

Food technologists - experts on call

The South Australian Food Centre, based at the Regency International Centre TAFE SA, is a valuable resource for food businesses wanting to innovate, develop and strategically grow.

Whether your business needs advice on market research, development or intelligence, business development or capability advice or technical know-how, the SA Food Centre can help.

A range of experts are on hand – including the expertise of food technologists - to help South Australian food businesses evolve into dynamic drivers for the future.

They have a focus on helping with value chain development, innovation and market development, and developing the capabilities of your food business to improve business performance and assist you to be more successful in the market.

Experts at the ready

Andrew Barber, Principal Food Technologist and Stewart Eddie, Senior Food Technologist, are just two of the experts available to help.

With broad experience in the food science sector, Andrew and Stewart can help “join the dots” if businesses identify problem with packaging, shelf-life, product development, food safety and export options.

“On many occasions we have businesses making contact just to talk about their type of problems they are facing, but not really knowing what to do about them,” Andrew said.

“Once we have assessed the issues, we can point them in the right direction or take some specific action to fix the problem.”

Technical advice

Andrew said the SA Food Centre was a great source of information, particularly for businesses trying to identify ways to improve their products, access new markets and expand their potential.

While some businesses need advice on packaging and processing, others need scientific assistance on labelling, nutrition information and flavour balances.

“There is not much benefit in having a great product if it can't sit on a shelf or be exported to key markets, so we can assist in some of the technical know-how and help businesses develop their specific product development,” he said.

Workshops for industry are excellent tools for businesses accessing the SA Food Centre. Andrew said that several sessions have already been held, with a specific focus on seafood packaging, post-harvest handling, market trends and technological advances.

Topics to be covered in 2009 include freezing technology, new product development and efficient food manufacturing.

Who are we helping?

The SA Food Centre, which was opened in September 2008, brings together the resources and expertise of key government and industry providers to help South Australian food innovators grow their businesses.

More than 250 SA food businesses have already tapped into the expertise on offer, seeking assistance on a wide range of issues such as marketing advice, food safety, business management, technical issues and identifying skills shortages.

Several businesses are engaging food technologists in specific projects such as product development and shelf life testing.

The Graduate Access Program (GAP) delivered by the SA Food Centre fosters skills for the food industry by providing work experience for undergraduate and graduate students from TAFE and Universities. They work directly with food businesses with support from the SA Food Centre.

How can we help you?

Connect to the SA Food Centre and see how it can help grow your food business.

Your first step is to contact the Industry Development Officer (IDO) for your region. Your IDO is the first point of contact, and can assist you in sourcing the skills and experience you need.

Advice is free. Please contact the SA Food Centre to take the first step to move your business to the next level.



Your first
stop for
expertise



Ferguson Australia
 Quality gourmet seafood fresh to market

Leading South Australian business Ferguson Australia saw a gap in the niche seafood market in the late 1990s – and has now grown to be one of Australia’s most innovate producers of gourmet lobster products.

For more than 45 years, three generations of the Ferguson family have proudly fished in the Southern ocean for the magnificent Southern Rock Lobster and operated in the seafood industry.

Debra and Andrew Ferguson are now leading the charge, having evolved from a principally fishing enterprise to a strong value added export business, delivering a range of prestige gourmet rock lobster products, seafood range and oils.

By accessing the expertise on offer at the South Australian Food Centre, the business has been able to access new markets and expand its product range.

Throughout this growth phase, Ferguson Australia has worked with the SA Food Centre, through Industry Development Officer (IDO) Linda Kwok and others. The IDO’s identify and prioritise business needs and then refer their clients to a broad range of industry specialists including food technologists, food processing engineers, food safety specialists and a range of government services.

“Linda has been invaluable in her knowledge, contacts and professionalism. She has exceptional patience and focus, and for us this has been pivotal in our growth and setting up the structures necessary to grow as quickly as we have,” Debra said.

“The SA Food Centre is also a very good source for advice, bouncing ideas around, and helping us to make plans to move forward,” she said.

“We knew that to grow, we needed to look at our business, undertake market research, better understand the market perception of customers towards lobster, plus develop a service and product with a gap in the market.”

The business uses the expertise of the SA Food Centre to assist with packaging for export, extending product shelf life and developing new products.

“Our team consider this resource an invaluable part of the food industry and with this expertise, we intend to utilise it regularly,” Debra said.

“Packaging is always an issue for us particularly with seafood and as an Australian exporter where distance relates to shelf life. While we are proactive in our direction, we also try to meet global food market trends and demands and this includes packaging.

In addition to business management support, Ferguson Australia taps into the technical support available from the SA Food Centre to assist with packaging for export, extending product shelf life and developing new products.

“We are now involved on a project with the SA Food Centre in extending the shelf life of a product that is delivering excellent results.”

Debra said the business has started working with the food technologists, seeking advice on how to better value add their products.

“Our biggest challenge has always been on improving our packaging and shelf life, particularly for export markets, and the food technologists have been of great assistance,” she said.

Ferguson Australia is currently working on new flavouring products, such as lobster oil and lobster macadamia nuts – which value add from the basic lobster product.

“It is about developing the brand, and thinking outside the square about the opportunities available,” she said.

“While it is early days, we are thrilled with the expertise and resources the SA Food Centre team has committed towards these projects.”

For more information visit www.fergusonaustralia.com

(front) Debra Ferguson, Managing Director
 (above) Andrew and Debra Ferguson