



## SunOpta Announces Decision by Opta Minerals Inc. to Suspend Strategic Review

TORONTO, Dec. 22, 2011 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- SunOpta Inc. ("SunOpta") (Nasdaq:STKL) (TSX:SOY) today announced that the Board of Directors ("Board") of Opta Minerals Inc. ("Opta Minerals" or "the Company") (TSX:OPM), has decided to suspend the strategic review process for Opta Minerals that was previously announced on September 7, 2011. SunOpta currently owns approximately 66.4% of Opta Minerals and approximately 64% on a fully-diluted basis.

The decision to suspend the strategic review process was based, in part, on an assessment of current global market conditions which are currently challenging, combined with a number of actionable near-term growth opportunities within the Company. As a result, the Board of Opta Minerals has concluded that the interests of the shareholders of Opta Minerals are best served by completing and integrating these expansion activities and suspending the strategic review process until further notice.

As part of these growth opportunities, on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Opta Minerals announced the acquisition of Inland RC, LLC, a manufacturer of pre-cast refractory shapes, injection lances and electric furnace deltas with annual revenues of approximately \$3 million. The business is complementary with current Opta Minerals product offerings and has capacity for growth and significant synergy opportunities. For further information, see the full press release that was issued by Opta Minerals at [www.OptaMinerals.com](http://www.OptaMinerals.com). In addition to the acquisition of Inland RC, LLC, the Company is currently considering additional acquisition opportunities and has identified a number of internal growth opportunities which are currently in development.

Jeremy Kendall, Chairman of SunOpta commented, "We believe that shareholders will achieve more value in the future as market conditions improve, particularly if these near-term growth opportunities are completed and integrated. At this point it is important for the management of Opta Minerals to focus on the growth opportunities without further distraction from the strategic review process."

Steve Bromley, President and CEO of SunOpta, added, "The strategic review process was a useful undertaking as it has provided us with a better sense of value for the business and the opportunities to enhance shareholder value that exist. Opta Minerals is well run with a strong management team and operating systems, allowing the senior management of SunOpta to focus on our core natural and organic value-added foods business. Opta Minerals remains non-core for SunOpta, and while the active strategic review process has been suspended for the time being, we will continue to assess options for this business as appropriate."

### About SunOpta Inc.

SunOpta Inc. is a leading global company focused on natural, organic and specialty foods products. The company specializes in sourcing, processing and packaging of natural and organic food products, integrated from seed through packaged products; with a focus on strategically vertically integrated business models. The Company's core natural and organic food operations focus on value-added grains, fiber and fruit based product offerings, supported by a global infrastructure. The company has two non-core holdings, a 66.4% ownership position in Opta Minerals Inc., listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange, a producer, distributor, and recycler of environmentally friendly industrial materials; and a minority ownership position in Mascoma Corporation, an innovative biofuels company.

The SunOpta Inc. logo is available at <http://www.globenewswire.com/newsroom/prs/?pkgid=3958>

### About Opta Minerals

Opta Minerals Inc is a vertically integrated provider of custom process optimization solutions and related materials for use primarily in the steel, foundry, loose abrasive cleaning and municipal water filtration industries. The Company currently has production and distribution facilities in Ontario, Québec, Louisiana, South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, New York, Texas, Florida, Kosice Slovakia, and Romans-sur-Isère, France and one of the broadest product lines in the industry.

### Forward Looking Statements

Certain statements included in this press release may be considered "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of the United States Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995 and applicable Canadian securities legislation. These forward-

looking statements include, but are not limited to, management's expectations regarding growth opportunities, current market conditions and enhancement of shareholder value within Opta Minerals and capacity for growth and synergy opportunities within Inland RC, LLC. Forward-looking statements are based on information available to us on the date of this release and are based on estimates and assumptions made by the Company in light of its experience and its perception of historical trends, current conditions and expected future developments as well as other factors the Company believes are appropriate in the circumstances. Whether actual timing and results will be consistent with expectations and predications of the Company or Opta Minerals is subject to many risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from the Company's expectations and predictions, including risks associated with the successful completion and integration of potential acquisition opportunities such as the ability to secure any required financing, completion of satisfactory due diligence investigations, negotiation and execution of definitive purchase agreements, inability to maintain profit margins and loss of key personnel; inability to successfully execute upon existing internal growth opportunities; the risk that growth opportunities will not result in enhanced shareholder value; failure or inability to capitalize on synergy opportunities; and future market conditions. Consequently all forward-looking statements made herein are qualified by these cautionary statements and there can be no assurance that the actual results or developments anticipated by the Company will be realized.

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