

## Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

### Increasing Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers

IMPACTS 2007



#### SUMMARY

Over the last seven years, the Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship (NECFE), a university-based regional center created in 2000 by a partnership between Cornell University and the University of Vermont, has been successful in supporting food entrepreneurship in the Northeast by offering comprehensive assistance to food entrepreneurs that increases the safety of specialty foods, increases entrepreneurial knowledge and competency, and creates local economic development. NECFE increases the knowledge and competency of start-up food companies and acts as an economic engine for development in rural and urban areas.

#### THE ISSUE

Specialty foods continue to be a growth area in the food industry, providing opportunities to people interested in developing their own businesses and farmers looking for ways to utilize, add value to, and market their crops. Start-up companies need direct assistance in complying with increased federal and state food safety regulations, and to transfer knowledge in food manufacturing. Business and marketing training is also necessary to increase the chances of success by small companies in highly competitive niche markets.



#### IMPACTS

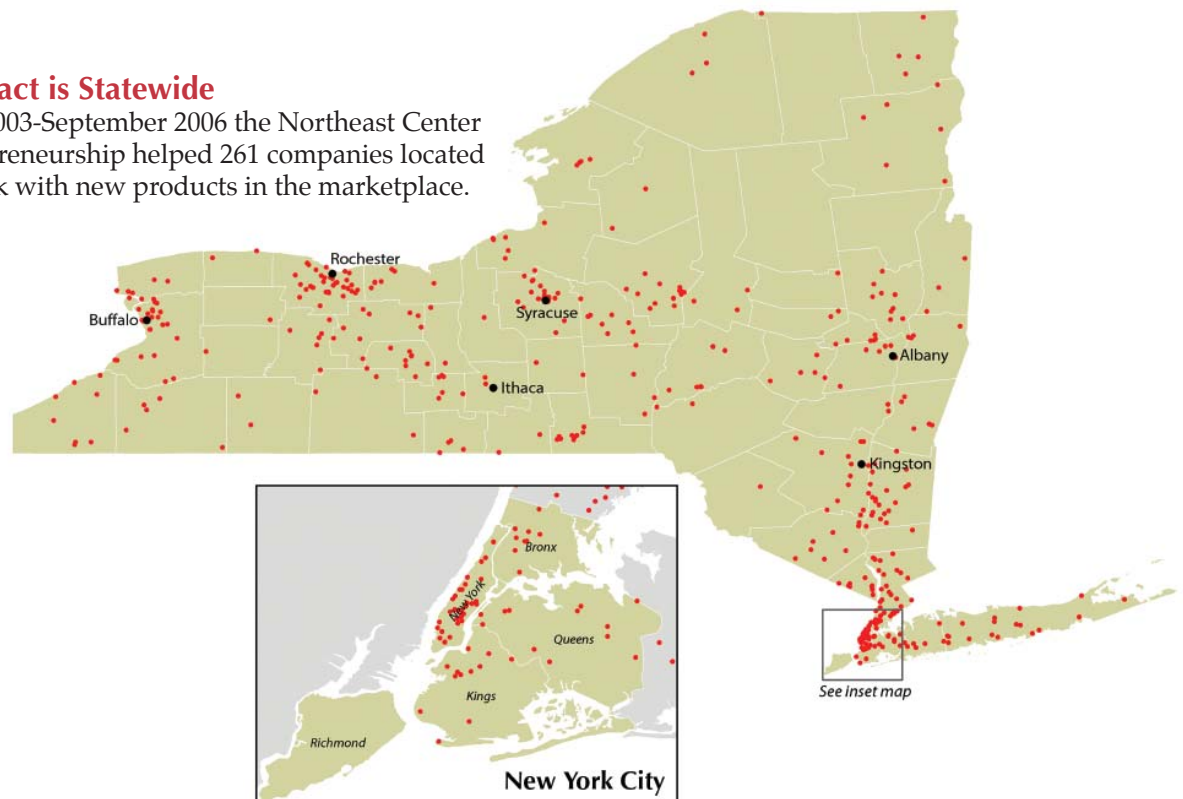
- In its seventh year of operation, NECFE at Cornell University's Food Venture Center, continues to successfully provide comprehensive assistance to food entrepreneurs in the Northeast by offering direct counseling and educational programs. The Center is now supported by New York State and by fees for service. In 2006, the center responded to 1000 inquiries for assistance on marketing food products. The Center worked with 189 entrepreneurs who needed safety evaluations of 594 specialty products and processes for commercial production. The center's laboratory analyzed 429 samples of food prototypes to address their safety and technological feasibility.
- The Center conducted and sponsored eight workshops and conferences totaling 292 attendees and covering topics relevant to specialty foods production. Center personnel also participated as speakers in 24 activities reaching 880 individuals.
- The Center printed educational materials with wide distribution including the 108-page manual *Small-Scale Food Entrepreneurship: a Technical Guide for Food Ventures* and "Venture," a newsletter for the small-scale food entrepreneur. Complete electronic archives are maintained in the website, which is accessed by over 20,000 visitors per year.
- In 2006, the Center provided direct assistance or training to 2,100 people in food safety, food processing, and business development and marketing, complemented by referrals to existing local service providers.



- After seven years of operation, the center has developed a highly productive program that has positively impacted 900 entrepreneurs for the commercialization of 3,200 food products. On a follow-up survey based on three years of operation, it was estimated that 806 full time jobs were created by new businesses and 7,836 existing jobs are supported by established businesses. Ninety four percent of clients were satisfied with the direct assistance received and 65% reported services provided aided in the success of their businesses.
- The Center received the 2004 USDA Secretary's Honor Award in recognition of outstanding performance.

### Cornell's Impact is Statewide

From January 2003-September 2006 the Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship helped 261 companies located across New York with new products in the marketplace.



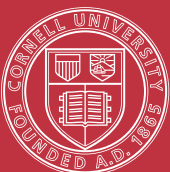
### Funding Sources:

New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, New York Farm Viability Institute, Federal Formula Smith Lever, and fees for services.

### Contact:

Dr. Olga Padilla-Zakour, NECFE Director  
 Department of Food Science and Technology, Cornell Univ.  
 630 W. North Street, NYSAES, Geneva NY 14456  
 Phone: 315-787-2259  
 Fax: 315-787-2284  
 E-mail: oip1@cornell.edu

NYSAES 080110



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