

## Committee of the Whole (2) Report

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**DATE:** Tuesday, February 11, 2025

**WARD(S):** ALL

**TITLE:** PRIVATE LABEL MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION (PLMA)  
TRADE SHOW 2024 - FINAL REPORT

**FROM:**

Micheal Genova, Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives

**ACTION:** FOR INFORMATION

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**Purpose**

To attract growing and leading agri-food and food processing companies to Vaughan while supporting local businesses in their development and export efforts, Economic Development (EcDev) participated in the 2024 Private Label Manufacturers Association (PLMA) Trade Show in Chicago, Illinois from Nov. 17 to 19. The following report outlines trade promotion and investment attraction activities undertaken by staff.

**Report Highlights**

- The largest trade show of its kind, PLMA is considered the venue for the latest in food and non-food consumer packaged goods. This annual trade show features 2,700 booths representing 1,700 exhibitors from approximately 60 countries and offers valuable business-to-business opportunities.
- Attending the PLMA trade show allowed staff to engage with and showcase the strengths of Vaughan's agri-food and food processing sector to some of the world's largest food and beverage brands, as well as supporting Vaughan-based businesses with business advisory and export support.
- Vaughan is at the heart of Toronto Region's food and beverage sector, the largest in North America, boasting nearly 500 companies in the City's own food and beverage supply chain and employing approximately 22,250 workers – more than 10 per cent of Vaughan's employment base.

## **Report Highlights continued**

- The agri-food and food processing sector is a critical driver of job creation and economic growth in Vaughan.
- During the show, staff engaged with seven Vaughan-based businesses, six Canadian businesses, and 16 international companies from Brazil, Greece, Italy, Pakistan, Spain and the U.S. Tailored follow-up actions are currently underway to address the unique needs of each company.

## **Recommendations**

1. THAT Council receive this report for information.

## **Background**

***The largest trade show of its kind, PLMA is considered the venue for the latest in food and non-food consumer packaged goods. This annual trade show features 2,700 booths representing 1,700 exhibitors from approximately 60 countries and offers valuable business-to-business opportunities.***

More than 50 national pavilions were featured at the show, including a dedicated Canadian Pavilion. Additionally, the province of Ontario hosted its own separate pavilion to spotlight the province and its businesses. Representing Vaughan at the event were Concord Premium Foods, Kisko Products, Maximum Seafood, Summer Fresh Salads, VM Food Group and Zavida Coffee. Other notable national pavilions included Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

***Attending the PLMA trade show allowed staff to engage with and showcase the strengths of Vaughan's agri-food and food processing sector to some of the world's largest food and beverage brands, as well as supporting Vaughan-based businesses with business advisory and export support.***

By participating in the PLMA trade show, EcDev built on the momentum of the department's initiatives to expand this sector in Vaughan by engaging and networking with agri-food and food processing companies to attract growing and leading food companies to Vaughan while supporting Vaughan-based companies in their business development and export efforts. Participation in the PLMA trade show focused on the following areas:

## **1. Trade and Business Development Assistance**

Trade shows are a crucial avenue for identifying new customers and export opportunities. To support Vaughan-based food and beverage processors with their export and business development goals, staff connected with several local companies at the show to understand their objectives and provide tailored assistance. Staff also collaborated with partners such as the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service team in the U.S. and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. These partnerships enhanced Vaughan's profile as a prime investment destination and facilitated connections for Vaughan companies seeking export support in the U.S.

## **2. Investment Attraction and Site Selection Assistance**

Staff leveraged the PLMA trade show to connect with decision-makers from global food and beverage companies, understand their international expansion goals and promote Vaughan as an ideal location for investment.

Site selection assistance continues to be one of EcDev's key services. In 2023, the team managed 27 site selection inquiries and provided aftercare support to major corporations, including Cardinal Health, FGF Brands, Hanon Systems, Microsoft and Rivian Automotive. These efforts led to significant investments and job creation, driving Vaughan's economic growth. Notably, agri-food and food processing have become key areas of interest for site selection, representing nearly 30 per cent of all inquiries since 2023.

***Vaughan is at the heart of Toronto Region's food and beverage sector, the largest in North America, boasting nearly 500 companies in the City's own food and beverage supply chain and employing approximately 22,250 workers – more than 10 per cent of Vaughan's employment base.***

Vaughan's agri-food and food processing sector runs "farm to fork," which includes touchpoints along the continuum of the sector – from growing and processing to consumption at a retail or hospitality outlet.

Leading companies within the agri-food and food processing industry include Voilà by Sobeys' Customer Fulfilment Centre, Arla Foods, Concord Confectionary, Saputo Dairy Products, Costco Distribution Center, Longo Brothers Fruit Market Inc., Wholesome Harvest Baking Limited, Taylor Farms, United Natural Food Inc. and Ozery Bakery.

Notable industry concentrations include bakeries and tortilla manufacturing, sugar and confectionery product manufacturing, dairy product manufacturing and food merchant wholesalers, which boast a location quotient of more than 2.0.

***The agri-food and food processing sector is a critical driver of job creation and economic growth in Vaughan.***

Various initiatives throughout 2023 and 2024 focused on advancing and further developing this sector, including:

- Joined as a member of Food and Beverage Ontario and CareersNOW! Advisory Council
- Released an editorial to highlight Vaughan's thriving food and beverage supply chain with Food in Canada
- Completed a Council-led mission to Germany and Italy in October 2023 to advance opportunities for trade and investment, focusing on the agri-food and food processing sector. As part of this mission, the City's delegation joined the federal government, Ontario Food Cluster and York Region at the Anuga FoodTech Conference in Cologne, Germany.
- Hosted Food Plastics and Packaging Roundtable in partnership with Food and Beverage Ontario
- Completed a Council-led mission to Northern and Central Italy, which focused on advancing opportunities in the agri-food and food processing sector.

Recent investments in food processing include:

- In 2022, Taylor Farms, based in California, opened its first Canadian production facility in Vaughan. Its Vaughan location is focused on its retail product portfolio, and its investment represents 300 employees.
- Expected to be completed by the end of 2024, FGF Brands, a North American leader in bakery products, invested in three locations in Vaughan. The investment totals more than 625,000 square feet and will create up to 1,200 new jobs in addition to the 700 employees currently in Vaughan.
- In November 2024, Arla Foods, a global leader in sustainable food production, celebrated its recent expansion in the city. The company opened a new refrigerated warehousing facility, expected to create up to 100 jobs.
- In 2024, Taylor Farms expanded its operations in Vaughan by investing in their production lines, adding more than 50 jobs to their Vaughan plant.

**Previous Reports/Authority**

[International Economic Relations – Italy 2024 – Summary and Next Steps](#). Committee of the Whole (2) Report, September 17, 2024

[Vaughan Economic Development Action Plan, 2023-27](#). Committee of the Whole (Working Session) Report, April 10, 2024

[2023 Germany and Italy Mission Final Report and 2024 Economic Relations Look Ahead](#), Committee of the Whole (1) Report, January 23, 2024.

[2023 International Economic Relations - Agri-Food Cluster mission update](#), Committee of the Whole (2) Report. May 9, 2023.

[2023 International Economic Relations - Agri-Food Cluster Mission](#), Committee of the Whole (2) Report. April 18, 2023.

## **Analysis and Options**

***During the show, staff engaged with seven Vaughan-based businesses, six Canadian businesses, and sixteen international companies from Brazil, Greece, Italy, Pakistan, Spain and the U.S.***

Tailored follow-up actions are currently underway to address the unique needs of each company, including:

- Facilitating business-to-business meetings for six companies, with potential follow-up visits to Vaughan.
- Delivering four site selection packages tailored for warehouse and food manufacturing operations.
- Providing demographic and local profiles to all participating companies.
- Facilitating introductions to the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) for three companies to support their export development efforts.

Staff also discussed potential opportunities for collaboration in investment attraction and trade promotion with federal and provincial investment and trade teams, both before and during the show.

Before the event, staff proactively engaged with the Canadian Trade Commissioner in Chicago and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness team. These discussions centred on EcDev's objectives for the show and explored avenues for collaboration in investment attraction and trade promotion.

At the event, staff participated in a roundtable discussion led by the Honourable Minister Rob Flack of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness. The discussion included Earl Provost, Special Advisor and Agent General, along with representatives from federal and provincial investment and trade teams and several Ontario municipalities.

During the meeting, both Minister Flack and Agent General Provost praised Vaughan's strong food and beverage sector, highlighting the recent investment by Arla Foods in Vaughan as a prime example of a foreign company's confidence in expanding

operations in Ontario. Agent General Provost also emphasized the valuable work undertaken by the Ontario Food Cluster (OFC) to attract investments into the province and suggested that Vaughan consider joining the OFC. Currently, Vaughan benefits from indirect representation within the OFC through York Region's membership.

### **Financial Impact**

There is no financial impact. Participation in PLMA was accounted for through the Economic Development operational budget.

### **Operational Impact**

None.

### **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

Municipalities in York Region are responsible for developing and executing their own International Business Development Programs. Outbound Delegations are within the mandate of Economic Development's Business Plan as a vehicle for promoting Vaughan's advantages, strategic projects, market opportunities and local businesses in global centres.

Vaughan will continue to work in collaboration with regional partners such as York Region, Toronto Global, the Indo-Canadian Chamber of Commerce (ICCC), the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce (VCC), the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA), and the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) to position itself as a destination of choice within York Region, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Ontario, and internationally, as well as to focus on making valuable connections abroad to enhance trade opportunities for the local business community.

### **Conclusion**

To attract growing and leading agri-food and food processing companies to Vaughan, in addition to supporting local businesses in their development and export efforts, Economic Development participated in the 2024 Private Label Manufacturers Association (PLMA) Trade Show from Nov. 17 to 19.

The event offered staff a valuable opportunity to engage with some of the world's largest food and beverage brands and showcase the strengths of Vaughan's thriving agri-food and food processing sector.

**For more information**, please contact: Raphael Costa, Director, Economic Development.

## **Attachments**

None.

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