

**Burcon**  
A New World in Protein



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Willardsen is confident that Burcon's plan to add value to canola carries a lot of promise.

## Burcon snags processing whiz Willardsen

# Firm hires spark-plug to get more from canola

By Martin Cash

WINNIPEG is the heart of the \$2.5-billion Canadian canola crop so it is only fitting it should also be front and centre in the technology being developed to extract protein from canola meal.

Burcon NutraScience Corp., which began as BMW Canola Inc. in Winnipeg in 1992, yesterday announced the hiring of Randy Willardsen as its senior vice-president for processing. Willardsen is an expert in membrane-based purification technologies and his appointment to the company is seen as an important step along the way to commercial production that company president Johann Tergesen believes is about three years away.

"This is important news for us," Tergesen said. "Randy is a very talented guy. We need him more than he needs us."

Burcon is looking to nudge its way into the \$5-billion food ingredient market with a canola protein, something that has never before been produced. Tergesen, originally from Manitoba but now based in Vancouver, believes it is likely Burcon will develop commercial production capabilities in conjunction with a strategic alliance with one of the large, multi-national food ingredient companies.

Four multi-billion-dollar multi-national companies — Dupont, Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) and Europe's Cereol — dominate the world of food ingredients and protein additives.

Willardsen, who is based in Sacramento, Calif., will spend about half his time at Burcon's Winnipeg lab that also employs 19 other people. The company has a staff of seven in Vancouver.

"I really like what Burcon is doing," said Willardsen, who has started at least three of his own companies and

has developed technologies that are used throughout the food-processing industry. "I think this will be challenging. Burcon is headed in the right direction."

Dale Adolphe, president of the Canola Council of Canada, said the prospect of adding value to canola meal is something the industry would welcome.

"At this point the protein side (of the canola seed-crushing industry) has only one traditional use as livestock feed," Adolphe said. "The food industry would create higher value."

Tergesen said one of the future scenarios for the company is to develop an operation capable of producing about \$118 million of canola protein, which would require the entire canola meal production from one of the 13 canola-processing plants in North America.

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Winnipeg Free Press

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2001

# BUSINESS

## Spark-plug

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Dave Shambrock, executive director of the Manitoba Food Processors Association, said protein additives are the world food-processing industry's largest individual ingredient.

"I can tell you there is tremendous interest in plant-based sources of ingredients right now," he said. "It has to do with consumer preference to naturally occurring products or ingredients."

Tergesen said the lower cost of sourcing the raw material from which to extract the canola protein and health scares about animal-based ingredients gives the canola product a promising future.

He said the company has recently determined it is likely the canola protein's function will be as an emulsifier or a thickening agent for certain types of food. Protein ingredients are added to foods more for their function as a thickening or bonding or texture agent than for their nutritional value.

Burcon closed up \$0.02 to \$1.20 yesterday in trading on the CDNX.

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