



## **SunOpta Announces That SunOpta BioProcess Inc. Awarded \$5.5 Million (CAD) in Funding From Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC)**

TORONTO, Jan. 13, 2010 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- SunOpta Inc. ("SunOpta" or "the Company") (Nasdaq:STKL) (TSX: SOY), today announced that its subsidiary, SunOpta BioProcess Inc. ("SBI"), has been awarded \$5.5 million (CAD) in funding from Sustainable Development Technology Canada ("SDTC") to assist SBI and its partners to design, build and operate an integrated cellulosic ethanol plant and co-located xylitol production facility to be located in the Greater Toronto area.

Early in 2008 SBI formed a joint venture with Xylitol Canada with the goal of researching and co-developing a proprietary technology to produce xylitol using co-product streams from the production of cellulosic ethanol. These efforts resulted in the development of a viable xylitol production technology for use in tandem with cellulosic ethanol production. The next step in the development of this technology will provide the necessary technical and economic performance data to validate scale-up to commercial-scale production of both cellulosic ethanol and xylitol.

The fabrication of valuable co-products is expected to allow biofuel producers to increase their profitability and competitiveness. SBI and its partners have developed an integrated process that will produce both food grade xylitol -- a healthy sugar substitute -- and fuel grade cellulosic ethanol, therefore increasing the economic and environmental sustainability of cellulosic ethanol production. Using wood chips as feedstock, the technology is projected to decrease process water consumption by up to 75% compared to producing corn ethanol while retaining all of the life-cycle carbon benefits inherent to cellulosic ethanol.

The project involves the construction of a demonstration facility at a total cost of approximately \$17.0 million (CAD), to be funded approximately 67% by the partners and 33% by the SDTC grant. The construction of the demonstration facility is not expected to have an impact on projected 2010 operating results. The facility is anticipated to produce up to a rated capacity of 620 tonnes of xylitol and two million litres of cellulosic ethanol per year.

Operation of the facility is expected to commence December 2010 with process validation complete by December 2011. Thereafter the facility may be operated for process optimization, continuous improvement and to test new innovations. Upon completion of the SDTC project, construction of a 10,000 metric tonne commercial xylitol facility in connection with a minimum 40 million litre cellulosic ethanol facility is contemplated to commence in September 2011, with first xylitol production from this facility expected by December 2012.

Murray Burke, President of SunOpta BioProcess commented, "SunOpta is delighted to receive support from SDTC to assist in building and operating a cellulosic ethanol and xylitol production facility that will demonstrate the commercial viability of the cellulosic ethanol and xylitol co-product technology. We believe this will be the first operation of its kind in the world. This is a valuable step leading to rapid deployment of our biorefinery technology, culminating in economically viable commercial facilities that are expected to advance production of sustainable bioproducts, stimulate local economies and meet significant environmental objectives through water conservation and GHG reduction."

About SunOpta Inc.

SunOpta Inc. is an operator of high-growth ethical businesses, focusing on integrated business models in the natural and organic foods and natural health products markets. 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; Opta Minerals Inc. (TSX:OPM) (66.5% owned by SunOpta), a producer, distributor, and recycler of environmentally friendly industrial minerals; and SunOpta BioProcess Inc. which engineers and markets proprietary steam explosion technology systems for the bio-fuel, pulp and food processing industries. Each of these business units has proprietary products and services that give it a solid competitive advantage in its sector.

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

About SunOpta BioProcess Inc.

SunOpta BioProcess Inc. (SBI) is a leader in the design, construction and optimization of biomass conversion process technologies, equipment and facilities. With over 30 years experience in delivering biomass solutions worldwide, SBI combines

its applications expertise with innovative, patented, and proprietary technologies to design and build equipment and processes to produce cellulosic ethanol, cellulosic butanol, xylitol, and other value-added products derived from lignocellulosic biomass. The company is currently supplying equipment and process technology to pilot and commercial demonstration cellulosic ethanol projects worldwide. SBI is an 86% owned subsidiary of SunOpta Inc. (Nasdaq:STKL) (TSX:SOY).

## About SDTC

Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC) is an arm's-length foundation created by the Government of Canada which has received \$1.05 billion as part of the Government's commitment to create a healthy environment and a high quality of life for all Canadians. SDTC operates two funds aimed at the development and demonstration of innovative technological solutions. The \$550 million SD Tech Fund(TM) supports projects that address climate change, air quality, clean water, and clean soil. The \$500 million NextGen Biofuels Fund(TM) supports the establishment of first-of-kind large demonstration-scale facilities for the production of next-generation renewable fuels. SDTC operates as a not-for-profit corporation and has been working with the public and private sector including industry, academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the financial community and all levels of government to achieve this mandate. For more information, please visit [www.sdtc.ca](http://www.sdtc.ca).

## Forward Looking Statements

Statements included in this press release regarding SBI's plans to build, own and operate cellulosic ethanol and xylitol facilities of indicated capacities as well as the estimated cost of construction and anticipated benefits of such facilities may constitute "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of the United States Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995 and applicable Canadian securities legislation. The terms and phrases "goal", "will provide", "expected", "will produce", "projected", "contemplated", "expected by", "will demonstrate", "believe" and similar terms and phrases are intended to identify these forward-looking statements. These statements are based on information available to us on the date of this release and we assume no obligation to update these forward looking statements for any reason, except as required by law. These forward-looking statements are based on estimates and assumptions made in light of SBI's experience and perception of historical trends, current economic conditions and expected future developments as well as other factors believed appropriate in the circumstances including, but not limited to, government funding support, product pricing levels, customer demand, competitive intensity, engineering estimates, plant capacity and utilization, and supply contracts. Whether actual timing and results will agree with expectations and predictions of the Company is subject to many risks and uncertainties including, but not limited to: labor issues, ability to secure any required building permits, execution of definitive funding agreements, environmental issues, potential construction delays, ability to secure any required construction financing, problems with installation and operation of equipment, and other risks described from time to time in SEC reports filed by SunOpta Inc. in respect of or relating to SBI. 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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