

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST: COLLABORATION IN AN ARCTIC FOODS INNOVATION CLUSTER (AFIC) PROPOSAL

Within the Arctic region there are considerable opportunities for commercial food production, both for export and for meeting local food needs. Food industries are producing large volumes of food commodities that are culturally compatible with indigenous\local food preferences and also have high export value. However, the Arctic foods value chain is challenged by a host of social, economic, logistical, and political obstacles. Industries located along the value chain tend to be fragmented and have little to no coordination or communication. This has perpetuated an overreliance of raw export, bottlenecking of distribution points, and limited innovation in primary and secondary product development. Given these conditions we propose to establish an Arctic Foods Innovation Cluster (AFIC). An AFIC would pull together relevant actors in the Arctic food value chain for a cluster-focused approach to food production and regional economic development. A cluster-based approach to food innovation would draw together Arctic food producers with governments, Indigenous communities, universities, research centers, vocational training providers, and industry associations with a shared aim of increasing the Arctic's competitiveness in food industries. The objective of the AFIC include:

- Serve as a hub(s) of expertise drawn from communities, industry, investors, governments, and researchers – all converged on food innovations.
- Be an incubator for business models, new technologies, and value-added products.
- Bring greater awareness to Arctic foods and their globally unique places of origin.
- Be a global leader in food innovations that can find solutions to Arctic food challenges.

Canada intends to champion the establishment of an Arctic Foods Innovation Cluster as a circumpolar-wide initiative of the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) during the October (2018) SDWG meeting in Rovaniemi. In this regard, we are seeking research collaborators and institutional partners who would be interested in contributing to the AFIC proposal, and if successful, the development of an Arctic Foods Innovation Cluster.

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