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# Nebraska Innovation Campus to collaborate with ConAgra Foods



"Breaking Ground for the Future" was the theme for a major announcement today on a new level of collaboration between University of Nebraska-Lincoln and ConAgra Foods. The collaboration continues and accelerates research and development projects at Nebraska Innovation Campus -- the university's project for private-public innovation and research.

Through the collaboration ConAgra Foods hopes to foster a culture of innovation related to food science. For example, the collaboration will help to further understanding and knowledge related to popcorn and tomato breeding and research. Alongside university students and faculty, ConAgra Foods will leverage leased space in greenhouses at Nebraska Innovation Campus, where it will grow and research tomatoes, such as those used in Hunt's and Ro\*Tel brands. ConAgra Foods also will continue its research on popcorn at the university. The company expects to harvest more than 100 million pounds of Nebraska-grown popcorn this year alone, which is used in Orville Redenbacher's and ACT II popcorn.

The company also hopes the collaboration will create education and development opportunities for students as they further explore the possibility for research in emerging food safety practices and microbiology, robotics and their application in food commercialization.

The announcement marks the first commitment from a private-industry partner at the new campus. The company has worked with UNL for several years in food science research. UNL Chancellor Harvey Perlman said ConAgra Foods is a perfect collaborator, with the vision for the campus focusing on food, fuel and water.

"The modern economy is based on innovation, and we know that many private-sector companies involved in agriculture, technology and other fields want to locate adjacent to or on a university campus where they can collaborate with university scientists and engage university students," Perlman said. "Nebraska Innovation Campus enhances opportunities for private businesses to access faculty research in the development of marketable innovations.

"With this announcement today of our collaboration with ConAgra Foods, we celebrate breaking new ground for the future, we celebrate the beginning of construction at Nebraska Innovation Campus, and the beginning of new possibilities for our university, our private partners, our students, and our state."

"We're enthusiastic about this announcement, which really represents an extension of the relationship we've been fostering with the university for several years," said Al Bolles, executive vice president, Research, Quality and Innovation at ConAgra Foods. "This is our first step toward exploring additional opportunities to expand a relationship that we hope will serve as the model for successful collaboration between the private sector and public universities."

The Nebraska Innovation Campus concept was announced in November 2007 and became reality on Jan. 1, 2010, when the state transferred the former State Fairgrounds to UNL. The 249-acre tract is designated to be transformed into the public-private research and technology development center. NIC's vision is to expand access to commercial markets, expand access to talented people and research capabilities, and expand access to talented potential employees.

"For ConAgra Foods to be the first major partner at Nebraska Innovation Campus is a rare opportunity that we could not pass up," said Gary Rodkin, chief executive officer of ConAgra Foods. "The expertise in food science at UNL, when combined with the expertise at ConAgra Foods, represents valuable potential in our ongoing momentum in the area of product innovation."

Nebraska Innovation Campus is governed by a Development Corporation Board and is focused on a campus with 2 million square feet of research and development space. The campus will eventually house as many as 7,000 people working in a collaborative environment. In June 2011, plans were unveiled for four new or renovated buildings representing an estimated \$80 million in public and private investments, that include laboratory, greenhouse, conference and office space in the 280,000 square feet of space to be constructed as part of Phase 1 of NIC. Woodbury Corp. and Nebraska Nova LLC (now Scott Woodbury Wiegert) were announced as the private investors in that project.

Earlier today representatives from Nebraska Innovation Campus, ConAgra Foods, Woodbury and financial partner First National Omaha visited the campus for a ceremonial photo representing the physical ground-breaking at the beginning of the first phase of construction.

"This is one of Nebraska's most ambitious and most significant projects," said Gov. Dave Heineman. "We want to grow and attract new, technology-focused companies to our state. Innovation Campus represents an important opportunity for the University of Nebraska to leverage its research talent to fuel new economic growth. Accelerating the development of Innovation Campus is a critical part of our vision for Nebraska's future."

Dan Duncan, executive director for Nebraska Innovation Campus, said ConAgra Foods is the "perfect first collaborator."

"Food is a major focus in our research, and ConAgra's collaboration will provide our faculty and students with expanded opportunities. I'm excited that our first corporate announcement is with a company based in Nebraska and to see the future unfold with ConAgra as a partner," Duncan said.

### About ConAgra Foods

ConAgra Foods Inc., (NYSE: CAG), is one of North America's leading food companies, with brands in 97 percent of America's households. Consumers find Banquet, Chef Boyardee, Egg Beaters, Hebrew National, Hunt's, Marie Callender's, Orville Redenbacher's, PAM, Peter Pan, Reddi-wip, Slim Jim, Snack Pack and many other ConAgra Foods brands in grocery, convenience, mass merchandise and club stores. ConAgra Foods also has a strong business-to-business presence, supplying frozen potato and sweet potato products as well as other vegetable, spice and grain products to a variety of well-known restaurants, foodservice operators and commercial customers. For more information about ConAgra Foods, please visit us at [www.conagrafoods.com](http://www.conagrafoods.com) (<http://www.conagrafoods.com>).

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