

# COLLEGE of BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

## The Business of Food



Andrew Baynham, a Longo's Food Lab participant, wears eye-tracking equipment intended to help researchers gauge eye movement of grocery store shoppers.

In Canada, food is big business. It's our second-largest industry, with one in five jobs being food-related. And the University of Guelph is Canada's food university. So it follows that food-related research at the University's College of Business and Economics is leading the nation in food-related research.

Through research in topics such as marketing, sustainability initiatives and consumer preference, CBE helps inform and strengthen the agri-food industry by providing a unique perspective on how Canadian's choose to buy and consume food.

Studying the influence of economic trends and advertising on consumer buying behaviour leads to

improved consumer experiences. CBE researchers also recognize and explore the role of historical and cultural perceptions of food on the public's purchasing habits.

Sustainability, global food security and consumer health are at the forefront of CBE research projects, from preventing food waste in restaurants to studying the health effects of diet soft drinks.

CBE food research has stemmed from partnerships among the University of Guelph and its constituent colleges, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and Longo's Inc. These partnerships help create a healthier, more sustainable world through the business of food.

PHOTO: KATE JENKINS

Protecting Canada's  
icewine integrity  
PAGE 2



Black pepper –  
from harvest to  
table  
PAGE 3



Increasing vegetable  
consumption  
PAGE 4

research





### **Lefa Teng** **Protecting Canada's** **icewine integrity**

Canada's Niagara region is world-renowned for its icewines. It's a hit in China, where icewine is widely viewed as a symbol of status. But counterfeit icewine is becoming increasingly prevalent in China. Counterfeit wines lower consumer standards and undercut market prices. That's why researchers are helping to inform consumers and retailers in China about how to spot fakes, such as avoiding labels that spell "icewine" as two words.

PHOTO: KAREN K. TRAN

### **Tirtha Dhar** **Diet soft drinks linked** **to conscious consuming**

While some believe that drinking diet soft drinks may lead to overeating, a U of G researcher has found that diet soft drinks are associated with a lower caloric intake overall. This data could significantly affect whether or not Ontario policy-makers tax soft drinks in the future.

### **Mychal-Ann Hayhoe** **How supply chains** **manage food waste**

Food waste occurs in both small and large supply chains in Canada. Researchers are comparing how producers and retailers of all scales are reducing waste. They found that local organic supply chains have shorter food transportation times, which reduce the likelihood of food being damaged in transit. Larger companies often have better options for waste diversion, so they can use imperfect products and manage very efficient supply chains.

### **Bruce McAdams** **Food waste in restaurants**

The economic and environmental impact of food waste in restaurants is prompting owners to re-evaluate their practices. For example, researchers have found that up to 30 per cent of bread served in restaurants goes uneaten. Serving bread upon request, offering a choice of portion size and purchasing local products instead of importing are a few ways in which restaurants can reduce waste.

### **Tanya Mark** **Premium meats** **for cheaper eats**

Restaurant visits fall off during a recession — but researchers have found that consumers still indulge in premium meats by purchasing brands from retailers at a more affordable price and by dining at home. Researchers suggest that industry managers not retreat when the economy slows down, despite the struggle. Stay visible to advertise and promote brands on and offline, say researchers.

### **WooMi Jo** **How food influences travel intentions**

Tasting food from another culture for the first time can be an intriguing experience. Researchers are highlighting how the perception of countries based on their cuisine can positively or negatively influence whether a person chooses to travel to that country. Traditional ethnic food could be used as a gateway through which travellers visit regions not traditionally viewed as tourist destinations, such as Africa and East Asia. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK







## Elliott Currie Hazelnut orchards show promise in Ontario

In 2012, Canada imported \$105-million worth of hazelnuts. Can such imports be replaced with locally grown hazelnuts? A U of G researcher thinks so, and is developing cropping systems to grow them locally. Development of orchards is not a fast process — it can take up to five years for them to fully develop. But each hazelnut tree lives for up to 100 years — and that longevity could lead to ongoing jobs in Ontario.

PHOTO: ELLIOTT CURRIE

## Sara Mann Online tool improves hiring for farmers

Ontario farmers seldom have human resources capacity for screening and hiring the best candidates for on-farm jobs. U of G researchers developed a website with online tools to help producers create questions for interviews and performance appraisals. The website also offers consulting, workshops and webinars on how to avoid biases and create equal opportunity for prospective employees.

## Timothy Dewhirst Deconstructing exaggerated claims

Some advertisers use rhetorical figures — in other words, artful deviations from expectation — to sell products. Remember the juice container showing the straw stuck directly into an orange? That isn't how we consume orange juice, but such metaphorical promotion can be used to imply health benefits or ingredients that may not be found in the actual product. Researchers are studying such promotions to help inform Health Canada on food and beverage advertising regulations.

## Tirtha Dhar The effect of banning fast food ads

Fast food advertising that targets children can lead to lifelong unhealthy eating habits in younger populations. In Quebec, fast food television ads aimed at children have been banned for over 30 years. A researcher found that the ban has led to Quebec families spending less money on fast food restaurants than their counterparts in Ontario and having the lowest childhood obesity rates in the country.

## Joe Barth Black pepper—from harvest to table

Black pepper is used as an ingredient or condiment in countless meals around the globe. It is also used in traditional Chinese and Indian (Ayurveda) medicine and has been shown to enhance the absorption of many drugs taken orally. To understand the supply chain of black pepper from grower to exporter, a researcher travelled to Cochin, India, to visit farmers, spice traders and one of India's largest pepper exporters. The research discoveries from Cochin will be shared in a forthcoming book.

PHOTO: JOE BARTH





## **Brent McKenzie**

### **The future of price tags**

Electronic shelf labels (ESLs) — small screens that display price and product information in grocery stores — may soon replace paper price tags. Researchers say ESLs are environmentally friendly and cost-effective, and enable retailers to update prices in real time. ESL technology could also facilitate links between popular smartphone apps that help modern consumers plan trips to the grocery store.

## **Lianne Foti**

### **Higher produce prices alter buyer behaviour**

In the past year, Canadians have seen a jump in produce prices of up to 25 per cent. According to a nationwide survey conducted by U of G researchers, increasing costs led more than one-quarter of participants eat fewer fruits and vegetables. Nearly half of consumers reportedly bought juice or frozen produce instead of fresh produce. These results demonstrate the vulnerability of many Canadian consumers — especially lower-income households — to price fluctuations.

## **Erna van Duren**

### **Research theme adds value to agri-food products**

Erna van Duren is the research program director for the product and value chain research program under the OMAFRA–U of G Partnership. This partnership allows Ontario agriculture and food businesses and researchers to collaborate to develop new products and other solutions to challenges facing the sector. Profs. Sara Mann, Department of Management, Lefa Teng, Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies, and Sunghwan Yi, Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies, are supported by this program.



## **Sunghwan Yi**

### **Increasing vegetable consumption**

Despite the well-known nutritional benefits of dark green and yellow vegetables, Ontarians are not eating enough of them. Researchers want to know why. Although some familiar vegetables such as potatoes and tomatoes are enjoyed by the majority of consumers, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and other cruciferous vegetables are perceived to be challenging to prepare and expensive. Strategies to deal with this perception include providing samples to consumers with recipes in supermarkets to showcase how delicious and inexpensive these vegetables can be. PHOTO: KAREN K. TRAN

## **Rumina Dhalla**

### **Sustainability in the wine industry**

Growing global populations have prompted many industries — including the wine industry — to adopt sustainability certifications, standards and regulations to protect the environment. Researchers are investigating the reputational, marketing and economic value of such “eco certifications” and labelling in the wine industry, and how consumers can better understand how these certifications relate to environmental initiatives and biodynamic and organic production.

## **Recreating the grocery store experience**

Consumers are bombarded daily with food information from a variety of sources, such as flyers, nutritional guides and television advertisements. How this overload of information affects consumer choices, however, is poorly understood. That’s why researchers in the Longo’s Food Innovation Research Lab are using advanced technology such as eye-tracking equipment in a mock grocery store setting to help analyze Canadian consumers’ food purchasing behaviours and responses to advertisements.

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