



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Food Handler Training program promotes food safety excellence in Ontario's processing workforce

GUELPH, ON – December 20, 2010 – Ontario Independent Meat Processors (OIMP) continues to demonstrate its commitment to food safety with the launch of a new Food Handler Training (FHT) program for workers and supervisors in the food processing industry. Building on the success of the original FHT course, the new program fulfills current regulatory requirements for staff training and provides options for learning in multiple languages through self-study and interactive workshops.

“Whether you work in a bakery, a cheese factory, a vegetable packing plant or a meat processing facility, every food handler plays a critical role in food safety,” said Laurie Nicol, Executive Director, OIMP. “The new Food Handler Training Program is an essential learning resource for businesses embracing a food safety culture.”

The FHT program focuses on five key areas: Food Safety Responsibilities; Food Safety Hazards; Controlling Hazards; Food Safety Management Systems; and Management's Responsibilities for Food Safety. Participants at the worker level cover the first four areas; supervisors will study all five to address their responsibilities within a food safety and management role. Workers and supervisors who successfully complete the Food Handler Training examination will receive a Certificate of Completion from the University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus.

“This program covers fundamental food safety issues and practices – concepts that are universal to all food processing operations,” said Jane Graham, Executive Director, Alliance of Ontario Food Processors. “It is comprehensive and concise, and it acknowledges the different training requirements for workers and supervisors.”

In recognition of the industry's diverse workforce, the workshop materials and examination are offered in 10 languages: English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Simplified Chinese, Spanish and Traditional Chinese.

Funding assistance for the FHT program was provided under the Food Safety and Traceability Education (FSTE) Program administered by the Agricultural Adaptation Council.

The FHT manual is now available for purchase, and the first round of workshops takes place between January and March 2011 in Burlington, Mississauga and Scarborough. More information on the Food Handler Training program is available at www.oimp.ca under Food Safety.

Ontario Independent Meat Processors (OIMP) is the non-profit, representative voice of the independent meat processor in Ontario. The meat sector represents 20% of Ontario's \$33 billion food and beverage processing sector, which directly employs over 110,000 people and more than an additional 100,000 workers in related industries.

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