



SunOpta Signs Steam Explosion Equipment Contract for a Wheat Straw to Ethanol Plant

TORONTO, Aug 08, 2005 -- SunOpta Inc. (SunOpta or the Company) (Nasdaq:STKL) (TSX:SOY) today announced that it has signed a 4.7 million Euros (\$7.1M Cdn) contract to supply its patented steam explosion equipment and process technology to Abener Energia S.A. of Seville, Spain, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Abengoa S.A. (Abengoa) (Madrid Stock Exchange - ABG), for the first commercial production facility in the world to convert wheat straw into ethanol. This facility, which is scheduled to be operational in the fall of 2006, will be built in Babilafuente (Salamanca), Spain and is located adjacent to an existing cereal grain to ethanol plant operated by Abengoa. Abengoa is the largest ethanol producer in Europe and the second largest in the world.

SunOpta is recognized as the world leader in the preparation, pretreatment, steam explosion and extraction of value added compounds from plant biomass material.

The awarding of this contract follows extensive development work completed at SunOpta's pilot plant and laboratory facilities located in Norval, Ontario. The development was sponsored by Abengoa Bioenergy R&D of St. Louis, Missouri, with a focus on the production of ethanol from biomass.

The soaring price of oil and the concern over greenhouse gas emissions has created a strong interest in the demand for ethanol, with President Bush recently calling for a substantial commitment to increase the production of ethanol in the U.S. Several States and Provinces have legislated the inclusion of 10% ethanol in auto fuel and others are considering similar legislation.

Ethanol is largely produced from cereal grain in Europe and corn in North America and it is generally recognized that the cost effective supply of grains and corn will be a limiting factor in meeting the growing demand of ethanol for energy use. Experts agree that it is critical to utilize technology that extracts fermentable sugars from the whole plant, including wheat straw and corn stalks to meet this growing demand.

SunOpta entered into a partnership in May 2004 with Abengoa of St. Louis, Missouri, to develop technology for the integration of the production of ethanol from lignocellulosic biomass and from starch to improve the commercial viability and to provide an unlimited growth opportunity in the ethanol industry. SunOpta was selected due to their commitment to innovation and sustainable development.

Murray Burke, Vice President and General Manager of SunOpta's StakeTech Steam Explosion Group, commented that "SunOpta is delighted to partner with Abengoa and its affiliates to deliver our expertise and proprietary technology to the formidable team that Abengoa has assembled. This world class facility will be the benchmark for all future biomass to ethanol plants."

SunOpta Inc. is an operator of high-growth ethical businesses, focusing on integrated business models in the natural and organic food markets. For the last seven consecutive years, SunOpta was included in Profit magazine's 'Profit 100' list of the 100 fastest growing companies in Canada. The Company has three business units: the SunOpta Food Group, which specializes in sourcing, processing and distribution of natural and organic food products integrated from seed through packaged products; the Opta Minerals Group, a producer, distributor, and recycler of environmentally friendly industrial materials; and the StakeTech Steam Explosion Group which engineers and markets proprietary steam explosion technology systems for the pulp, bio-fuel and food processing industries. Each of these business units has proprietary products and services that give it a solid competitive advantage in its sector.

SOURCE: SunOpta Inc.

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