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AAK USA OPENS CUSTOMER INNOVATION CENTER IN RICHMOND CALIFORNIA

(November 12, 2019) Edison, NJ – AAK USA Inc., one of the world’s leading manufacturers of value-adding specialty vegetable fats and oils, announced the opening of its newest Customer Innovation Center. The facility, located in Richmond, California supports co-development work with multiple industry segment-focused labs and houses AAK’s U.S. Center of Excellence for Plant-Based Foods.

“AAK has over fifteen Customer Innovation Centers worldwide and has opened multiple locations across the U.S. over the last several years,” said Octavio Diaz de Leon, President of AAK USA and AAK North Latin America. “Our Richmond Customer Innovation Center investment offers an additional 2,000 square feet of co-development space and delivers on our commitment to providing our customer-partners coast-to-coast service and support. We accelerate innovation using AAK’s Co-Development approach, and our expansive team of fats and oils, bakery, dairy, plant-based foods and personal care experts, all coming together to create real-world formulation solutions.”

“The addition of our Richmond Innovation Center allows AAK to bring specialty vegetable oil solutions to our West Coast customers in a very collaborative way,” said James S. Jones, Ph.D., Vice President Customer Innovation, Plant-Based Foods, AAK USA. “We test AAK solutions and prove them in our customer’s products, ensuring functionality before plant trials and production. Our experts evaluate the customer critical attributes of flavor, texture, appearance—and even sound—that impact the consumer’s organoleptic and emotional eating experience. Fats and oils are a critical component of flavor and functionality systems for many products, especially plant-based foods. We continue to improve our portfolio of customer prototypes and solutions in close collaboration with our customers. Not only do we help them with their own ideas, we also bring our customer-partners new product ideas.”

AAK’s state-of-the-art Customer Innovation Center in Richmond is staffed with an expansive team of product development experts who have a deep understanding of the many roles that fats and oils play in a customer’s formula and in their process, labels and value chains. This team utilizes the same or similar equipment a customer would use, enabling AAK to provide hands-on co-development to tackle issues with formulas, ingredient statements, nutrition, processes and products.

“The greatest benefit of working closely with colleagues of different applications backgrounds is the opportunity to share knowledge and experience,” said Steve Council, Richmond Customer Innovation Manager, AAK USA. “By connecting similar formulation strategies from seemingly unrelated products, our open collaboration has led to a number of breakthrough product development concepts. In Richmond, we continue this style of teamwork and collective learning, delivering further insights and innovative solutions for our customers.”

Richmond features three Customer Innovation laboratories including:

Bakery Lab allows the AAK team to test and experiment with new and current product offerings to bring prototypes straight to customers, to expedite bakery innovation and speed to market. AAK’s bakery specialists create a wide range of bakery goods using shortenings, hardstocks, frying oils, margarines, cubed shortenings and flaked shortenings. Many of the most popular products consist of biscuits, cookies, croissants, cupcakes, cakes, donuts, dry bakery mixes, frozen baked goods, icings, pies/pie crusts, pizza crusts and flat breads.

Dairy and Plant-based Foods Lab includes all of the equipment necessary to develop dairy products using vegetable fats in place of dairy fat, as well as products that are 100% plant-based foods that provide the appearance, texture, mouthfeel and flavor delivery expected by consumers. AAK's deep knowledge of vegetable oil and fats working in conjunction with other ingredients, has enabled AAK's innovation team to develop an industry first, creamy plant-based cheese that can be sliced or shredded without crumbling. This breakthrough was made possible with the new lab where AAK focuses on solutions which replace milk fat in a variety of consumer products including: butter alternatives, cheese analogs, plant-based creamers, whipped toppings, plant-based yogurts and frozen desserts like ice cream. In addition to developing tasty dairy products with vegetable fat in place of dairy fat, prototypes in this lab provide improved nutritional profiles (no cholesterol), made with sustainable ingredients that are better for the planet.

Personal Care Lab focuses on solutions for skin care, hair care, color cosmetics, and other personal care products that require high performing, botanically derived emollients. AAK leads the way in developing innovative, technologically advanced shea-based ingredients for the beauty industry. With AAK's shea-based ingredients, customers can not only improve the functional and sensorial appeal of formulations, they also make a positive difference to the socio-economic development of the communities in West Africa that rely on the shea trade for their livelihood. Solutions focus on lip balms, lipsticks, sunscreens, lotions or nearly any other personal care product customers might need.

"Now that Richmond is fully operational, we are hosting a series of Innovation Days to inspire West Coast customer-partners with a range of new concepts and ideas," said Tom Welsch, Regional Sales Manager, AAK USA. "We create these highly customized events to aid specific customer needs and accelerate speed to market of innovative new products, product improvements and cost savings for our West Coast customer-partners."

AAK offers a wide range of plant-based oils and works together with customers to co-develop customized solutions that make the most of their combined expertise to ideate and develop innovative new products. AAK's coast-to-coast Innovation Center coverage and Customer Innovation Specialists increase their customers' speed to market of innovative new products. Together, AAK can help you give consumers the great-tasting, better-for-you, clean label and sustainable options that they want.

Find out more about AAK's Co-development solutions by visiting <https://betterwithaak.com/the-co-development-company/> and www.aak.com.

We are AAK – The Co-Development Company.

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AAK is a leading provider of value-adding vegetable oils & fats. Our wide range of raw materials, broad process capabilities, and expertise in oils & fats within food applications enable us to develop innovative and value-adding solutions across many industries – Chocolate & Confectionery, Bakery, Dairy, Special Nutrition, Food Service, Personal Care, and more. AAK's proven expertise is based on more than 140 years of experience within oils & fats. Our unique Co-Development approach brings our customers' skills and know-how together with our own capabilities and mindset for lasting results. Listed on the NASDAQ OMX Stockholm and with our headquarters in Malmö, Sweden, AAK has 22 production facilities and customization plants, sales offices in more than 25 countries and more than 3,700 employees.