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Made in Canada Solution Tackling \$31 Billion Food Waste Challenge

Ontario farm and food businesses have partnered to develop new food waste reduction technology.

Guelph, ON – The United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that one third of the food produced is wasted along the value chain, and in Canada, the situation is similar. Provision Coalition’s milestone report, *Addressing Food Waste in Canada* indicates that 30-40 per cent of food produced in this country is lost across the farm, manufacturer, retailer and consumer continuum.

To address food waste head on, a number of Canadian food companies and industry associations have been working towards solutions at the manufacturing level, where roughly 18 per cent of losses occur. One such collaborative initiative led by Ippolito Fruit & Produce, Riga Farms, EarthFresh Foods and Amazing Grains is taking a novel approach with the development of hyperspectral chemical imaging technology for production line grading and sorting of leafy greens, carrots and potatoes. This technology, which is used in other sectors, can offer significant untapped benefits to food and beverage businesses.

“Currently, many produce manufacturers in Canada are using aging technology for sorting and grading. At Ippolito, we connected with our industry peers to explore and then implement new technology – technology that has broader food industry application and will be shared with companies across the country,” said Joel Ippolito, chief executive officer of Ippolito Group.

P&P Optica, an Ontario-based chemical imaging solutions company and Axiom Millwrighting & Fabrication, specializing in the design and installation of industrial equipment, have been contracted to develop, test and pilot the new technology. In partnership, the bench and in-field testing will be conducted by the University of Guelph and Conestoga College.

Provision Coalition, the food and beverage manufacturing industry’s voice and lead organization on sustainability, has also been engaged to integrate a sustainability program and coordinate the change management required at Ippolito.

Cher Mereweather, executive director of Provision Coalition, said “the corporate culture in Canadian food companies is one that welcomes business improvements which makes it possible for my team to step in and help implement new operating procedures. We also spend time with companies having a conversation around the importance of reducing food waste and how it connects to food security and climate change.”

Outcomes of this project will include the development of new technology available to other food manufacturers and a deeper understanding of how to collaborate successfully within a Canadian-based consortium addressing an important food industry issue.

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