Oregon State Receives Grant To Help Local Dairy Manufacturers; Plans For Cheesemaking

The Cheese Reporter

Corvallis, OR—Oregon State University announced Wednesday it has received a $860,000 endowment fund, part of which will create an outreach program to support Oregon’s small cheese and dairy manufacturers.

The Paul G. and Sandra A. Arbuthnot Professorship Fund will create the Arbuthnot Dairy Center within the College of Agricultural Sciences (CALS), support internships and endow a faculty member to develop and deliver education and outreach programs for OSU students and the state’s small dairy foods processors. Lisbeth Goddik, dairy foods specialist with the OSU Extension Service, is the first to hold the professorship.

The endowment will be spent on outreach programs – primarily targeting Oregon’s small dairy processors and artisan dairy manufacturers.

"It will give us significantly more opportunities to make a difference in the dairy industry here in Oregon," Goddik said.

We have a number of programs that we want to put in place – most of which focus on assuring product safety, Goddik said.

"That would mean we would run reoccurring programs on GMPs and HACCP," she continued. OSU food science students will also be trained for service in the field, helping small cheese and dairy producers set up HACCP plans.

"Most cheese makers are so busy, they have difficulty setting aside time for that, so we'll train our students to be able to help out," Goddik said.

Larger dairy processors would also be included in the outreach program. Oregon has 60 dairy processors, and one of the upcoming classes on the schedule is titled "Getting Practical About Sustainability."

We’ll talk with them about topics not involved in day-to-day processing, but rather long-term goals like using sustainability to lower processing energy, waste and expense, Goddik said.

"One other group we want to reach out to is the dairy farmers," she said. "We want to help them try to convert to value-added at the farm level."

Part of our donor’s passion is helping retain family farms, she said.

"Having a cheese maker in the family is a way to pass it along to the next generation," Lisbeth Goddik said.

We want to meet with dairy farmers and tell them what they need to do if they want to train their wives, their daughters or their sons in cheesemaking, she said.

“Dairy farmers have just gone through a very tough couple of years,” Goddik said. “So, I don’t think we’ll see the switch right now – maybe in a couple of years with the energy and the finances to make the change.”

Paul Arbuthnot Has Long Involvement In Dairy Industry

Donors Paul and Sandra Arbuthnot established the endowment because of Paul’s longtime involvement in the dairy industry and his belief in the benefits of dairy products to Oregon’s economy.

Arbuthnot spent most of his working life in the dairy industry. He is a retired president of Portland-based Sunshine Dairy Foods, served on the Oregon Dairy Products Commission and was president of Quality Chedk Dairies.

Arbuthnot initially became connected with OSU’s food science and technology department through collaboration with Floyd Bodyfelt, who was the dairy foods Extension specialist prior to Goddik.
"I appreciate the importance of OSU’s Extension specialists to Oregon’s agriculture," Arbuthnot said.

"I had good feelings about the program," Arbuthnot said. "When Lisbeth signed on, it brought a new dimension, and that was her interest in artisan cheese."

"We are grateful to Paul and Sandy Arbuthnot for their generosity to create the professorship," said said Sonny Ramaswamy, the dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences.

"It will enable Dr. Goddik to develop and deliver outstanding programs in support of the Oregon dairy industry they are passionate about," Ramaswamy said.

**OSU Cheese Plant To Be Operational By Next Fall**

OSU’s food science department has grown tremendously over the past six or seven years, according to Goddik. The student population is about four times greater than in 2004.

"It’s all focused around fermentation – wine, beer, cheese and bread," she said.

By fall of 2011, OSU food science students will be making cheese on campus for the first time.

"It’s not funded through the endowment, but we are in the process of scaling up so we can start cheesemaking next year," Goddik said.

"We found that the best way of training people right is to know all the practical sides of it as well," she said. OSU will hire a part-time cheese maker to supervise production. Plans are also in motion to host cheese makers from abroad for a year as a “cheese maker in residence” program.

OSU earned its pilot plant license last summer, and is now purchasing the necessary manufacturing equipment. Cheesemaking will commence in spring, and be available for sale by Homecoming next fall.

The cheese plant will be supplied with milk from OSU’s dairy farm. Once the plant became licensed, it served as an incubator plant for dairy companies. Manufacturers would make products at the plant for nine-month contracts as a way to get up and running.

The entire project is student-driven – participants will select a cheese to make, develop a recipe and figure out a way to sell it.

"I will certainly retain veto power," Goddik said. "For example, I know we don’t want to make the cheeses I really like the best – the sharp, French cheeses – because they can be challenging in the distribution system."

I prefer we went with a hard cheese like Gruyere or a Comte style, she said. We’re also hoping to add a new cheese each year – the student whose recipe is selected will get tuition for free, Goddik said.

Label design and brand name will also come from students, and free tuition – either for a whole term or a year – will also be awarded to the student whose design is chosen.

In spite of all the excitement surrounding the start-up phase, Goddik said production remain small-scale and manageable. "We are not planning on getting very large like some other universities – Cougar Gold, for example," Goddik said.