufacturing options for both consumers and food businesses. The Food Processing Development Centre (FPDC) is hosting a half day workshop on 3DFP with the University of Alberta. Participants will get an introduction to 3DFP and learn about current research at the University of Alberta, and food industry perspectives on how this technology can be used.

Attend online or in person at the FPDC in Leduc where you can see a live 3DFP demonstration. Space is limited to 30 people.

Speakers: FPDC and University of Alberta experts

Registration deadline: Before 9:00 a.m., January 10

Register: [Get tickets for the free workshop.](#)
[For the webinar only use this link to register.](#)

Agriculture and Irrigation Webinar Continuous Improvement 1.0

January 18, 2024 –9:30 a.m.

Do you wish that your business could achieve better cost savings, develop more efficient processes, and use resources more effectively? But you think your business is too small to do it. Then this webinar is for you.

It's one thing to read about Continuous Improvement (CI) in a book, and another to speak with experts who've been using CI to drive results in small- to medium-sized businesses. If you're interested in beginning your own CI journey, the Food and Bio Processing Branch invites you to learn more from keynote speaker Kim Wolf. She will provide information that can help you establish a CI program, determine which CI tools can work best in your organization, and the bottom line results you can expect to see. Kim will be joined by a panel of industry who will share their challenges and successes implementing CI.

Speakers: Kim Wolf Leadership Coaching and Manufacturing Consulting and representatives from industry.

Registration deadline: Before 9:30 a.m., January 18

Register: [Sign up for this free webinar.](#)

Agriculture and Irrigation Webinar How to win on Amazon: debunking the myths and misconceptions for food brands

February 15, 2024 – 1:30 p.m.

Are you a food brand owner who wants to succeed on Amazon? Then join this webinar with keynote speaker Tom Harrison, a consumer-packaged goods food brand consultant to find out how.

The Food and Bio Processing Branch is hosting this 90-minute webinar where Tom will share his extensive experience as an Amazon seller. He will provide practical advice and deep insights into the world of Amazon selling. During the presentation, Tom will debunk myths and misconceptions, address specific challenges and opportunities food brands face, and give participants a chance to ask specific business questions.

Speaker: Tom Harrison, owner of TNT Ecommerce Inc.

Registration deadline: Before 1:30 p.m., February 15

Register: [Sign up for this free webinar.](#)

Leduc County Webinar Food safety: best practices and regulations for local markets

February 28, 2024 – 2:30 p.m.

Learn about the various regulations that apply to local food products and the markets where they are sold. In this free webinar, Alberta Health Services will cover topics like low- and high-risk foods, resource materials, and steps to take when planning a food-related event.

Speaker: Alberta Health Services (AHS)

Registration deadline: February 27, 2024

Register: [Leduc County - Food safety for direct marketers](#) or contact Sharon at sharon@leduc-county.com or 780-770-9271.

Leduc County Overview of CanadaGAP and food safety practices for fresh fruit and vegetable growers

March 6, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.

Participate in this free webinar series to understand CanadaGAP, its purpose, benefits and practices. In this free webinar, learn about web-based CanadaGAP resources, business processes and fees for businesses working towards certification.

Speaker: Erin Hiebert, Saskatchewan Food Industry Development Centre Inc.

Registration deadline: March 5, 2024

Register: [Leduc County - Food safety for direct marketers](#) or contact Sharon at sharon@leduc-county.com or 780-770-9271.

Funding

THRIVE Academy IV Program

February – March 2024

The THRIVE Academy is 12-week pre-accelerator program designed to support pre-seed and early-stage agrifood tech startups in commercializing their innovations.

This program offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to de-risk and validate their ideas, develop a robust go-to-market strategy, and prepare for raising capital. Taking place from February to May 2024, it provides ample time for intensive learning, mentorship, and networking.

Registration deadline: Before 11:59 p.m., January 12

Register: [Learn more and apply.](#)

Alberta Food Processors Association



As the new year unfolds, AFPA is set to celebrate its golden anniversary. For 50 years, the association has been the voice of Alberta's food and beverage industry.

Several exciting events are in the works to mark this major milestone. AFPA will re-introduce the Food and Beverage Awards to recognize excellence, innovation, and outstanding achievements in Alberta's food and beverage sector. There's also a 50th anniversary special event planned for June.

Make sure to subscribe to our e-newsletter and follow our social posts to:

- learn more about upcoming events
- take advantage of our extensive food safety and workplace health and safety courses
- keep up to date on important issues impacting the industry.

Find out how to receive the e-newsletter and contribute story ideas at [Alberta Food Processors Association Newsletters.](#)

Made in Alberta Voluntary Labelling Program

Over the decades AFPA has remained dedicated to supporting Alberta's food and beverage processors and that works continues with the Made in Alberta program. When consumers shop at their local farmers' market or grocery store, this voluntary labeling program helps them quickly choose food and beverage products made right here in our province. More than 300 companies are now using the label on more than 450 products, highlighting the incredibly diverse food and beverage offerings made in Alberta. AFPA is encouraging more food companies to participate in the program. To sign up and see the products that currently display the label, visit madeinalberta.co.

In Action Magazine

In case you missed it, the latest issue of AFPA's In Action magazine is now available. It features profiles on some of our inspiring Made in Alberta companies, a look at our latest AB Food Connect co-packing portal, details on AFPA's Food Futures employer-wage subsidy program, and more. Download a digital copy at [AFPA Magazine](#).

Food Safety Virtual Training

- GMP, Preventative Controls & HACCP Implementation (\$800) – *January 23-24*

Register: [Find out how to register](#).

Workplace Safety Virtual Training

- Hazard Assessment & Control – *February 7 (6 hours)*
- Incident & Accident Investigation – *February 13 (6 hours)*
- OHS Roles & Responsibilities for Managers and Supervisors – *February 21 (full day)*
- HS Committee or Representative – *February 28 (7 hours)*
- OHS System Building – *March 6-7*
- Safety Auditor – *May 7-8*

Register: [Email AFPA](#) or contact Melody at melody@afpa.com for more information.