



Protein Highway™

Network for plant-based protein innovation

May 2023

Welcome to the Protein Highway Quarterly Newsletter!

The [Protein Highway](#)™ is an initiative to enhance cross-border collaboration among entrepreneurs, researchers, and end users across the Canadian Prairies and U.S. Midwest-Great Plains region. The mission is to support and facilitate bilateral, precompetitive initiatives that unite industry, academia, and government in advancing the North American plant protein sector.

The Protein Highway Newsletter is published quarterly. If you or someone you know would like to be added to our mailing list, or if you have ideas for future newsletter content, please contact proteinhwy@gmail.com.

[Learn more about the Protein Highway.](#)



Help Advance the Protein Highway-

Join the Board of Directors

The Board is looking to add new members from across the Region and from across the sectors of the Plant Protein continuum.

Interested? Questions? Contact [Lee Anne](#) or [Christina](#)

Across the Region

Protein Highway Collaborates on Alternative Protein Forum with Global Innovators

In May 2023, the Protein Highway collaborated with Minnesota's [Agricultural Utilization Research Institute](#) (AURI) and [MBOLD](#) to deliver an Alternative Protein Forum with global participation. The Forum brought together roughly 30 alternative protein businesses and innovators from Canada, Israel, the Netherlands, Finland and the U.S. to explore avenues to further develop the alternative protein industry in Minnesota and collaborate across international borders. Our thanks go to Protein Industries Canada, Wageningen University & Research, VTT Research Institute, the Plant Protein Innovation Center, SunOpta, Puris and several others for thinking together creatively about shared needs and opportunities. Contact [Christina](#) for more Information.

160 attend PPIC 4th Annual Research Spotlight Meeting

[The Plant Protein Innovation Center](#) (PPIC) hosted its Fourth Annual Research Spotlight Meeting on March 29-30, 2023 at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul Campus. This year, PPIC welcomed 160 individuals from over 65 companies and organizations involved in alternate protein research. Dr. Nesli Sözer, Research Professor, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, kicked off the meeting with her research entitled Processing Technologies to Design Plant-Based Dairy and Meat Analogues. Researchers from 9 universities presented summaries on projects focused on functionality, flavor interactions, nutrition, and breeding of various plant proteins.

This year's presentation also had 2 panel discussions on plant-based food products and plant protein ingredients with industry panelists representing these two sectors. The panel discussions were preceded by an overview by The Hartman Group where Dr. Shelley Balanko presented on the consumer trends in the plant protein category.

CSIS report: The Future Appetite for Alternative Proteins

Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) released a new report entitled “The Future Appetite for Alternative Proteins”. During the launch event, USDA Deputy Undersecretary Sanah Baig spoke about the vulnerabilities of the North American protein supply chain and solutions that can emerge under President Biden's recent bioeconomy executive order. [full report.](#)

Call for EOI Technology Leadership Program- Protein Industries Canada

Protein Industries Canada will accept new Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for the Technology Leadership Program on May 8, 2023. This is the second call for projects under the new tranche of \$150 million funding provided through the Global Innovation Cluster program.

EOIs under the second round may be submitted until June 26; however, consortiums are encouraged to submit their EOIs as soon as they are ready. Submissions will be accepted by filling the form on PIC's [Technology Program](#) page.

EOIs will be accepted from consortiums of at least three partners, one of which must be an SME. Projects must include the use of a high-protein dryland crop. Approved projects may receive up to 45 per cent reimbursement of eligible costs.

Meet a Protein Innovator- Shannon Schlecht, AURI



SHANNON SCHLECHT

Executive Director,
Agricultural Utilization Research Institute ([AURI](#))

Shannon is the Executive Director at AURI. In this role, he is responsible for the overall strategic and operational oversight of the organization as it executes its mission of driving value-added market opportunities utilizing agricultural derived products that create economic impact for Minnesota. AURI operates several programs to achieve this mission, ranging from individual business assistance and public initiatives to convening events. He also engages with several entities across the regional ecosystem and serves in an advisory or director-level role with organizations of shared interest in the value-added agriculture space, including the Ag Innovation Campus, MBOLD and the University of Minnesota College of Food Science and Nutrition.

Shannon shares his career path, thoughts on challenges and opportunities in the alt protein arena and a reminder that wheat is an often-overlooked protein crop.

Tell us about the path that brought you to your current position.

I am a farm kid from North Dakota and obtained an undergraduate and graduate degree in Agricultural Economics at North Dakota State University. I spent 14 years with U.S. Wheat Associates, conducting market development activities around the world to grow U.S. wheat exports. I held various roles in this organization with increasing responsibilities for driving impactful opportunities with industry on behalf of wheat producers. The most relatable to AURI was the technical assistance U.S. Wheat Associates provided to flour millers and bakers around the world to assist them in utilizing American-produced wheat in their commercial operations to achieve business success.

What is the biggest challenge facing the alternative proteins industry today?

Alternative proteins have a big potential but also face challenges. First of all, I believe the trajectory of protein consumption will continue to provide a tailwind for growth. Taste and texture improvements continue to be an area of need to help meet consumer expectations, which translate into repeat purchases. The increased interest in the level of 'processing' of foods consumed is an area that appears to be receiving more interest and could slow the alternative protein sector growth. Infrastructure for the development/scaling of protein businesses (fermentation scale-up, right sized co-manufacturing) is another that needs attention through innovative business models as the economies of scale at this facility size to enable growth is a less attractive capital investment stage. While not a challenge per se, efforts to advance coproduct utilization from alternative protein processing byproduct streams needs further exploration to drive revenue and sustainability opportunities.

Do you have a favorite plant-based food and/or restaurant?

A few include: peanut butter, cashews, and hummus. I also am a big consumer of wheat products and believe it is an over-looked source of protein as it is a widely consumed crop in many diets globally and one of the higher protein cereal crops.

Attending a Protein-Focused Event?

Let us help share the news.

Mark your calendars for these upcoming events:

- [Inventures](#) - May 31, Calgary
- [AURI Fields of Innovation- Oilseeds](#)- June 9, Crookston, MN + Virtual
- [Future Food-Tech Alternative Proteins](#), June 27-28, New York City
- [GFI Good Food Conference](#)- September 18-20, San Francisco
- [Bridge to Food Plant-Based Foods & Proteins Course](#)- October 18-19, Chicago



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