



MEDIA RELEASE

Canadian and International Food Businesses Profiting from Reducing Food Waste

Guelph, ON (November 30, 2012) - Last week, over 80 Canadian agriculture and food leaders participated in the first **"Cut Waste, Grow Profit™"** Forum. The Forum presented the financial, environmental, and social costs of food waste occurring in the agri-food sector, and how businesses can improve profitability by reducing food waste. The Forum was hosted by the Value Chain Management Centre and the George Morris Centre at the Maple Leaf Foods' ThinkFood! Centre in Mississauga.

Led by Value Chain Management Centre Director, Martin Gooch, expert speakers from Canada and the United Kingdom provided their insights, analyses, and practical experiences to agriculture and food leaders across the entire value chain. Speakers included: senior representatives from Sobey's Inc, Maple Leaf Foods, Walmart Canada; smaller enterprises, such as Appetizingly Yours; community groups, Ontario Christian Gleaners, and Second Harvest; the Holland Marsh Growers Association; and the University of Guelph. The keynote speaker was Dr. Keivan Zokaei from S A Partners in the United Kingdom, who has assisted retailers and food processors save millions of dollars through reducing food waste.

The Forum speakers each described the issues and costs of food waste within their organizations, and then provided the Forum delegates with practical business-focused strategies to reduce waste, improve local or regional environments, expand food access to lower income individuals, and enhance business finances. A number of speakers commented on the national scale of food waste, as estimated by the Value Chain Management Centre at >\$27B annually, but then narrowed their comments to their specific organizations or studies to showcase the challenges in identifying and then reducing food wastes and costs to their organization. All speakers acknowledged the complexity of the challenge, the myriad of possible business strategies, and the need for leadership and commitment within the organizations or groups. Dr. Keivan Zokaei provided specific case studies of his work with various firms within the United Kingdom to successfully and sustainably cut food wastes and improve the firms' financial performance over time.

The Forum allowed the delegates to fully interact with the speakers and engage in selected opportunities to voice opinions on key issues surrounding food waste and food waste responses in Canada. Delegates voiced their views on the barriers to a widespread reduction in food waste in Canada, and the possible business and community remedies at the firm or local levels to reduce, rescue, reuse, and re-examine even the production of such food wastes. Several of the case studies presented showed that the size of the business involved does not preclude firms or communities from the benefits of reducing food wastes. Delegates noted that individual company leadership and management capacity, preferably involving wider participation across the value chain, would successfully reduce food waste and improve financial results. Delegates

identified a possible need for a broader public sector response, and the example of the United Kingdom's experience with the WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) initiative was provided as a possible model for Canadian governments to examine.

Dr. Gooch stated, "The Forum showed that commercial businesses are motivated to make the changes needed to reduce food waste – and with it, the environmental and social costs - when there are clear financial benefits. These benefits can be extended to motivate Canadian consumers to alter their food purchasing, handling, and storing behaviours, resulting in reductions in household food waste – which is where the most significant opportunities lie."

Delegates identified that the ability to sustainably reduce food wastes rests on improving the measurements used to monitor food waste, identifying the root causes of such wastes, and communicating the potential financial benefits. Delegates noted that the next stage is to develop management systems and the incentives required to enable continuous improvements to occur along the value chain, and involve agri-food businesses and community groups in the process of establishing a sustainable food industry.

Over the coming months, the Value Chain Management Centre (VCMC) will publish a report based upon the information and discussions which occurred at the Forum. The report is being developed in conjunction with Professor Ralph Martin, Loblaw Chair of Sustainability at the University of Guelph, who is also leading a food waste audit of Ontario households. Presentations made at the Forum are now available at <http://www.cutwastegrowprofit.ca/>

The Forum hosts would like to thank the many sponsors, in particular, the University of Guelph, Ontario Agricultural College, Maple Leaf Foods, IFCO, and MNP LLP.

The VCMC is the only Canadian organization dedicated to researching value chain issues and opportunities, and assisting businesses implement value chain initiatives. The George Morris Centre is a national, independent, economic research organization that focuses on the agriculture and food industry. Areas of research include: trade, regulation, food safety, market analysis, agricultural research, environment, competitiveness, corporate strategy, and value chain management.

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For more information, please contact:

Dr. Martin Gooch, Director
Value Chain Management Centre
George Morris Centre
519-822-3929 ext. 216
martin@georgemorris.org