Winter 2019-2020

ALBERTA food processors association

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AFPA in ACTION

The official magazine of the Alberta Food Processors Association

Meeting the Demand for Traceability

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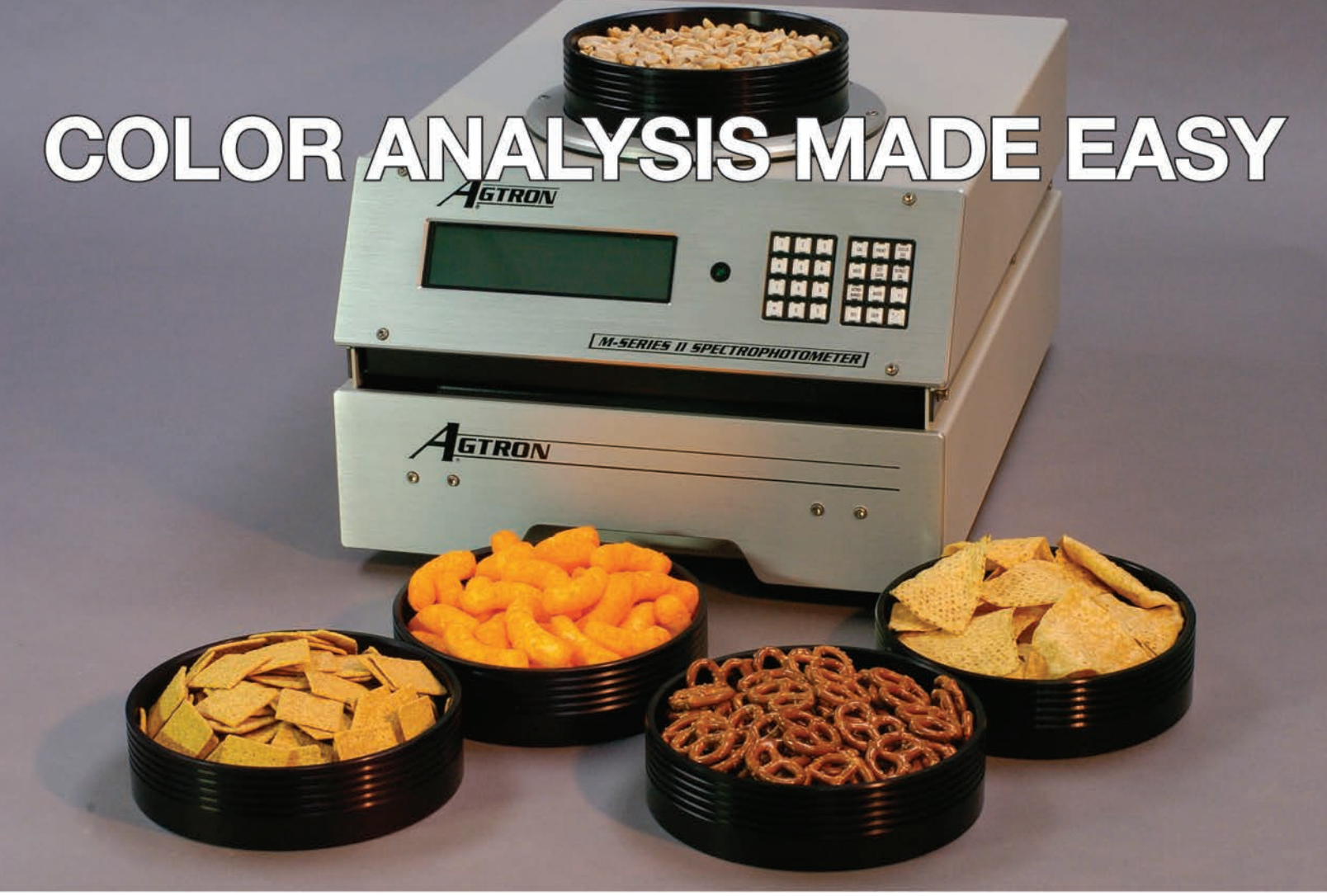

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AFPA in ACTION
The official magazine of the Alberta Food Processors Association
Winter 2019-2020

On the cover:
This issue's cover features Bee Maid Honey Limited (top), and employees from Cinnaroll (bottom left) and Star Produce (bottom right). Learn in this issue how all of these companies are excelling at ensuring their products are safe and traceable.

ALBERTA food processors association

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Shaping the Agenda of Change

Eric Haak
AFPA Chair
Sunrise Bakery Ltd.

WHILE I AM PROUD to be Albertan, I am even prouder to be a part of the province's second largest manufacturing sector: food and beverage processing. Ours is an industry of unprecedented opportunity that currently generates in excess of $14B in revenues. The good news is, we're just getting started!

Albertans and their provincial government will increasingly rely on the ingenuity and entrepreneurial *know how* of our sector to help diversify Alberta's economy and to draw attention to the fact that Alberta remains one of the best places to live and invest in this country.

It has been said that the government's role is to create the policy environment in which businesses have the best opportunity to attract investment capital and create jobs. The industry's role, it follows, is to capitalize on market opportunities that will make the cash register ring and enable businesses to scale-up operations and hire more employees.

Significantly increasing food and beverage processing sector revenues will require a fair few strategic challenges, including new investments in technology, product development, training and education programs, and assistance with market access. This may necessitate changes to public policy, but it will most certainly require a new, long-term strategic partnership with the Alberta government to ensure we are jointly invested in the future success of the food and beverage processing sector. To get there will require a bold vision for the future.

Change occurs in our communities not because we wish for good things to happen, but when there is a clear and disciplined plan that is augured in clear measures of success so everyone understands when the desired goal(s) have been achieved. This is the opportunity presenting for the industry and, as your strategic business partner and voice to the government, it is our responsibility and privilege to help shape the agenda.

A reinvigorated association will sit at the nexus of public policy and industry development discussions to drive investment, business and job creation efforts in Alberta's food and beverage sectors.

As board chair, my focus, and that of our board, will be to initiate discussions with key leaders within our industry. At the senior government level, it will be to articulate a vision for our industry to the year 2025. Our success will depend on your involvement and support. You will be hearing more about our vision looking forward to the year 2025 and the measurable ways this will grow the economic potential of the sector as a whole.

Through ongoing enhancements to association programs and services, such as workplace and food safety, AFPA is determined to become the industry's one-stop shop for advocacy, training, education and capacity building in support of the whole of the food and beverage sectors.

As a member, you already know the excellent work your association does in the areas of food safety and health and safety programming through the dedicated and professional leadership of our AFPA team. Going forward, you can expect to see more value-added programs and services that are demonstrative of our association's commitment to support you in your business success.

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Traceability:

The Not So Secret Ingredient Differentiating Alberta Food Processors

From hive to home, all BeeMaid brand honey comes from a single source processor in a co-operative approach which eliminates needless complexity in the supply chain.

IT IS NO SECRET consumers are increasingly demanding food companies demonstrate more transparency in the processes used to make food. While Canadians have used the terms "sustainability" and "locally-sourced" when discussing the creation of food at scale, another term is gaining prominence among consumers lately – traceability. In fact, a search for the term "traceability" on Instagram generated almost 23,000 hits.

According to research from PWC, only 20 per cent of Canadians would likely purchase groceries online. The majority says they prefer visiting the bricks and mortar store to see the product and read the ingredients and labels before buying.

But consumers are moving beyond labels, even taking up the slogan often used by writers; "don't tell me, show me." Increasingly, consumers want proof their food is made safely and more than ever, many people are educating themselves about terms like traceability to learn more about the value chains behind the companies putting food on their shelves.

Traceability is the ability for a food company to track the movement of food or a food commodity one step forward or one step back. Canada's Safe Food for Canadians Regulations, introduced in January 2019, aim to make our food system, already one of the world's best, even safer through traceability. Under the regulations, food processors that process food that crosses borders within Canada or for export must implement preventive control and traceability requirements.

Several AFPA members have found unique ways to demonstrate traceability in their food value chains.

Using technology to drive transparency: Provision Analytics

Perhaps no other system offers trust in food more than a highly digitized traceability program, such as the platform being created by Calgary-based company Provision Analytics (https://www.provisionanalytics.io).

The company's system, OneTrace™, combines all established food safety compliance programs with digital technology to simplify the execution and accountability in three areas: food safety, traceability and analytics.

"Our system uses a data structure similar to that used in Facebook and Google, leveraging complex mathematics" says Erik Westblom, CEO. "It combines data capture and workflow analysis within a company's operation and supply chain." OneTrace™ works with all food safety compliance systems and reduces the complexities of documentation, checklists and forms, workflows and critical control points.

The company is the brainchild of Westblom and Provision Analytics co-founders Chris Elias, Michael Gibbons and Phil Roberts, who, between them all, have

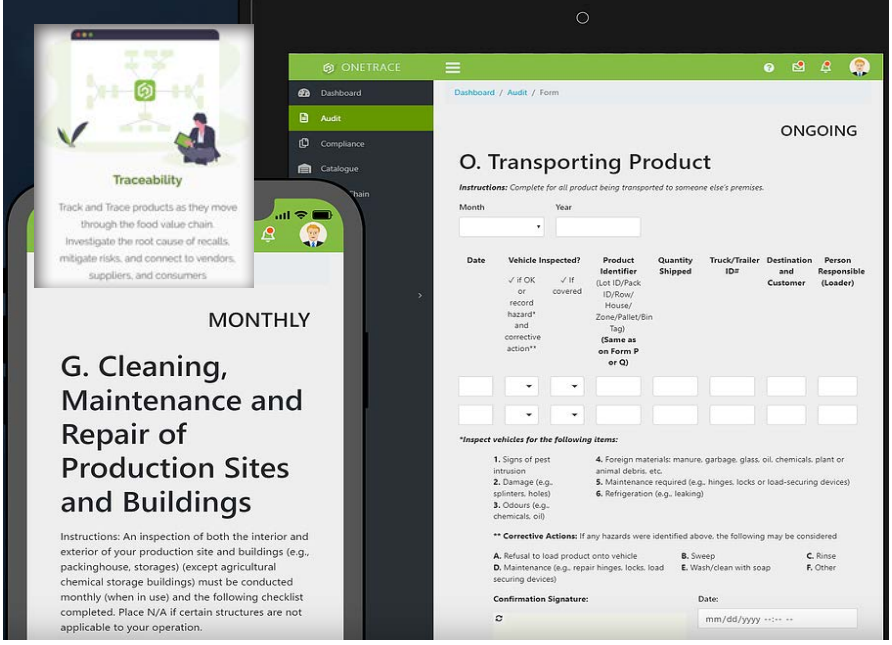
backgrounds in information technology, business and agriculture.

OneTrace™ can easily trace products in real time. In the case of a recall, OneTrace™ tracks food down to the exact batch, quickly searching through the hundreds of form fields of information stored in the platform to determine the equipment used, time and date, raw materials and even the employees involved in that unique process.

Once a product leaves the facility, the software can follow it through the value chain, linking multiple facilities and users. This insight allows users to discover and quickly investigate the cause of recalls. "It can also discover other issues down the value chain, reduce risk such as food fraud and reduce overall employee reporting time," says Westblom.

He adds, "It can leverage data to find opportunities such as where food is lost in the value chain or combine any other information capture throughout the value chain, where other parties' data is provided to make better decisions about how to make food better."

Helping partners extend shelf life by several days is just one more use of the data.



Provision Analytics' OneTrace™ software combines all established food safety compliance programs with digital technology to simplify execution and accountability.

Traceability as a business strategy: Cinnaroll

One of the companies taking advantage of Provision Analytics' technology is Cinnaroll Bakeries Limited (www.cinnaroll.com), a specialty international retail, franchise and wholesale company that makes popular cinnamon rolls. Recognized across Canada in all major grocery retailers for its Cinnaroll Gourmet Cinnamon Rolls, the company prioritizes food safety and quality processes as a key component in its success.

CEO Brad Turner credits the company's Calgary facility for a recent 98 per cent score on a recent audit. "Our people do a great job in food safety already," he says, although food safety administrative processes are cumbersome since all information is recorded using

Joe Katongole, Operations Manager; Andrea Haase, Director of Wholesale Operations; and Olivia Xun Wei, Food Safety Manager, take food safety very seriously at Cinnaroll Bakeries Limited.

pen and paper. Provision is currently digitizing the almost 80 paper forms Cinnaroll uses and is addressing some minor workflow issues within the plant. Moving to a software-based system offered by Provision will allow the company to access multitudes of information in a fraction of the time it currently takes.

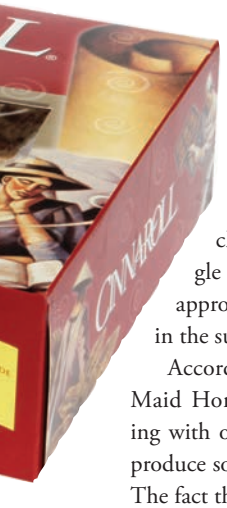
Turner says his company's thoroughness of records means they are already able to react quickly when a large customer has a request, but digitization will make them even more responsive, thereby strengthening the relationship through trusted and quick information. Considering the size of the company's 30,000 square foot plant in Calgary, which is certified by NSF to SQF Level II, having more instantaneous control over information is crucial to Cinnaroll's future.

"Not only does a strong traceability program show our commitment to food safety, it is an investment in our ability to scale," says Turner. An enhanced traceability program is therefore also a strategic differentiator, contributing to the bottom line and the future growth. "We are expanding into eastern Canada and further into the United States. Proving we are committed – and just getting stronger in the areas of food safety and quality – is helping in our growth plans."

Keeping it simple: Bee Maid Honey Limited

Being a single ingredient product helps keep production and processing simple and is what gives honey packer Bee Maid Honey (www.beemaid.com) its own food transparency advantage.

Bee Maid is the sales and marketing arm of two honey co-operatives in Manitoba and Alberta that joined forces in the 1950s to sell their quality Canadian honey throughout the world. Bee Maid sources its honey from



the approximately 300 member beekeepers, ensuring the integrity of the supply. In fact, Bee Maid celebrates having one of the most integrated honey-packing supply chains in the world. Having a single source processor in a co-operative approach eliminates needless complexity in the supply chain.

According to CEO Guy Chartier, "Bee Maid Honey is very fortunate to be working with over 300 Canadian beekeepers who produce some of the best honey in the world. The fact that our suppliers are also the owners fosters a sense of pride in the honey that they produce for their own organization."

Of course, simplicity does not rule out rigor. Bee Maid employs both SQF and HACCP in its food safety practices and was the first honey packer in Canada to receive SQF Level 2. All Bee Maid plants are equipped to identify and implement measures to prevent, reduce or eliminate hazards during the honey production process.

With a small, secure supply chain, the company is better able to stay on top of its SQF and HACCP commitments more easily. Being nimble means they are able to easily tackle new challenges, such as implementing the Safe Honey Production Practices (SHPP) 2019 program to help the industry transition to new CFIA requirements for honey in the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR).

A collaboration with the Alberta Beekeepers Commission and the Saskatchewan Beekeepers Development Commission, the document lays out policies, standard operating procedures and safe honey production records that focus on biosecurity, quality and traceability. CFIA has reviewed and approved the document. Bee Maid is also part of True Source, a multinational certification program that guarantees food safety and product purity by certifying the origin of the honey.

"We have high expectations from our beekeepers, as suppliers of quality honey," says Chartier. "At the same time, we have to be there to support them. The Safe Honey Production Practices program is one example of our commitment in assisting our members and the Canadian beekeeping industry."

But in true "keeping-it-simple" style, Bee Maid uses a bit of shorthand to display its food safety credentials. All BeeMaid brand labels proudly display a red Canadian maple leaf and the statement "Proudly owned by Canadian beekeepers."

"Not only does a strong traceability program show our commitment to food safety, it is an investment in our ability to scale."

Take your safety to the next level

If your company needs food safety assistance, the Alberta Food Processors Association (AFPA) can help. The association offers several food safety resources, including consulting, training and Gap assessments.

Learn more by visiting their website (www.afpa.com). In the Resources section, choose Food Safety & Quality.

AFPA PRIDES ITSELF ON delivering exceptional training and consulting in conjunction with our partners. All AFPA's training courses are developed and delivered by subject matter experts. Below is a list of the different food safety courses we offer. Please visit https://afpa.com/fsq_courses for dates, locations, prices and full course descriptions.

Remember, if you don't see what you're looking for, let AFPA know (info@afpa.com)! Remember to register (or at least tentatively hold your spot) with as much notice as possible as courses may be cancelled or moved due to low registration. AFPA members received preferred members rates for any **GAP assessments, consulting, or internal audits.** Reach out to info@afpa.com to book your safety training, today!

Food Safety & Quality
Food Defense Management Certification Course

HACCP
HACCP I: Prerequisite Programs
HACCP II: Developing Your HACCP Plan
Documenting Your Food Safety System
HACCP for Warehousing and Distribution Operations
HACCP for Cannabis
Principles of Internal Auditing
Train the Food Safety Trainer
Verification and Validation of your Food Safety System

Packaging
HACCP for Manufacturing Food Packaging Materials

Regulations
Canadian Ingredient Labelling
Canadian Nutrition Labelling
U.S. Food Labeling Under the FDA

Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)
FSPCA Foreign Supplier Vearification Programs (FSVP) Course
FSPCA Preventive Controls for Human Food (PCQI Training)

Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR)
SFCR: Preventive Controls and Traceability Requirements

GFSI Training: SQF, BRCGS, & FSSC
BRCGS Global Standard – Understanding the Requirements for Sites
BRCGS Internal Auditor
CanadaGAP Auditor Training
Internal Auditor: FSSC 22000
SQF Advanced Practitioner
SQF Internal Auditor
SQF Practitioner's Bundle for Food Manufacturing
Understanding the CanadaGAP Program

Did you know that AFPA partners with several organizations to provide great food safety training in Alberta!

ALBERTA food processors association
NSF International
SGS
FOOD SAFETY SOLUTIONS

Your Training, Your Way!

Onsite, customized training is available (either half day or full day, depending on your needs).

Food safety training is essential to the success of your company's food safety management system. It is a requirement for all regulatory and customer driven food safety standards, and a number of food related recalls have identified employee mishandling or unsafe work practices as their cause.

This half day or full day course, provided by AFPA, can help you educate your employees while meeting your regulatory and customer requirements. The training covers day-to-day food safety practices that help keep food safe, and protects consumers and your brand. The session will review Prerequisite Programs (Preventive Controls or Good Manufacturing Practices) that form the basis of the food safety management system.

Training can be further customized to include specific facility rules, procedures or information.

For further information, email foodsafety@afpa.com or call 403-201-3657 ext. 21.

Safety-related Funding Opportunities

You may be eligible for funding for training, GAP assessments, certifications, audits and the development and implementation of your food safety system. Look for details on what's available, as well as an application form, at https://cap.alberta.ca/CAP/program/RISK_MITIGATION.

The program covers areas such as:

- The use of consultants to assist in program development (ie. AFPA);
- The cost of attending courses (see AFPA courses on previous page);
- The cost of your first food safety audit (including expenses, if any, from auditor travel);
- Small equipment purchases (such as thermometers, light meter, scales, etc.) used in your food safety program;
- The cost of upgrading equipment in the facility (if it contributes to food safety, such as metal detectors, or conveyor belting to move product through an inline packaging machine, etc.); and
- Lab testing required in a food safety program (environmental swabbing, such as yeast, mold and Aerobic plate count).

AFPA members have also been successful receiving funding from the Canada-Alberta Job Grant for cost sharing training requirements: https://www.alberta.ca/canada-alberta-job-grant.aspx.

Food Safety Solutions (AFPA Consulting and Training Partner)

Emily of Wild Tea Kombucha says, "Working with Food Safety Solutions and AFPA was a significant and important step of our business. Without them we would not have passed our inspection. FSS was fast, concise, very clear with the necessary changes needed and always available. With the help of the provincial government, we were able to afford this service to create an action plan and pass our HCAAP certification. Thank you to your team and everyone that helped us!"

Shane of True Büch Kombucha says, "Food Safety Solutions/AFPA was instrumental in moving our business forward. Without a food safety background, navigating that world solo would have been an extremely daunting task. They helped explain and walk through getting the appropriate systems in place and were there to help get through the audits as well. As a small business owner, your time is stretched between so many things, and I don't think I would have had the time to get to the level they go us to without their help."

And We are Live! Introducing *Processing Success: The AFPA Podcast*!

AFPA really is the voice of the food processing industry. Starting soon, listen for *Processing Success: The AFPA Podcast*, a monthly podcast featuring a mix of industry news, AFPA member interviews and tips to make you more productive in all aspects of your business.

Processing Success is hosted by Ted Flitton, AFPA's former director of sustainability and communications. Appearing on the podcast is a great way to advertise your products, services and expertise. Be a part of this exciting new opportunity! An introductory price of $125 gets you five podcasts ($225 thereafter). Sponsors can purchase one minute of space for $1,500 (this includes one personalized E-blast). Or bundle with our new blogging package and save. Contact Ted at tedf@afpa.com to learn more.

Listen at work, during your commute or at home. Take us wherever you go.

Look for *Processing Success* on your favourite podcasting service.

Workplace Safety:

Addressing Physical, Psychological and Social Well-being

By Ed DeGroot, CRSP, CHSC, B. Mgt., AFPA

AFPA IS THE FOOD AND beverage processing industry's advocate and leading safety resource for ensuring the continuous improvement of workplace health and safety programs, tied into organizational performance. It is our mission to assist companies with their efforts to achieve their specific goals—which includes the implementation of a formal health and safety program, and maintaining or formally attaining their Certificate of Recognition (COR). **Contact AFPA for your training, resources and materials needs.** Always remain positive and don't become discouraged; it's all a part of "getting there."

Harassment, violence and bullying...and creating a respectful workplace

Our workplaces are evolving (*or are being forced to evolve*) to one of increased civility, diversity, respect, psychological safety and productivity. It will take awareness, knowledge, ability and reinforcement of necessary changes to meet compliance requirements here in Alberta. There are two Acts to protect employees:

1. *The Alberta Human Rights Act;* and
2. *Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act*, which has now been expanded to include "protected grounds" harassment, psychological harassment, bullying, violence and domestic violence. Providing education and training to all staff is a critical aspect of these changes.

Creating a respectful workplace means your company must properly address tough issues, such as harassment, bullying, intimidation, violence and/or sexual harassment. All of these acts are illegal in Alberta.

Psychological safety is also important to understand. Mental health disorders impact people of all ages, cultures, education levels and/or socio-economic status.

- **1 in 3** Canadians will experience mental illness or substance abuse problems in their lifetime.
- **1 in 5** Canadians will experience a mental health problem in a given year.
- **23 per cent** of workers have experienced physical health problems caused by stress, anxiety or depression.
- **20 per cent** of all sick leaves are directly related to mental health issues, which adds significant costs to any company.

Make sure to speak about psychological safety during your scheduled meetings, have a psychological safety moment, plan to discuss your current or newly updated company policies regarding psychological safety and **keep records**.

Ashley Ford, from Sun Gold Meats, was the first to earn the new Food & Beverage Health & Safety Officer designation.

Safety competence...are you there yet?

The new **Supervisor** competency requirements that "employers are expected to ensure" include formal training in hazard assessment, incident investigation and *Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act*. Such safety training is also required for select managers and H&S committee members, who are entitled to up to 16 hours of **annual** training related to their duties and functions in serving on the committee.

Workers must report as per OHS legislation

Your workers now have a "duty" to report all incidents, with an extra focus on any near miss reporting due to the PSI factor: Potential for Serious Injury. Make sure your team members know this! Tell them in your next regular safety meeting.

Workplace safety...what are your plans for 2020

Take some time to reflect on 2019 and look ahead to 2020. Have your efforts made any real impact on your workplace? On your employee's health and safety? What key lessons were learned? Shared? Do specific areas of your program need improvement? What would directly or indirectly make your workplace safer? What, if any, are your OHS priorities for 2020? Is there key AFPA safety training you can provide to your staff? How will you generate enthusiasm and commitment to your H&S priorities in 2020? Do you understand that safety is a value, not a competing priority?

If you take proper care of your employees, which includes a safe and respectful work

Important dates and upcoming events

The Alberta Occupational Safety Auditors Association Workshops

Two workshops will be held in 2020. AFPA encourages all food and beverage industry auditors to attend; this is the perfect place for auditors to meet, discuss, receive updates from the province and propose changes to the function of Safety Auditing, or within the COR auditing process. Attendance is also good for F&BHSO's required maintenance. Hope to see you there.

AFPA's 2020 Spring H&S Training Schedule

More details will soon be available at www.afpa.com, under the Training tab.

AFPA's 2020 Free Lunch n' Learn Sessions

Details will be available as they're scheduled.

AFPA's 2020 Workshop Sessions

These will include discussion on creating a respectful workplace with keynote speakers and presentations. More details to follow as they become available.

NAOSH week (North American Occupational Safety & Health)

May 2020 (Day of Mourning, April 28)

Canadian Society of Safety Engineering (CSSE) Professional Conference & Tradeshow

September 27-30, 2020, in St. Johns, Newfoundland.
September 12-15, 2021, in Edmonton, Alberta.

environment, they will take good care of your company, production and key clients.

Safety isn't expensive; it's priceless! What becomes expensive is the lack of workplace health and safety.

AFPA's Health & Safety Program/COR Training Requirements

Mandatory Training includes:

- OHS System Building (two-days).
- Hazard Assessment & Control (one-day),
- Roles & Responsibilities for Managers/Supervisors (one-day), to be attended every three years. This is strongly recommended for anyone who directs the work of others by any title, especially now with all the OHS changes in effect.
- Incident Investigation (one-day).
- Internal Safety Auditor (two-days).
- Internal Auditor *Refresher* (one-day), to be attended every three years.
- H&S Committees or H&S Representative (five to 19 staff) (one-day).

Elective Courses (all half a day) include: Understanding Office Safety, Fatigue Management, Alberta OHS for Dummies paired with Performing Proper Inspections.

All AFPA safety courses can be facilitated on site for our members at a reduced cost/flat rate, and you can fill the room. All apply to the Food & Beverage Health & Safety (F&BHSO) designation.

A reminder to all AFPA members, mandatory training requirements were upgraded as a measure to improve worker safety in our industry effective September 1, 2015. Please review your current records and make arrangements for any training needed to ensure that you have at least **one current** (preferably two or more) individual(s) in your organization who have attended *all required* AFPA safety training. COR member audits must be able to verify all required training by providing documentation (course certificates). Call us to register or discuss your specific safety requirements...**why not do it right now**?

So, in addressing workplace safety, you must understand

Your employees are on loan to your organization from their families. You have **legal, ethical and moral** obligations, regardless of any production protocols or customer needs, to provide a safe and healthy working environment for them. They are expected to return home safely...each and every day. Training, knowledge, education, evaluating competency and management support is required...daily.

Introducing AFPA's eight new Food & Beverage Health & Safety Officers

AFPA and your industry now has eight recognized F&BHSO's. All of these dedicated safety professionals have met the formal training and education requirements and were successful on their final exam on August 23, 2019.

The eight new F&BHSO's are:

- Ashley Ford, from Sun Gold Meats. Ashley was focused on being the first to earn the new designation, and we are proud to say she was, along with;

Continued on next page...

The recipients of the new Food & Beverage Health & Safety Officer designation.

More members are talking about AFPA's Health & Safety training...book now!

"The instructor opened the eyes of my supervisors as to their key responsibilities, excellent." –Miles

"The information provided was very relevant, up to date and very applicable to my company." – Delores

"Great, knowledgeable instructor, always provides clear, relevant examples to clarify." – Hafiz

"Group exercises are great, always a fun way to learn and retain critical safety info." – James

"AFPA's approved H&S committee course provides us with all the required knowledge to have an effective committee in place that will meet the *Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act*, compliance criteria." – Amanda

continued from page 15

- Debbie Stankowski, from Capital Fine Meats;
- Cindy Baxter, from Pro Western Plastics;
- Cherienne Whitson, from Bunge Canada;
- Mike Foisy, from MF Consulting; and
- Andre Morin, Brad Harrison and Andrew Allan, all from Gordon Food Service.

AFPA introduced the F&BHSO designation for those individuals wishing to achieve a formal recognition for their efforts and commitment to workplace safety in our industry. Candidates for the F&BHSO must complete (or have previously completed) all six mandatory courses, as well as their own chosen elective courses equaling two points (so...4 @ ½ day = 2 or 2 @ ½ day & 1 full day = 2, etc.), plus challenge the exam successfully (with a minimum mark of 80 per cent) to obtain this designation. If courses have previously been completed, you will need to provide certificates as proof.

There is no such thing as too much safety! Ask your family!

For more information contact Ed DeGroot, CRSP, CHSC, B.Mgt., Director Workplace Health Safety & COR Certification, at 403-201-3657, x 28 or ed@afpa.com.

Star Produce has drastically cut the amount of water needed to grow a head of lettuce from 100 litres to just one.

Star Produce Exerts Control Over Food Safety and Quality

AS A TESTAMENT TO the strength of his company's food safety protocols, Star Produce co-founder, David Karwacki once told a newspaper reporter he rarely washes his lettuce before eating it.

The reason Karwacki is so confident in the safety of his food comes down to Star Produce's control over processes. Nowhere is control more apparent than in the company's newest accomplishment: a state-of-the-art lettuce-growing greenhouse located in Coaldale, Alberta.

"It's the jewel in our crown," says Rindi Bristol, a senior director with Star Group. "It's really quite incredible." Completed in May 2017, Bristol says, "the plant is almost fully automated with no human touching the food until it is picked, and even then, only with almost full protective gear."

Thanks also to automation in this enclosed building, Inspired Greens is far less susceptible to contamination originating from human or animal origin, a huge differentiator the company shared during the *E. coli* outbreak of 2018; five people died and more than 200 were sickened by *E. coli* found in lettuce harvested at a farm near a cattle ranch in Yuma, Arizona. The Star Group saw demand for its indoor grown produce jump during the outbreak.

Star Produce, the central business of the Star Group, began as a tomato re-packer in 1989. It is now one of western Canada's best-known distributors of fruit and vegetables, with more than 100 grower direct programs with SQF, Level 2-certified cut floors in Winnipeg and Calgary, and Canada GAP audited warehouses in Vancouver, Calgary and Winnipeg.

This network provides the company with more than 200,000 square feet of refrigerated distribution space serving all of Canada and the pacific northwest. The company is quickly deepening its reach south of the border with facilities in Florida, Arizona and Washington. "Working seed to store, as we say," says Bristol, "the Star Group has embraced the entire fresh produce industry offering boutique brands including CFP, Sliced FC, BC Hot House and Whole Leaf."

In its 30 years, the company has learned controlling processes is crucial to delivering the best products available across all brands. One key area is its water use. The company has drastically cut the amount of water needed to grow a head of lettuce from 100 litres to just one. Water is regularly tested at its cut facilities and the company routinely tests for salmonella, listeria and *E. coli*.

Star Produce and its suite of companies considers food safety and quality before any seeds enter the ground. The company's inventory system, headed by its in-house logistics team, provides instantaneous traceability and tracking information from the time the order is taken to delivery of the product.

Star knows that food safety requires the commitment of others in the value chain and employs very selective process in determining the companies with which they will partner. "One of the keys we consider is a company with a long track record of existence and caring about quality taste while not compromising food safety," says Bristol.

Star holds itself to high standards and it holds partners to the same. Growers must follow Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs), and all are Country of Origin Labelling (COOL) compliant. All facilities participate in an annual, rigorous, third-party food safety audit.

The company is currently stress testing its ability to manage operations by expanding the size of the Coaldale facility. Originally designed to grow nine million heads of high-quality lettuce, it is on track to grow more than 18 million heads annually, including such varieties as Crispy & Crunchy Trio, Delicate and Delicious Butter, Bright & Juicy Red, Fresh & Familiar Green, and also the only year-round, Canadian grown, ready-to-eat assortment of value-added salad blends under the Inspired Leaves brand.

Despite its success and ambitious expansion plans, Star Produce has never forgotten its roots. The company holds active memberships in about a dozen produce and processing associations. "We are Albertans and Canadians," says Bristol "We always believe in giving back to our communities and making our industry stronger through innovation and being involved."

Left to right: Michael Veldman, Assistant Grower at Whole Leaf; Ramon Melon, Head Grower at Whole Leaf; and Danna Kochis, Assistant Grower at Whole Leaf.

Proud member of the ALBERTA food processors association

Global eTrade Services Facilitates Trusted Connections, Traceability and Export Compliance with Blockchain

AFPA MEMBER GLOBAL ETRADE SERVICES (GETS) is leveraging advanced technologies like blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to allow food processing companies to facilitate cross-border trade with ease. "By harnessing these advanced technologies to fulfil regulatory requirements, we make trade more accessible, easier and predictable for the digital ecosystem," says Ng Chee Keong, VP of Global Sales and Business Development.

Blockchain is a platform to manage digital transactions recorded in blocks and distributed across many networks ensuring visibility among all players in the supply chain, thereby decreasing risk of data manipulation and fraud. Members of the network are updated immediately each time new information is added.

Food processing companies dealing with import and export are familiar with Electronic Certificates of Origin (eCO). This document is commonly sent to overseas buyers, financial institutions and customs authorities to certify that goods in a particular export shipment are wholly obtained, produced, manufactured or processed in a particular country. Trade parties can authenticate using the eCO by entering the hashtag on the GeTS Blockchain portal, which will then show the date, time and the origin where the eCO was issued.

The GeTS global supply chain platform, CALISTA, allows companies to submit trade declarations, cargo manifests and import / export permit applications with global trade associations and government agencies through one single platform. GeTs can help AFPA with trade compliance needs, such as Food & Drug Administration (FDA) requirements. When importing food products into the US, importers are required to file prior notice to get clearance from the FDA before the arrival of goods. Often the FDA prior notice filing is outsourced to other service providers by paying a $100 fee per shipment. By working with GeTS, shippers take control of their own compliance at a fraction of the cost using a simple online form that users can complete and submit directly to the FDA. Acceptance from the FDA can be received instantly, which also can be tracked on a mobile app real-time.

GeTS technology makes trade compliance easy and predictable with full real-time visibility of goods. Data is entered only once; and can be inherited into subsequent applications for other trade compliance requirements. This single data point entry system makes diverse customs requirements simple to fulfil, saving time. The transformation of data for multiple trade compliance needs enables companies to automate their processes, thus reduce costs and errors.

GeTS

No matter where in the world you're doing business, Global eTrade can help.

"Highly compliant industries such as food will benefit, especially when safety and timely delivery is a key concern," says Winnie Lau, Director. "Our platform allows traceability and provides transparency in the supply-chain in the event of recall or adulteration of food."

"We are proud to be members of the Alberta Food Processors Association," says Lau. To show its support for AFPA members, GeTS is offering AFPA members their service free for one month. Monthly subscription plans are as low as $19 per month and other plans are available for all your business needs.

"Companies interested in the simplification of their logistics, compliance should give us a try," adds Lau.

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