



SunOpta BioProcess Cellulosic Ethanol Joint Venture Receives \$1 Million Minnesota NextGen Grant

MINNETONKA, Minn., Nov 6, 2008 (GlobeNewswire via COMTEX News Network) -- SunOpta Inc. (SunOpta or the Company) (Nasdaq:STKL) (TSX:SOY) today announced that Central Minnesota Cellulosic Ethanol Partners (CMCEP) received notification from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture that it has been awarded an approximately \$1 million NextGen matching grant for support of the project entitled "Second Phase Feasibility Study and Detailed Engineering for Commercial 10 Million Gallon Per Year Cellulosic Ethanol Plant." CMCEP is a joint venture between Central MN Ethanol Co-op, Bell Independent Power Corporation (BIPC), and SunOpta BioProcess Inc. (SBI), a subsidiary of SunOpta. Each partner is a one-third owner of the previously announced CMCEP joint venture.

The feasibility study is anticipated to lead to design and construction of the first commercial scale cellulosic ethanol production facility in Minnesota. The proposed facility will be sited adjacent to CMEC's existing 21.5 million gallon starch-to-ethanol plant in Little Falls, MN. Cellulosic ethanol will be produced primarily from wood chips from poplar as well as other cellulose-containing materials utilizing SBI's proprietary fiber preparation and pre-treatment technology. The facility will also provide for co-generation of electricity based on a BIPC-engineered system.

SBI President Murray Burke commented, "We are grateful to Governor Tim Pawlenty and Agriculture Commissioner Gene Hugoson for their foresight in recognizing the tremendous potential for commercial cellulosic ethanol production in the State of Minnesota. Because it uses only inedible plant fibers, cellulosic ethanol offers a viable source of clean, renewable energy with no negative impact on the food supply and pricing. SBI wishes to recognize the State of Minnesota for its support of innovative technologies that have the ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs, enhance rural economic vitality, and reduce dependence on foreign oil."

The NextGen Energy Board was established in 2007 by Governor Pawlenty and the Minnesota Legislature to implement an ambitious program for "Next Generation Energy" in Minnesota. These goals include a target for 25 percent of all Minnesota's energy to be derived from renewable resources by 2025 and the establishment of targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050 (from a 2005 baseline) with interim reduction milestones for intervening years. The NextGen grant follows a \$100,000 matching grant awarded to the CMCEP venture on May 12, 2008 from Minnesota's Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI) for initial phase work.

About SunOpta BioProcess Inc. and SunOpta BioProcess USA Inc.

SunOpta BioProcess Inc. 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 produce cellulosic ethanol, cellulosic butanol, xylitol, and dietary fiber for human consumption. The company is currently designing and supplying equipment and process technology to pilot and commercial demonstration cellulosic ethanol projects worldwide. SBI intends to build, own and/or co-own commercial scale cellulosic ethanol production facilities. SBI operates in Minnesota via its wholly-owned subsidiary SunOpta BioProcess USA Inc., based in Minnetonka, Minnesota.

About SunOpta Inc.

SunOpta Inc. is an operator of high-growth ethical businesses, focusing on integrated business models in the natural and organic food and natural health markets. The Company has three business units: the SunOpta Food Group, with 10 facilities employing over 500 people in Minnesota, specializing in sourcing, processing and distribution of natural and organic food products integrated from seed through packaged products; Opta Minerals Inc. (TSX:OPM) (66.6% owned by SunOpta), a producer, distributor, and recycler of environmentally-friendly industrial materials; and SunOpta BioProcess Inc. with its wholly-owned U.S. subsidiary SunOpta BioProcess USA 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 Central MN Ethanol Co-op

Central MN Ethanol Co-op (CMEC) is a majority farmer-owned Minnesota cooperative which operates a 21.5 million gallon per year corn starch-to-ethanol plant in Little Falls, Minnesota. The plant is located 30 miles north of St. Cloud and has been in continuous operation since 1999. For more information, visit www.centralmnethanol.com.

About Bell Independent Power Corporation

Bell Independent Power Corp is focused on developing renewable fuel alternatives to traditional gas and electric supplies including expertise in the production of green energy and carbon neutral technologies. BIPC's mission is to be a leader in the energy industry through the acquisition of under-performing energy assets as well as the development of new technologies. These assets and technologies are enhanced through BIPC's research and development programs. In addition, BIPC's in-house expertise to successfully engineer, finance, build, operate, and maintain these development projects result in low cost energy programs for BIPC's customers. The BIPC team has expertise in all stages of the utility industry, including, but not limited to, design, project management, cost control, contracting, budgeting, and management.

Forward-looking Statements

Certain statements included in this press release may constitute "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of the United States Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These forward-looking statements include, but are not limited to, references to the expected results related to the future growth and strategies of the business. These forward looking statements are based on certain assumptions and analyses made by the Company in light of its experience and its interpretation of current conditions, historical trends and expected future developments as well as other factors that the Company believes are appropriate in the circumstance. However, whether actual results and developments will agree with expectations and predications of the Company is subject to many risks and uncertainties including without limitation the expected results related to the joint venture relationships identified above, results of which may be beyond the control of the Company. 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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SOURCE: SunOpta Inc.

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