PepsiCo Spotlight

Performance with Purpose

About PepsiCo

PepsiCo began in 1965 through the merger of Pepsi-Cola, founded in the late 1890s, and Frito-Lay, which has roots dating back to 1932. Today, they are one of the world’s leading food and beverage companies with a diverse portfolio of brands that reach markets in over 200 countries and territories. Some of their most well-known and beloved labels include, of course, Pepsi® and Fritos®, but also Doritos®, Lays®, Gatorade®, Tropicana®, and Quaker®.

“Performance with Purpose,” the common thread that runs through every aspect of the business, focuses the entire company on one goal: to deliver top-tier financial performance over the long term by integrating sustainability into its business strategy and leaving a positive imprint on society and the environment. A progressive company, it has won numerous awards and accolades for business performance, sustainability, and diversity.

Knowledge That Cultivates Performance

Over the years, Cornell and PepsiCo have shared a long and mutually beneficial relationship. The two organizations have collaborated on numerous projects, with PepsiCo relying on Cornell for expertise in several areas of food science.

Strong partners on various food and beverage industry-related projects, the two have worked together on topics that include fat reduction in potato chips, flavor in products containing Stevia, natural variation in the nutritional qualities of oats, and quality and efficiency of dairy farm operations. PepsiCo has also prioritized developing the next generation of food science professionals by consistently contributing to the Cornell Food Science Summer Scholars program. In celebration of this long and fruitful relationship, the auditorium in the newly renovated Stocking Hall is named the “PepsiCo Auditorium.”

PepsiCo recently extended its commitment to its long-standing industry-academic collaboration with Cornell by becoming a CIFS-IPP Gold Partner. We sat down with Ian Puddephat, Senior Director of Agro Discovery & Sustainability, and Mike Finnerty, Senior Director, Beverage
Category Ingredient Discovery, both of them from PepsiCo’s Research and Development division, to discuss this new level of formal partnership and what it means for PepsiCo.

**Welcome to CIFS-IPP. What attracted you to join this partnership?**

PepsiCo and Cornell have shared a long relationship. Over the years, several divisions of PepsiCo R&D (e.g., Frito-Lay, Quaker, Tropicana, Pepsi, Wimm-Bill-Dann) have worked closely with Cornell on research initiatives relating to Cornell’s expertise in Food Science, Agriculture Science, Dairy Science, Animal Science, and Flavor Science.

Further, because our R&D team is deeply committed to developing next-generation food science talent, we’ve been proud to support Cornell’s Food Science Summer Scholar Program, in which scholars participate in an annual field trip to our Valhalla, NY-based R&D center. The last group was just here in June (2015), and they were excellent.

The CIFS-IPP partnership is a great opportunity to strengthen our existing Industry-Academic bond in the field of food science and technology.

**As one of our gold-level partners, what benefits and services have you enjoyed thus far?**

While we’ve worked on about a dozen different projects together, there are two we’re especially excited about. First, we’re collaborating with Cornell’s Department of Plant Breeding & Genetics to gain a better understanding of the natural variation in nutritional qualities of oats in order to improve new varieties.

Second, we’re working with Cornell’s Department of Animal Science to generate research insights for our European dairy business, Wimm-Bill-Dann. We created a training course designed to build internal capability that we can use with dairy farmers in our Russian supply chain. The goal was to produce sufficient quantities of high quality milk while simultaneously advancing animal well-being and decreasing environmental impact. Two years ago, a group of Cornell faculty and staff specializing in Dairy Processing traveled to Moscow, where they conducted a “deep dive” into our dairy operations. Our team leveraged the insights we gained to generate cost savings as well as enhance quality and improve shelf life.

**Is there anything else you would like other potential CIFS-IPP members to know about your experiences within the Cornell Institute for Food Systems, CALS, or Cornell?**

Innovation is the lifeblood of PepsiCo. And to truly drive innovation, we need the best and brightest partners we can find. Our research collaborations with institutions like Cornell expose us to cutting-edge technology and research, which translates for us into the introduction of new products that help drive topline growth for PepsiCo. This growth enables us to re-invest in more R&D, and so on. Industrial–academic research partnerships have become an important part of corporate R&D, and we look forward to continued success with our university-based colleagues.