

\$21 million in new and retained sales  
\$22.3 million in new investments  
546 jobs created or retained

The **Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership** sole purpose is to provide small and medium sized manufacturers with the exact tools they need to succeed in the global marketplace. The NMEP works directly with manufacturers, helping them access a national network of more than 2,000 field engineers and manufacturing specialists whose solutions can be tailor-made for each company's specific needs, ultimately leading to greater productivity, increased profits, and enhanced global competitiveness.

The Nebraska MEP was formed specifically to help Nebraska manufacturers build on their strengths, identify and capitalize on opportunities, and increase competitiveness and profitability. This manufacturing extension service is the product of a public-private partnership that brings together the experience of private sector manufacturers in developing and guiding productivity and business solutions. The MEP organization is designed to capitalize on the geographic distribution of Nebraska's community colleges, supplementing the colleges' expertise in training with the expertise from programs under the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Food Processing Center, Nebraska Business Development Center and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.



For more information, contact:



Dave Wright, Director  
301 Centennial Mall South  
Lincoln, NE 68509  
(402) 471-3755  
[www.nebraskamep.com](http://www.nebraskamep.com)

\* Impacts are based on clients receiving service in FY2010

# CLIENT SUCCESS: BEARDEN FOODS, INC

*“What a great experience it was going through your programs, which provided every detail necessary in making our dream come true. Our sincerest thanks to your staff for their professionalism, dedication and effort they poured into the development of our product.”*

Don Bearden, Owner

## Lifetime Entrepreneur Launches Food Manufacturing Business

A stained glass artisan by trade, Don Bearden is a small businessman with over 38 years of experience in starting and managing several retail operations related to the stained glass industry. In early 2011, Bearden and his wife entered the food market with the launch of Bearden Foods, Inc. selling their Five Star Grill and Dinner Sauce. The story of began over 10 years ago in Bearden’s kitchen. As a novice chef and small-scale caterer, Don set out to create a sauce low in sodium and fat that used only natural ingredients. Family and friends soon began requesting his new sauce. Today, this multi-purpose sauce can be found in specialty and grocery stores and online.

### *Situation:*

Although the Beardens had experience in starting and operating a business, they were new to the food industry. They needed assistance in determining whether they should enter the market and, if so, how to handle product development and marketing. A large contract manufacturer of sauces, dressings, and dips put the Beardens in touch with The Food Processing Center at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, a NIST MEP affiliate.

### *Solution:*

The Food Processing Center has a program to assist entrepreneurs interested in starting a food manufacturing business. The Beardens attended a one-day workshop covering the basics of starting a food business; providing an overview of the marketing, business, and technical aspects that need to be taken into consideration. Following this seminar, the Beardens received a personal consultation with the program manager and a food scientist. They decided to launch their product and then attended the next phase, which consisted of one-on-one technical and business development assistance over an extended period of time to create a market-ready product. They received assistance in designing the product label in compliance with FDA regulations, developing marketing materials, customizing the recipe formulation for mass production, and related services. Additionally, The Food Processing Center conducted a search to locate a contract manufacturer for the product. Finally, the center helped conduct a soft launch of the Five Grill and Dinner Sauce.

### *Results:*

- \* Commercialization of a new product
- \* Sold approximately 50 cases in the first seven months
- \* Working to introduce the product to Whole Foods—  
the world’s largest retailer of natural and organic foods with over 300 stores

## Commercialization of new product

Feb 2012