

# 2008 IN REVIEW

As one year draws to a close and another begins, for many it provides an opportunity for reflection. It is no different for the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors. 2008 was an active year for the Alliance and the food and beverage processing industry. The Strategy (a 5-year vision and strategy to guide both industry and government in decision and policy making for the sector) was presented to the provincial government and industry early in the year. The Alliance focus in 2008 was on the implementation of this Strategy which encompasses industry sector priorities: increased industry profile, increased collaboration throughout all levels of the agri-food sector, addressing competitiveness through support of innovation and productivity improvements, regulatory reform, and workforce development. Executive Director, Jane Graham, commented that, "In 2008, the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors made great strides in implementing the Strategy in all priority areas and will continue to take a leadership role in rallying the support of the industry and its partners to benefit the entire agri-food industry."

Some of the highlights for 2008 are summarized here but complete details on all AOFPP activities can be viewed at [www.aofp.ca](http://www.aofp.ca). A year-long study on *regulatory barriers to competitiveness* was undertaken and a report will be published in 2009 that will point out the regulatory barriers that need to be addressed to increase business opportunities and sustainability for the industry. Seeing innovation in the industry as a priority, the AOFPP was instrumental in the introduction of the Food and Beverage Industry Innovation Fund, making \$3M (from federal and provincial governments) available for projects that focused on innovation in the Ontario food and beverage processing

industry. Addressing the need for skilled workers in the processing industry, the introduction of a *Business Plan* late in 2008 focused on post-secondary curriculum, funding, and details for a facility - the Ontario Institute for Food Processing Technology (OIFPT) - to fill this need. *Destination Excellence*, a program to "create employers of choice in Ontario's food and beverage processing industry" rolled out a number of 'tools' to assist employers in attracting and retaining skilled workers. The 2-day HR Summit in September brought together academics, government and industry to focus on strategies for workforce development. In another area, to increase the awareness of this industry as a career option, the website [www.tasteyourfuture.ca](http://www.tasteyourfuture.ca) was developed and continues to expand. The much anticipated online *Directory of Ontario Food and Beverage Processors* was launched with over 3000 processors listed. Participation in Growing Forward consultations were ongoing throughout 2008 as AOFPP continued to be *the* voice of the industry and ensure that the interests of Ontario's food and beverage processing industry were being represented.

When asked to summarize 2008, Ms. Graham thanked the industry volunteers and participants for the unflagging dedication to AOFPP and the food and beverage processing industry. Ms. Graham concluded, "The AOFPP is unique in that it is a non-profit alliance of companies and organizations; created and maintained by the industry. As the industry continues to evolve and strives to create a sustained processing sector that will excel in a competitive global marketplace, the Alliance will continue to lead the way." Stay tuned for 2009!

## APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Join the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors, government officials, educators and your colleagues for an information session to learn more, and provide input to the **Apprenticeship Program** for the food & beverage processing industry! Don't miss this opportunity. Registration is complimentary but pre-registration is required by January 19, 2009.

The date of the session is January 22, 2009 at the Cambridge Hotel and Conference Centre (formerly Future's Inn, Cambridge) from 9:00 a.m to 11 a.m. Continental Breakfast provided.

For more information and registration please call (519) 767-5374 or email at [info@aofp.ca](mailto:info@aofp.ca).