



Harper Government teams with Canadian researchers to bolster food safety system

OTTAWA – July 26, 2012 — The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Genome Canada and Alberta Innovates Bio Solutions are partnering in a \$600,000 project that will help protect consumers from Listeriosis, a serious foodborne illness.

The project aims to map the genome of *Listeria* bacteria so that more rapid tests can be developed. Current test methods take at least five days. Genomic techniques could improve accuracy and cut testing time significantly, allowing the CFIA and industry to more effectively identify unsafe foods.

“The Harper Government is committed to improving Canada’s already robust food safety system,” said Agriculture Minister, Gerry Ritz. “Through investments in science and innovation, we are giving industry the opportunity to better identify and reduce risks for consumers, meaning safer food for Canadian families.”

Gary Goodyear, Minister of State for Science and Technology, said: “This project is a step the Harper Government is taking to demonstrate how Canada’s research leadership can be used to benefit Canadian society by investigating innovative and more timely techniques to protect our food supply.”

Listeriosis is a serious concern for the food industry. Although healthy people are not often affected, the elderly, pregnant women and children especially can suffer serious complications.

In general, *Listeria monocytogenes* appears to be capable of survival regardless of freezing, dehydration and exposure to temperature regimes commonly used in the pasteurization of food. Given the seriousness of this bacterium as a food pathogen, its timely detection in food will help reduce the incidence of foodborne listeriosis.

Pierre Meulien, President and CEO, Genome Canada, said: “Genomics research will bring a new level of advanced innovation and technology to food safety. We expect to provide the means to enable both the food industry and food regulators to respond swiftly to food safety investigations by identifying a potentially dangerous food contaminant as quickly as possible to prevent or limit the impact of an outbreak.”

Stan Blade, CEO, Alberta Innovates Bio Solutions, said: “While Canada and Alberta have an excellent reputation for food safety, we strive for continuous improvements through the application of science and innovation. We are pleased to support a program that will further our knowledge about *Listeria* and enhance Canada’s reputation as a preferred supplier of safe food products.”

The 18-month research project involves an investment of \$250,000 each from Genome Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and \$100,000 from Alberta Innovates Bio Solutions. Through the Request for Applications, released today, participants have until October to submit proposals for funding.

Genome Canada is a catalyst for developing and applying genomic sciences that create economic wealth and social benefit for Canadians. We work in partnership to invest in and manage large-scale research and translate discoveries into commercial opportunities, new technologies, applications and solutions. We build bridges between government, academia and industry to forge a genomics-based public-private innovation focused on key life science sectors. For more information, visit www.genomecanada.ca

The **Canadian Food Inspection Agency** (CFIA) is Canada's largest science-based regulator. The Agency is dedicated to safeguarding food, animals and plants, which enhances the health and well-being of Canada's people, environment and economy. For more information, visit www.inspection.gc.ca.

Alberta Innovates Bio Solutions (AI Bio) is a publicly funded board-governed corporation that works with partners to identify, coordinate and fund research projects designed to help solve industry challenges with solutions that deliver economic, environmental and social benefits. Through this investment in science and innovation, AI Bio aims to help create new technologies and products that will grow Alberta's agriculture, food and forest sectors. Visit www.bio.albertainnovates.ca

-30-

For more information, contact:

Marlene Orton
Director, Media and Communications
Genome Canada
Phone: 613-751-4460, x219
Cell: 613-295-1476
morton@genomecanada.ca

Canadian Food Inspection Agency Media Relations
Phone: 613-773-6600

Marie Cusack, Communications Director
Alberta Innovates – Bio Solutions
Phone: 780-638-4060
Marie.Cusack@albertainnovates.ca