Session Title: Maximizing Return on Investments for small-scale processing facilities
Session Date: Friday, November 14th
Session Time: 10:15am-11:15am

Key Messages from presenters:

• By nature, food production is seasonal and processing demands are high during harvest season and low during off-season. Forming **collaborative** and **cooperative connections** and **communications** with suppliers and retailers can mitigate the risks and challenges associated with this. Through these communications processors can discover and potentially utilize existing distribution systems to get their products to retailers (however, retailers do value the relationships with small-scale producers as they don’t get that from larger companies.)
• Distribution problems and regulations (like food safety) increase exponentially with growth
• Small-scale processors should consider product-service offering arrangements (like freezing so you can process year-round) and ways to add value that are creative, sustainable and not easily imitated
• Regulations change regularly and it is hard to keep up. Small-scale producers must dedicate a lot of time to paperwork. There is a need to challenge policy-makers to come up with coordinated policies

Discussion Highlights

• Co-packing with other processors who have infrastructure but only use it part of the time. Cost-saving and food-safety standards are already in place.
• Geographic issues make delivery expensive, but the challenge of collaborating with other small-scale producers/farmers in getting their products to market is the different **regulations** in place for products in different categories (ie. Delivering milk, meat and vegetables in the same vehicle would mean it must fit certain licensing regulations)
• Food safety standards are often inaccessible to smaller producers, there was discussion of a need to be able to scale up to that level

Other thoughts / actions that emerged

• There is not necessarily a NEED to spread production of a good year-round—small scale processors can create excitement when a product is being offered “limited time only”.
• A Food lawyer present at the discussion encouraged producers to stay on top of regulations, as they are going to change in the coming year. “Safe Food for Canadians Act” has a general primer for the coming regulations and can be found online.