



Food Development Centre advancing innovative food products in Manitoba

The Food Development Centre (FDC) has played a key role in many *Growing Forward 2* supported projects by helping entrepreneurs and enterprises in two main areas: innovation and competitiveness, and market development.

FDC is a special operating agency of Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The centre collaboratively engages with Manitoba's value-added, agri-food processing industry by developing and commercializing new and innovative food products ranging from ingredients to ready-to-eat foods. FDC is licensed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for processed food production. This enables companies to use FDC as a food business incubator to develop, produce and market their products nationally and internationally.

FDC's client base includes entrepreneurs, small and medium-size enterprises, as well as large companies. Many of FDC's clients have started with an innovative concept and gone on to establish larger enterprises, resulting in a strong economic impact and continued job creation in Manitoba. FDC's laboratories and pilot plant facilities provide the necessary flexibility to conduct a wide variety of research and development projects in cereal grains and oilseeds, fruits and vegetables, bakery, beverages, meat and non-timber forest products. FDC has advanced *Growing Forward 2* supported projects through:

- new product development, market research and development in domestic and international markets;
- value-added product development, commercialization and bringing innovation to market; and
- accelerating and delivering innovation in Manitoba.

Through *Growing Forward 2*, FDC is supporting the transformation of Manitoba's food industry through innovation.

For more information on the FDC, visit their website at manitoba.ca/fdc. ■

Energy drink to develop new opportunities for Manitoba honey

Brent Ash, manager and co-owner of Ash Apiaries Ltd.



A new energy drink is in development that will use a sweet substance made in Manitoba instead of more traditional sweeteners. Ash Apiaries Ltd., the second largest processor of liquid and creamed honey in Manitoba, is working with the Food Development Centre (FDC) in Portage la Prairie to develop the line of natural honey-sweetened energy beverages.

"Our kids were into sports and that's the area we thought would be the best fit for our company," says Brent Ash, manager and co-owner of Ash Apiaries Ltd. He compares the new drink to a healthy cup of coffee as it will be made with fruit juice, and sweetened exclusively with honey while containing low levels of caffeine.

Developing new uses for honey

Ash Apiaries has been in operation for more than 40 years and is a family-operated honey producer and processor located in Gilbert Plains, Manitoba. The business was founded in 1972 by Floyd and Peggy Ash with 200 bee colonies, and has now grown to more than 8,000 colonies and is run by the couple and their three sons: Brent, Grant and Bryan.

The energy drink project is supported through *Growing Forward 2*'s Growing Value – Commercialization program. Honey has many nutritional benefits and can provide a quick and natural burst of energy. The venture intends to use honey as the only added sweetener in the beverages, giving it an alternative use that could increase domestic consumption and expand the market.

"Any new use of honey is good for us," says Ash. "Currently there is very little honey being used in beverage manufacturing. If this drink—or any drink sweetened exclusively with honey—takes off it would be good for the honey industry as a whole."

Providing expertise to entrepreneurs

Ash Apiaries has hired the FDC to manage the energy drink project.

"I don't have the equipment to produce this drink by myself," says Ash. "Not only is the FDC close, they have the necessary production expertise and they can source the ingredients. There is no one else in Manitoba who can take the project from start to finish like they can. We've done projects with them in the past with good results."

"We think of ourselves as being a one stop shop," says Roberta Irvine, business development at the FDC. "If someone has an idea we can help them develop it. We can also help businesses improve existing products or perform research."

The FDC provides entrepreneurs with the product development and research expertise, equipment and industry links to transform an entrepreneur's food or beverage idea into a market-ready product.

Funding available to advance new food ideas in Manitoba

Jeff Fidyk, business development specialist—consumer trends with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development says the FDC's role in helping Manitoba entrepreneurs is invaluable.

He explained that the Growing Value – Commercialization program provides many funding options for Manitoba businesses and entrepreneurs. There are options to work in partnership with an organization such as the FDC or to purchase equipment to develop or improve a product within a company's own processing facility.

Brent Ash says the funding helped Ash Apiaries move its project along and try something new.

"We have a few projects we want to do over the next few years," says Ash. "Getting funding through *Growing Forward 2* helps us get more projects off the ground than we would on our own. It just makes it more feasible for us and allows us to try some things we wouldn't do by ourselves." ■