



FoodByte software start-up simplifies food safety compliance for business

FoodByte, a software start-up based in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, has developed a business-friendly software tool to help food processors and food exporters comply with new federal food safety regulations that came into effect in Canada in January 2019. The revised rules apply to businesses exporting food across provincial and national borders.

The FoodByte platform simplifies the work required to prepare components of a preventative control plan based on industry food safety principles known as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP).

Prior to the change, “about 10 percent of food processors required HACCP plans,” said Doug Armour, co-owner of FoodByte. “Under the new regulations, almost 90 percent of food processors will require preventative control plans.”

Heather Lunan, who owns Pie R Squared in Wolfville, is voluntarily using the tool to create a prerequisites plan (which is one part of a HACCP plan) for her small-scale operation. Pie R Squared makes prepared and frozen meals that are gluten-free and allergy-sensitive, using local ingredients. Lunan chose to create a prerequisites plan to give her “peace of mind.” “It’s about having an effective and excellent system in place to ensure food safety for our customers,” said Lunan. But creating and monitoring the plan is incredibly onerous. In Lunan’s case, about 250 points in the process needed to be recorded and monitored. “It is a huge piece of work,” said Lunan, made easier with the FoodByte solution. “Their program is simplifying the process for a food business.”

Armour’s business partner is Matthew Winchester. Along with their former partner, Mitchell Kane, they developed their food safety platform as a resident business at the Rural Innovation Centre at Acadia University. At the start, when their business was called Integrated HACCP Solutions Inc., their target customers were food processors, like Pie R Squared.

Along with a name change, the partners have changed their go-to-market strategy. “We were trying to disrupt the market,” said Winchester. Now they are pursuing a “complementary” approach. Their target customers are now food consultants who are developing HACCP or preventative control plans for clients. The value for these customers lies in reducing the time spent developing the plan and speeding up payment for services. Winchester said a consultant using their tool could shrink the “pipeline to pay day” from three months to one week.

Winning two contests has accelerated FoodByte’s development. The business won \$45,000 in the Innovacorp Spark West contest in 2016. In 2017, it won \$30,000 in cash and in-kind services through the annual Agriculture Innovation Accelerator Award offered by the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce (AVCC).

Since creating the award in 2013, the AVCC has awarded more than \$190,000 in cash and in-kind services to help Valley entrepreneurs advance projects to the next phase development. The prize package comes from local enterprises that are committed to sustaining and growing the agriculture sector in the Annapolis Valley.

***Written by Rachel Brighton,
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Innovation Accelerator Award.***





Agriculture Innovation Accelerator Award

RIGHT: Heather Lunan (left) is using the food safety platform developed by Doug Armour (shown here) and Matthew Winchester.



ABOVE: Doug Armour (right) accepts the award for Integrated HACCP Solutions (FoodByte) in 2017.

Quick facts

Agriculture Innovation Accelerator Award

→The Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce (AVCC) created this unique community-sponsored award in 2013 to recognize outstanding agri-business innovators, producers, processors, suppliers and organizations in the Annapolis Valley.

→The annual Agriculture Innovation Accelerator Award helps the successful applicant advance their project to the next phase of development.

→To date, more than \$190,000 in cash and in-kind business services has been awarded.

→In 2018, for the first time, the AVCC offered two awards (\$15,000 each), for outstanding innovators in Agri-Tech and Agri-Food.

→The award ceremony is usually held in December.

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Winners

2018: Barrelling Tide Distillery won the \$15,000 prize in the Agri-Tech category, to assist with the purchase of an alcohol analyzing system. Creation Care Farm won the \$15,000 Agri-Food prize to develop a passive-solar aquaponic greenhouse.

2017: Integrated HACCP Solutions / renamed FoodByte (food safety software platform)

2016: TapRoot Fibre Lab (machinery development)

2015: Frostbyte Interactive Inc. / Aerhyve Division (aerial imaging)

2014: Hillcreek Family Farm in Grafton (pumpkin seed processing)

2013: HarvestHand New Media Communities (sales platform)

