

## High-tech food labs provide insight into Canadian consumers' needs

Exploring consumers' relationship with food are the focus of two new food laboratories at the University of Guelph, including a state-of-the-art grocery store lab.

The Longo's Food Retail Lab and the Schneider's Research Lab opened May 3. The labs are designed to help U of G researchers better understand consumer decision-making, consumption habits and reactions to food advertising.

Created to resemble an actual grocery store, the Longo's Food Retail Lab aims to gauge buyer behaviour patterns as consumers shop.

"Researchers will explore a number of areas, including how consumers value and learn about different foods, and their decision-making when viewing advertising, and purchasing and consuming foods," said lab research director Prof. Michael von Massow, Food, Agricultural and Resource Economics.

The mock store is equipped with monitoring cameras and eye-tracking equipment, allowing researchers to gauge consumers' responses to grocery store flyers or television advertisements, nutritional information and in-depth surveys both before and after their trips to the store.

The neighbouring Schneider's Research Lab is equipped with a bank of computers, so researchers can evaluate participants' reactions to advertising.

Finding new ways to innovate when it comes to food is critical, said Malcolm Campbell, vice-president (research).

"The federal government sees inclusive economic growth and jobs coming from food and agriculture, and it hopes to see Canada double food exports over the next several years," he said.

"As Canada's food university, we have a key role to play in innovation, and in helping the food and agriculture sectors to grow. The data learned here will assist researchers from across the U of G in developing unique solutions to the challenges these sectors face."

Longo Brothers Fruit Market Inc. and Schneider Foods provided funding for the labs, located in the College of Business and Economics' Macdonald Stewart Hall.

“We are excited to be supporting this unique and innovative research facility at the University of Guelph,” said Anthony Longo, Longo’s president and CEO.

“We believe that it will not only contribute to a broader understanding of consumer food purchasing behaviour, but also provide us with real insight to help us serve customers better.”

Von Massow is hopeful the labs will help researchers, and eventually stores and consumers, better understand Canadians’ food needs.

“Recognising how consumers process the bombardment of information on food they receive and make decisions in store is poorly understood,” said von Massow.

“The results of our research will help deliver Canadians the foods they want and the information they need.”

**Lien article :** <http://www.freshplaza.com/article/175069/High-tech-food-labs-provide-insight-into-Canadian-consumers-needs>