

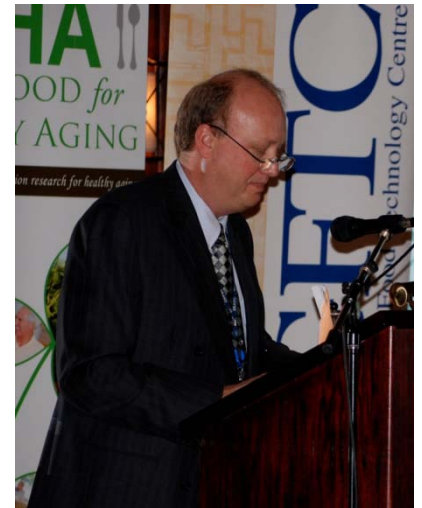


*Innovative agri-food and nutrition research for healthy aging*

## **Agri-Food for Healthy Aging Innovation Breakfast Opportunities for Ontario's Functional Food & Natural Health Product (FFNHP) Sectors EVENT SUMMARY**

**October 28, 2009 (Guelph, ON)** – The [Guelph Food Technology Centre \(GFTC\)](#) and the [Agri-food for Healthy Aging \(A-HA\)](#) program out of the [Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging \(RIA\)](#) partnered up to deliver the first innovation breakfast focused on the aging population as a new market opportunity for food industry. Many food industry representatives were present, along with government officials, academics, non-government organizations, grower associations, and media & communications. With over 100 people in attendance, including the [Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs \(OMAFRA\)](#) deputy minister, George Zegarac, it was evident that the focus of the breakfast presentations was timely for both industry and government alike. The breakfast would not have been possible without the generous support of the sponsors, including OMAFRA, the [Toronto Region Research Alliance \(TRRA\)](#) and [MaRS Discovery District](#).

Mr. Zegarac kicked off the breakfast with opening remarks highlighting the importance of bridging health and agri-food business with the aging population in mind. “The more we can do to address health issues with food, the greater the possibility for longer-term solutions for both personal and systemic needs.” Not only are there opportunities for the agri-food industries, there is the prospect to reduce health care costs for the province.



With many years experience in the field of geriatric nutrition, A-HA research scientist, Dr. Heather Keller from the [Department of Family Relations & Applied Nutrition](#) at the [University of Guelph](#), began the presentation portion of the program by outlining future opportunities and challenges around food and the eating environment for older adults. Dr. Keller indicated that only 5 per cent of the total population is living in retirement or long-term care facilities, with the majority staying at home out in the community. “This is the new market,” she says. The lack of research on what older adults are actually eating, and what their nutrient requirements are in different disease states present opportunities for industry and academia to work together to provide improved food solutions, promote healthy aging and improve quality of life.



A-HA research scientist, Dr. Alison Duncan, echoed the opportunity to address many different disease states but put an agricultural spin on things. As part of the [Department of Human Health and Nutritional Sciences](#) at the University of Guelph, Dr. Duncan conducts research involving agri-food products that can also be considered functional foods. She states the importance of supporting Ontario's farmers in product development so that there is benefit to all participants across the value chain. Her presentation provided several examples that linked agriculture, food and health with a focus on the aging population (e.g. development of foods containing higher amounts of lutein via innovative farm practices or functional food product development in order to deliver the link between consuming lutein and protection against age-related macular degeneration).

Following a brief networking break, during which time guests were invited to browse a display of functional foods designed for the aging population already on the market, a panel of experts in the fields of research, food service, nutrition, product development, and sensory evaluation came together and provided insight into the opportunities and barriers associated with serving the aging market. Featured themes included challenges in research involving older adults, sensory evaluation, and food services. Discussion also touched on opportunity for industry through specific nutrient intake (e.g. omega-3 fatty acids), product development and the Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) tax credit program which can make doing research more cost effective. Panelists included:

- **Dr. Mike Sharratt**, Executive Director, RIA
- **Dr. Lisa Duizer**, Department of Food Science, University of Guelph & A-HA research scientist
- **Jill Estioko**, RD, Director of Food Service and Hospitality, Schlegel Seniors Villages
- **Carolyn O'Brien**, Manager of Regulatory Affairs, Canada Bread Company
- **Dr. Ken Stark**, Department of Kinesiology, University of Waterloo & A-HA research scientist
- **Ann Kraus**, Technical Advisor, KPMG

Presentations made by A-HA research scientists, as well as a resource designed to highlight the most important components of functional foods for healthy aging, are both available in PDF format at the A-HA website (<http://aha.the-ria.ca>). There is also a link to a webcast of the event, thanks to OMAFRA's information technology staff.

**Agri-food for healthy aging**

**innovationbreakfast**

Our sponsors: Ontario, TRRA, MaRS

**Agenda**

Time	Speaker & Title of Presentation
8:30 a.m.	Registration, Breakfast & Networking
8:55 a.m.	Barb Dillingham, FNHP Sector Specialist, Guelph Food Technology Centre (GFTC) Welcome and Introduction to FANbase™ Ontario
9:00 a.m.	George Suggan, Deputy Minister, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) Opening Remarks
9:15 a.m.	Jessica Demeter, Program Manager Agri Food for Healthy Aging (A-HA), Schlegel Seniors Villages for Aging (SSV), Introduction to Agri Food for Healthy Aging (A-HA) Initiative
9:20 a.m.	Dr. Heather Kehler, A-HA Research Scientist - Family Relations & Applied Nutrition - University of Guelph Food and Older Adults: Opportunities and Challenges for the Future
9:30 a.m.	Dr. Alison Thomas, A-HA Research Scientist - Dept. Human Health & Nutritional Sciences - University of Guelph How Linking Agriculture and Food Can Impact Nutrition and Health Research in Older Adults
10:10 a.m.	Networking Break
	<b>FAN® Panel: Exploring research and food needs of older adults and opportunities for Ontario's FNHP sector</b> Nutrition Research, Food Safety & Food Service Needs for Older Adults
	Dr. Mike Sharratt - Executive Director, Schlegel Seniors Villages for Aging (SSV)
	Dr. Lisa Duizer - A-HA Research Scientist - Dept. of Food Science, University of Guelph
10:35 a.m.	Jill Estioko, RD - Director of Food & Hospitality, SSV Schlegel Holdings Inc. Exploring Industry Opportunities
	Carolee O'Brien - Manager, Regulatory Affairs, Canada Bread Company, Limited
	Karen McPhee - Manager, Product Development Services, Guelph Food Technology Centre
	Dr. Ken Stark - A-HA Research Scientist - Laboratory of Nutritional & Nutritional Research, Dept. of Knowledge, University of Waterloo
	*FAN: Functional Food, Agriculture & Natural Health Product
12:10 p.m.	Closing Remarks & Gift Basket Draw
12:20 p.m.	Seminar Adjournment



more programming involving whole family units, research results, industry could better understand opportunities in this growing area. Overall, attendees enjoyed the programming, food, venue and hospitality services.

Feedback collected from attendees demonstrated the success of the morning event. Most attendees who completed the evaluation form were “extremely satisfied” with presentations and program content. When asked what aspects of the program were most relevant, many people found the opportunity for product development and food innovation to be most interesting. Understanding the aging market and the demonstration of clear linkages between food, nutrition and healthy aging were also valuable. When attendees were asked to identify other areas related to functional foods and natural health products for programming, they indicated that strategies for communications and sales, challenges in the regulatory environment and further information on cost comparisons related to food production. In terms of other areas related to aging, attendees would like to see

Media coverage of this event included an article in The Guelph Mercury on October 29, 2009:

### [Aging population faces food challenges](#)

Joanne Shuttleworth

**GUELPH** – An aging population offers both opportunity and responsibility to those in the food industry, including government, researchers, food producers, packagers and farmers.

“The good news is we’re living longer,” said George Zegarac, deputy minister of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

“The bad news is we’re living longer. From a health standpoint, we have to get ahead of the curve.”

Zegarac was one of several speakers at a conference Wednesday that brought together people in the food industry to look at the dietary needs of the elderly and ways the food industry can adapt to help people live in their homes and age while remaining healthy. The event at the Cutten Club was organized by the Guelph Food Technology Centre, FANbase, and Agri-food for Healthy Aging.

Dr. Heather Keller, a research scientist at the University of Guelph, said while there’s lots of research about other aspects of aging, and obviously nutrition factors into that, little is known about their existing eating habits.

“There’s a lack of information about what’s eaten, what’s needed, the benefits of food intervention and drug-food interactions,” Keller said. “There’s

also a lack of government policy around food and aging.”

Seniors who live independently often have trouble getting to the grocery store, pushing big grocery carts and navigating big grocery stores. Food labels are hard to read with aging eyes and packaging can be difficult to open.

“There’s a high need for functional food,” she said. “This is the new market.”

Alison Duncan, also of the U of G, agreed.

“Omega-3 fatty acids are known to improve brain function. This can link back to the farmer,” Duncan said. “Lutein is a plant pigment known to improve eye health.”

She said with age comes declining muscle mass but a key to combating that is protein. She’s been experimenting with adding soy protein to bread, which is easy for a senior to eat.

“We can manipulate crops and the way they are harvested. We need to make food easier to eat,” she said.

Jill Estioko is director of food and hospitality for RBJ Schlegel Holdings Inc., which owns a chain of long-term care homes. She said it’s a challenge to feed residents three meals and two snacks each day on the \$7.31 per day, per person amount the Ministry of Health funds these facilities.

Some residents have trouble chewing and swallowing, so food is often pureed. But food loses nutrition and fibre when pureed. It’s often unappealing in that state too, she said.

The need for high fibre, low sodium and reduced trans fats foods, said Ken Stark, a professor at the University of Waterloo.

“And if you can find a puree that tastes great, that would be good too.”

Keller cautioned food producers to bear in mind that with a goal of keeping seniors in their own homes, “you can’t just develop products for long-term care. More seniors are living in their homes. They need products too.”

Facts about aging and eating that came out of the conference:

- In 2006 there were 4.3 million seniors in Canada (over the age of 65). By 2026 there will be eight million seniors.
- 22 per cent of seniors in long-term care are immigrants, with different dietary needs.
- 40 per cent are overweight.
- 27 per cent live with chronic pain that causes difficulty opening packages and cans.
- 51 per cent live home alone.
- Seniors often have difficulty chewing, cooking and shopping.
- 30 per cent of seniors in long-term care need modified texture food (soft or pureed).
- Long-term care facilities have a budget of \$7.31 per day per resident for food.
- Favourite foods are hot cereal, soups, eggs, and mashed potatoes.

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