



## SunOpta Signs Contracts to Apply Steam Explosion Technology to the Production of Ethanol

TORONTO--May 18, 2004--SunOpta Inc. (SunOpta) (Nasdaq:STKL) (TSX:SOY) today announced that it has signed a series of contracts with Abengoa BioEnergy R&D of St. Louis, MO, a wholly owned subsidiary of Abengoa SA of Seville, Spain, to apply steam explosion technology to the processing of corn stover and wheat straw into fuel ethanol. SunOpta's, Steam Explosion Division, will be responsible for the design and equipment supply for the fiber preparation and pretreatment. Abengoa is the largest producer of ethanol in Europe and the fifth largest in the U.S. Abengoa a 1.6 billion Euro revenue per year company, carries on business in Europe, North and South America and the Pacific Rim, and is based in Seville, Spain.

These contracts include a Technology Development Agreement, a Research and Development Contract, the supply of testing equipment and two Preliminary Engineering Contracts for production facilities to be constructed in Nebraska, U.S. and Salamanca, Spain. The agricultural residue will be pretreated through the steam explosion process in order to produce a substrate that is suitable for ethanol production. Once the preliminary engineering is completed by SunOpta, two equipment contracts are expect to follow for the two above facilities, with SunOpta supplying all of the pretreatment equipment including the steam explosion system.

Abengoa BioEnergy R&D has put together a world class team of top industry leaders to drive the cost of producing ethanol from lignocellulosic biomass to below that of the existing cost of starch to ethanol.

California requires the addition of 10% ethanol in all gasoline fuels as of the beginning of January 2004, which is increasing the demand for ethanol and for new ways to process materials not normally used in the manufacturing of ethanol. The conversion of biomass to road fuel will have a dramatic impact on the world wide reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. President Bush has set a goal for U.S. usage of ethanol from starch and biomass to double by year 2010.

SunOpta Inc. is an owner/operator of high-growth ethical businesses, focusing on integrated business models in the natural and organic food markets. For the last six 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 that engineers and markets clean pulping systems using patented steam explosion technology. Each of these business units has proprietary products and services that give it a solid competitive advantage in its sector.

For further information, please contact:

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Note: This news release may contain forward-looking information. Actual future results may differ materially. The risks, uncertainties, and other factors that could influence actual results are described in the Company's annual report to shareholders and in SEC filings.

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