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SunOpta Extends Global Sourcing Capabilities Via Majority Ownership Position in Ethiopian Organic Sesame Operation

AMSTERDAM, May 26, 2015 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- SunOpta Inc. (Nasdaq:STKL) (TSX:SOY) ("SunOpta") today announced that its wholly-owned subsidiary Tradin Organic Agriculture B.V. ("Tradin"), part of the Global Ingredients segment, has enhanced its global sourcing capabilities with an increase in its ownership position in Selet Hulling PLC, a premier supplier of organic sesame. Tradin now owns 76 percent of the joint venture of Selet Hulling, located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and as a result, has obtained full management control of the operation.

Obtaining majority ownership is a strategic step for Tradin as it strengthens its value added ingredient processing platform and establishes a centralized hub in Eastern Africa to further its sourcing project development. Tradin previously held a 35 percent stake in Selet Hulling in a joint venture with Kaleb Service Farmers House.

As a result of its increased ownership and management control, Tradin will be well positioned to continue development of its sourcing for organic sesame and other organic raw materials from Ethiopia and the East-African Region. Tradin will work to increase yields of sesame, test new varieties, improve soil fertility and rotation schemes. Tradin exports these materials to global markets to be used in the food ingredient and bakery industries.

"Increasing our ownership and management control of Selet Hulling is an important step as we continue to expand our global sourcing portfolio," said Gerard Versteegh, President of Tradin. "There is a very tight supply of organic raw materials, and we continue to take proactive steps to secure ingredients from all over the world to support our global customers as demand continues to outpace supply."

SunOpta's Global Ingredients segment has sales and sourcing offices as well as processing facilities worldwide and offers a unique, wide range of organic and certified raw materials. From grains, seeds, ancient grains, fruit, nuts and oils to specialty products such as cocoa, coffee and superfoods, many of these raw materials and semi-finished ingredients are sourced from the segment's own initiatives at origin and processed in company-owned facilities.

The Ethiopian operations will be managed as an extension of the sourcing department at the Tradin's headquarters in Amsterdam. Some new organic farmers' cooperatives will be partners for sesame sourcing and new crops will be developed with the field staff of Selet. In the new setup, more than 1,500 farmers will supply the factory.

About Tradin Organic Agriculture

Tradin supplies the international food industry with globally sourced certified organic raw ingredients. To ensure steady, traceable and flawless supply, Tradin continues to add its own worldwide sourcing initiatives and processing operations to its growing global network of suppliers. For these projects, Tradin Organic is involved in the entire supply chain from cultivation to processing to export, directly sourcing more than 150 products from over 60 origins. Tradin Organic operates processing facilities dedicated to key items such as cocoa, sesame and sunflower seed products, to further optimize risk management and ensure organic integrity and the highest product quality.

About SunOpta Inc.

SunOpta Inc. is a leading global company focused on organic, non-genetically modified ("non-GMO") and specialty foods. The Company specializes in the sourcing, processing and packaging of organic and non-GMO food products, integrated from seed through packaged products; with a focus on strategic vertically integrated business models. The Company's organic and non-GMO food operations revolve around value-added grain, seed, fruit and vegetable based product offerings, supported by a global sourcing and supply infrastructure. The Company also holds an approximate 66% ownership position in Opta Minerals Inc. (TSX:OPM), a producer, distributor, and recycler of industrial minerals and silica-free abrasives. Opta Minerals is a non-core holding.

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

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