



SunOpta Announces Update to Sunflower Operations

TORONTO--Oct. 17, 2006--SunOpta Inc. (NASDAQ:STKL) (TSX:SOY) today reported that its SunOpta Sunflower operations have continued to experience challenging results in the current 2006 year. As a result, SunOpta has taken a \$2.1 million (U.S. Dollars) one-time charge against earnings in the third quarter for a number of non-recurring items including the write down of inventory from the 2005 crop to its net realizable value. The SunOpta Sunflower operations represent approximately 6% of SunOpta's total revenue.

SunOpta Sunflower division has had two excellent years in 2004 and 2005, but in 2006 the crop experienced significant quality problems related to poor selection of genetics combined with drought weather conditions in parts of their growing area. These issues produced a product where the internal kernel of the sunflower was below size expectation creating additional processing costs and consequently the inventory had to be downgraded to lower market values.

The new sunflower crop is currently being harvested, which will be utilized in the last quarter of 2006 and in 2007. For this crop, the Company has reverted to known genetics and substantially expanded its irrigated growing areas. Early indications are that this new crop appears to be good and should yield better results for 2007.

SunOpta Sunflower is projecting a \$4.0 million improvement in their earnings before tax for the next 12 months, ie. ending September 30, 2007.

The Company is comfortable with its revenue guidance for the year and will update its earnings guidance on the next earnings call in light of this one-time charge.

As a reminder, SunOpta has scheduled a third quarter conference call to discuss the financial results at 10:00 AM Eastern Time on Thursday, November 2, 2006.

About SunOpta Inc.

SunOpta Inc. is an operator of high-growth ethical businesses, focusing on integrated business models in the natural and organic food 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; the Opta Minerals Group, a producer, distributor, and recycler of environmentally friendly industrial materials; and the SunOpta BioProcess 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.

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 business strategies, competitive strengths, goals, capital expenditure plans, business and operational growth plans and references to the future growth 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, but not limited to; general economic, business or market risk conditions; competitive actions by other companies; changes in laws or regulations or policies of local governments, provinces and states as well as the governments of United States and Canada, many of which are 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.