



TSX: MFI

[www.mapleleaf.com](http://www.mapleleaf.com)

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## **MAPLE LEAF FOODS LAUNCHES DNA PORK TRACEABILITY PROGRAM**

TORONTO, ONTARIO, January 27, 2004 -- Maple Leaf Foods Inc. (TSX: MFI) today announced that having successfully completed research and development into producing a DNA traceability program for pork, it is set to launch the first commercial application of this technology, with far-reaching benefits for food safety and the Canadian pork industry.

The DNA traceability system will allow Canadian pork marketed anywhere in the world to be traced back to the maternal sow, providing the Canadian pork industry with a major competitive advantage and an essential point of difference for the "Made in Canada" brand. Canada has set the international gold standard for pork, based on our superior quality, exclusion of growth promotants and sustainable environmental practices. DNA traceability provides further assurance to consumers that they are getting the best pork from the world's healthiest hogs, raised under the third-party audited Canadian Quality Assurance program.

The system will be implemented at one of Maple Leaf's plants in the spring of 2004, and initially provide fully traceable pork products to the Japanese market by the fourth quarter of 2004. Maple Leaf plans to make the commercial traceability system available for use by the Canadian pork industry after the initial implementation.

"In an era of growing concerns over food safety and increasing demands for full traceability of meat products, this breakthrough will deliver an added level of food safety assurance," said Michael H. McCain, President and Chief Executive Officer of Maple Leaf Foods. "By using DNA, which is nature's bar code, this system is uniquely positioned to trace product from the consumer to the farm of origin, where current methods cannot. DNA traceability will provide a calling card for Canadian pork that no other country can currently match."

Maple Leaf worked with Pyxis Genomics Inc. in the research and development phase of the DNA traceability project to develop a panel of highly informative genetic markers. By combining well-proven fingerprinting technology, enhanced with its own innovations, Pyxis successfully developed a gene panel that provides the foundation for the pork traceability system, which can accurately and rapidly trace pork products back to the farm of origin. Although the traceability system was developed for pork products, it is broadly applicable to other animal-species.

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The traceability system involves obtaining a blood sample from the maternal sow, which is then DNA-typed. The DNA information is then entered into a database linked to the farm of origin information. Producers can then update the database directly with the dates of birth of each litter.

“The success of identifying the gene panel significantly enhances our ability to provide live animal tracking systems that can directly link store-bought product back to its origin in a matter of hours, instead of days or weeks,” said Dr. Lawrence B. Schook, President and Chief Executive Officer of Pyxis Genomics Inc. “This is critical in an industry seeking to offer the highest standards of assurance to consumers in containing food safety incidents when they occur.”

Maple Leaf and Pyxis have chosen Orchid BioSciences to develop an assay to analyze the genetic marker panel and to implement a quality accredited laboratory process that will deliver rapid, high-throughput DNA analysis. Orchid is a leading provider of genetic testing with a proven record in the agricultural sector through its scrapie genotyping service, processing over half a million samples at its U.K. facility last year.

“Orchid’s proprietary genotyping and service testing expertise ensures we can deliver cost-effective, accurate and rapid high-volume genetic analyses for animal food safety applications,” said Paul J. Kelly, M.D., Chief Executive Officer, Orchid BioSciences, Inc. “Orchid has been a pioneer in developing and implementing new technologies to advance the utility of DNA identity testing and we look forward to contributing to the commercial success of Maple Leaf’s traceability program.”

Maple Leaf and Pyxis have chosen IBM Canada Ltd. to create and implement the comprehensive database featuring a computerized search engine that will quickly match DNA from a piece of meat to the mother’s identity. The traceability database is being designed to be capable of expansion and potentially link into any current or future system of national traceability in Canada, while also protecting the rights and confidentiality of producers.

“This initiative is a great example of IBM’s industry knowledge and technology expertise coming together to help solve a strategic mission for Maple Leaf,” stated Ed Kilroy, President, IBM Canada Ltd. “We are committed to developing expertise and solutions like this across many key industries around the world.”

#### **About Maple Leaf Foods Inc.**

Maple Leaf Foods Inc. (TSX: MFI) is a leading Canadian food processing company committed to delivering quality food products to consumers around the world. Headquartered in Toronto, Canada, the company employs more than 18,000 people at its operations across Canada and in the United States, Europe and Asia. Maple Leaf Foods had sales of \$5.1 billion in 2002. More information on Maple Leaf Foods can be found at [www.mapleleaf.com](http://www.mapleleaf.com).

**About Pyxis Genomics Inc.**

Pyxis Genomics Inc. is a privately held animal genomics company headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. Pyxis Genomics Canada is a wholly-owned subsidiary based in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Founded in 1999, Pyxis Genomics is a world leader in maximizing the health and performance of animal through its products, platforms and tools. As a global genomics-based animal health company, Pyxis Genomics discovers, develops and commercializes its own products and services to treat and cure animal diseases, enhance animal fitness, and increase productivity through nutritional intervention. For more information visit [www.pyxisgenomics.com](http://www.pyxisgenomics.com).

**About Orchid BioSciences Inc.**

Orchid BioSciences, Inc. (Nasdaq: ORCH) is the leading provider of identity genomics services for the forensic and paternity DNA testing markets and for public health DNA testing for food safety. Orchid's market leading positions in these segments leverage the Company's accredited laboratories in the U.S. and the U.K. its innovative genetic analysis technologies and expertise, and the world-renowned Cellmark and GeneScreen brands that have been associated with exceptional quality, reliability, innovation and customer service for nearly two decades. More information on Orchid can be found at [www.orchid.com](http://www.orchid.com) and [www.orchideurope.com](http://www.orchideurope.com).

**About IBM**

IBM is the world's largest information technology company, with over 80 years of leadership in helping businesses innovate. With consultants and professional staff in more than 160 countries globally, IBM Business Consulting Services provides clients with business process and industry expertise, a deep understanding of technology solutions that address specific industry issues, and the ability to design, build and run those solutions in a way that delivers bottom-line value for Canadian businesses. For more information, visit [www.ibm.com/ca](http://www.ibm.com/ca).

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**Note to Editors**

**News Conference:** Tuesday, January 27, 2004 at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Time  
Royal York Hotel, Quebec Room, Main Mezzanine Level,  
100 Front Street West, Toronto

**Webcast Coordinates:** <http://www.startcast.com/shows/91/A0002>

**Conference Call Coordinates:** 416-405-9328 / 1-800-387-6216

**Visuals:** B-roll will be available for television media on  
Tuesday, January 27, 2004 at 11:45 a.m. (EST) and 1:45 p.m.  
(EST) at Anik E2, C-Band, Transponder 1B, audios 6.2 and  
6.8.

A replay of the webcast will be available through the same webcast site later in the day, or at [www.mapleleaf.com](http://www.mapleleaf.com). Briefing materials will be also available via the webcast and on Maple Leaf Foods' website at [www.mapleleaf.com](http://www.mapleleaf.com).