



## **GAY LEA FOODS LEADS NEW DIRECTION FOR CANADIAN DAIRY ON INNOVATION AND INGREDIENTS**

*Following a banner year in 2016, one of Canada's leading agri-food innovators poised for even greater success during Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations*

**Mississauga, Ontario – (January 24, 2017)** Fresh off an historic year, Gay Lea Foods Co-operative Limited is poised for further growth in 2017 with ambitious plans for an expansion of its foods and ingredients business as well as for continued investment in innovative, industry-leading products.

At today's Annual General Meeting, Michael Barrett, President & CEO, highlighted the Co-operative's achievements in 2016, declaring it "a banner year" for Gay Lea Foods. Continued growth and an intensified commitment to innovation in 2017 will build on last year's successes which include numerous record setting accomplishments:

- Becoming the first North American co-operative to welcome both dairy goat and dairy cow members
- An investment and partnership in Mariposa Dairy, the fastest-growing goat cheese business in North America
- The launch of innovative new aged goat cheddar cheeses
- The addition of Black River Cheese and Stirling Creamery
- Record membership growth
- Record processing volumes
- Record sales
- Record profitability
- Record fundraising by employees and delegates for the Gay Lea Foundation, the official registered charity of Gay Lea Foods
- Continued investment in employee training and professional development programs

Notable decisions at the 2017 AGM include a move by Gay Lea Foods' delegates to expand membership eligibility to dairy farmers in Manitoba. The move follows the co-operative's November 2016 announcement that it has entered into a joint venture with Vitalus Nutrition Inc. to process dairy ingredients and butter in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Dairy Farmers of Manitoba will supply the raw milk for the processing facility, creating new market opportunities for milk from Manitoba farms.

Further to the change in by-laws, the Board of Directors also took the opportunity to announce the appointment of an outside director from Manitoba. Meredith Miller-Delichte, a dairy farmer from St. Alphonse, Manitoba has accepted the position of Director effective immediately.

Moving into 2017 – Canada’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary – Gay Lea Foods will continue its strategic focus on innovation, ingredients and industry leadership, working to create opportunities for sustainable, long-term growth in the Canadian dairy industry. As one of the key drivers of job creation and economic growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Canada’s vibrant agri-food sector will continue to thrive thanks to the commitment to innovation, excellence and co-operative values championed by Gay Lea Foods.

## QUOTES

“We are excited to have the full support of delegates to extend the membership opportunity to bovine dairy farmers in Manitoba. As we expand into Manitoba to increase processing of Manitoba milk, we welcome our fellow dairy farmers in Manitoba the same opportunity to be member owners. This is the second consecutive year that our delegates have embraced change and commitment to the Co-operative principle of open and voluntary membership.” - Gay Lea Foods Chair Steve Dolson

“As a dairy farmer owned co-operative, Gay Lea Foods is a firm believer in industry-led solutions to grow the market for Canadian cow and goat milk,” said President & CEO Michael Barrett. “The past year was a successful, record-setting year for our co-operative and we look forward to the year ahead as we continue to drive our co-operative forward through research and development, leading edge technologies, and innovative products favoured by consumers in households across Canada.” – Michael Barrett, President & CEO

## ABOUT

Gay Lea Foods Co-operative Limited is 100% Canadian owned and operated, with members on more than 1,300 dairy farms and more than 4,000 members in total. The co-operative is the first in Canada to include both licenced dairy cow and goat members, and processes both kinds of milk into a range of dairy products, as well as serving as a broker in the dairy goat sector. Gay Lea Foods is driven by innovation and growing the market for Canadian cow and goat milk. Our products include the consumer favourite Spreadables; North America’s first Smooth<sup>TM</sup> Cottage Cheese; and an innovative snack made with 100% cheese, *Nothing But Cheese<sup>TM</sup>*.

## LINK

[Gay Lea Foods](#)

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