

Innovation centre

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stration, we realized we needed to clearly define what the purpose was."

What was discovered was the innovation centre needed to be a person who has networking ability and the contacts necessary to make the concept work.

Realizing its members could see some of the largest gains, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association became the lead applicant and filed an application with the federal Agriculture Adaptation Council for funding. Other partners quickly signed on. These included the Ontario Ginseng Growers' Association, the Ontario Asparagus Growers' Marketing Board, Ontario Apple Growers' Commission, Vine-land Research and Innovation Centre, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Alliance of Ontario Food Processors, University of Guelph and Norfolk and Oxford counties.

Dr. John Kelly, a research scientist who lives near Guelph, was recently hired as director of the Erie Agri-Food Innovations Initiative. He will begin his position in April in the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture office on the Blue Line Road outside of Simcoe.

The director of innovation and commercialization is a four-year contract position with funding from the Agricultural Adaptation Council and various partners. The contract includes various milestones that need to be reached.

"At this point, in the early stages, the director will be a one-person show," Lammens said. "As it grows there will be additional administrative staff hired."

One of the possibilities included from the beginning is a feasibility study on an individually quick frozen vegetable plant in the SCOR area. Instead of the traditional concept of vegetables frozen all in one

big clump, individually quick frozen (IQF) vegetables are frozen individually and the end consumer can pour out as much as needed.

"In most cases, it's better quality because it's frozen within hours of when it was harvested," Lammens said.

For growers, the advantage of IQF is it will give them access to the market for the entire year, not just in the summer months. It

also eliminates the need for the grower to package produce.

Jane Graham, executive director of the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors, said there are existing IQF facilities in Ontario, but the feasibility study would look at the exact location of such facilities and what the potential is for another plant in the SCOR area.

"It's really just to investigate what opportunity might be there and what

opportunities might be for the area," she said.

Lammens said the great thing with the innovation concept is it fits

into the SCOR vision.

"It's all lining up beautifully," she said. "The timing couldn't be better."

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