



For Immediate Release: Thursday, September 10, 2015

Contact: Pamm Lent | Pamm.Lent@esd.ny.gov (716) 846-8309
ESD Press Office | PressOffice@esd.ny.gov | (800) 260-7313

EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES MAJOR EXPANSION OF BATAVIA MILK COOPERATIVE

O-AT-KA Facility to add 24 new jobs

Empire State Development today announced that O-AT-KA Milk Products Cooperative, Inc., a dairy cooperative based in Batavia, NY will be expanding their warehouse and material handling functions at their Batavia site. O-AT-KA is majority owned by Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc. headquartered in Buffalo, NY and also by Dairy Farmers of America, a cooperative with a strong presence in Central NY. O-AT-KA helps to ensure there is a market for milk produced by over 400 farms in the Western, Finger Lakes and Central NY regions. A new warehousing facility and equipment room will allow the cooperative to continue to grow its production and create 24 new full time positions within three years, raising total employment to over 350 positions.

“We consider this project to be a game changer” said Michael Patterson, O-AT-KA’s Chief Financial Officer. “This not only enables us to meet our immediate needs but positions O-AT-KA for growth into the future. Three factors driving this initiative are worker safety, food quality and operational efficiencies. These three legs of the stool will be the backbone supporting O-AT-KA’s continuing growth here in New York State.”

The economic support and assistance from local and state agencies was a critical factor in undertaking this project. New York State, through Empire State Development, will provide a \$400,000 capital grant to assist in bringing off site warehousing back onsite by building a 195,000 square foot warehouse and a 35,000 square foot equipment room to their existing facility. The company will also purchase new material handling equipment and re-purpose existing equipment. The new space will allow the company more efficiency, provide safety for workers, and allow for cost savings and helping with their competitive edge in the market place. The growth of on-site warehousing also allows the company the ability to grow its production of shelf stable dairy based beverages. O-AT-KA has a goal of increasing their export business by 10% over the next several years, which will result in approximately 25% of the total production being exported.

As the number 1 manufacturing employer in Batavia, O-AT-KA strives to foster productive, long-term relationships with their employees. The cooperative, which

produces dry, condensed and evaporated dairy products, was established in 1959 with five employees and has grown to 332.

“Agricultural and food processing has been identified as one of the top Finger Lakes REDC strategies,” said Empire State Development President, CEO & Commissioner Howard Zemsky. “The O-AT-KA project aligns with the council’s goal to optimize business retention and expansion, and support the growth of food processing companies in the region.”

“This commitment by New York State to O-AT-KA demonstrates Governor Cuomo’s support of economic development in Upstate New York and in particular to the agri-business industry in Genesee County,” said Paul Battaglia, Chairman of the Genesee County Economic Development Center. “We look forward to continuing working with New York State on other economic development opportunities.”

"O-AT-KA has played a major role in our local economy for decades. Now, expansion plans, along with 24 new jobs, will help to secure the cooperative's presence in Batavia for years to come. I commend O-AT-KA CEO Bill Schreiber for selecting Genesee County to invest and grow," said State Senator Michael H. Ranzenhofer.

“I am pleased to see the growth and expansion of an important Western New York agricultural staple such as O-AT-KA. As a small-business and farm owner for over four decades, I realize the integral part O-AT-KA plays in New York’s dairy industry and Western New York’s economy. Having grown up in Batavia, I have seen the company grow from just a few employees to over 300 people – truly epitomizing the American dream of entrepreneurship. As lawmakers we must continue to protect small businesses such as these and take measures to grow New York’s economy,” said Assemblyman Steve Hawley.

About O-AT-KA

Headquartered in Batavia, NY, O-AT-KA’s name was taken from the Seneca Native Americans, and means leaving the highlands or approaching an opening. The “highlands” refers to Wyoming County, New York and the “opening” refers to the Genesee River flowing into Lake Ontario. The cooperative opened in 1959 with only five employees and has since grown to provide employment to over 300 people in the facility; contributing to growth in the local economy. O-AT-KA’s ‘customer centric’ approach to business, continuous investment in capital equipment, and responsive R&D expertise has earned them an excellent reputation among major Fortune 500 companies. The promise of quality combined with our versatility will certainly make us the best choice for your dairy based production needs. O-AT-KA is proud to be owned by two highly respected dairy cooperatives; Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc. and Dairy Farmers of America. . www.oatkamilk.com

About Empire State Development

Empire State Development is New York’s chief economic development agency. The mission of ESD is to promote a vigorous and growing economy, encourage the creation

of new job and economic opportunities, increase revenues to the State and its municipalities, and achieve stable and diversified local economies. Through the use of loans, grants, tax credits, and other forms of financial assistance, ESD strives to enhance private business investment and growth to spur job creation and support prosperous communities across New York State. ESD is also the primary administrative agency overseeing Governor Cuomo's Regional Economic Development Councils and the marketing of "I Love NY," the State's iconic tourism brand. For more information on Regional Councils and Empire State Development, visit www.regionalcouncils.ny.gov and www.esd.ny.gov.

###