

NEWS RELEASE

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Lou Gentine, Chairman & CEO of Sargento Foods Inc., Receives 2012 NCI Laureate Award

(La Quinta, Calif. – January 19, 2012) The National Cheese Institute has bestowed its highest honor, the NCI Laureate Award, on Lou Gentine, chairman and CEO of Sargento Foods Inc., Plymouth, Wis. The award was presented this week to Gentine during a special ceremony at the International Dairy Foods Association's 2012 Dairy Forum by NCI Vice Chairman Mike Reidy, who is senior vice president, supply chain and corporate affairs, for Leprino Foods Company.

The NCI Laureate Award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the development and growth of the cheese industry. A panel of industry professionals chooses a winner each year based on the person's long-term contributions to the industry.

"The 2012 NCI Laureate is a family man, leading a family-owned business that understands the nutritional needs of the modern family," said Reidy. "Lou Gentine has built a remarkable reputation for delivering ground-breaking products in the cheese industry – reduced-fat cheeses, the Slide-Rite® freshness seal and specialty cheese blends to name just a few."

People, Pride & Progress

Gentine, a second-generation owner of Sargento Foods Inc., held his first job with the company as a box assembler at the age of 10. After graduating from the University of Notre Dame and working as a certified public accountant at Price Waterhouse, Gentine returned to Sargento as controller in 1973. He assumed the role of president and CEO in 1981 and was named chairman and CEO in 1996.

Creativity, innovation and risk-taking strengthened under Lou Gentine's leadership, and Sargento experienced tremendous growth. The company introduced innovations in packaging, such as the first inline application of the Slide-Rite® resealable slider package, and many product line innovations, including Bistro Blends, Artisan Blends®, reduced-sodium cheeses and Natural Blends™. Sargento net revenues grew from \$91 million in 1981 to more than \$1 billion today, and the company now employs more than 1,500 people.

Sargento Foods and Lou Gentine have been recognized for their industry excellence by many other civic and business organizations in recent years:

- 2008 – Sargento was named "Business of the Year" by the Plymouth, Wis., Chamber of Commerce;
- 2009 – Sargento was named "Dairy Processor of the Year" by Dairy Foods magazine and "Manufacturer of the Year" by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce;

- 2010 – Sargento was named "Top Workplace in Southeastern Wisconsin" and Gentine received a "Leadership Award" from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; and
- 2011 – Gentine received the inaugural "Economic Driver of the Year" award from the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corporation and a "Torch Award for Ethics" from the Better Business Bureau of Wisconsin.

Under Gentine's leadership, Sargento also expanded its commitment to the community and local charities with a focus on food and shelter.

- Sargento has partnered with the Green Bay Packers to create the "Touchdowns for Charity" program. Sargento donates \$1,000 to the Milwaukee-based Hunger Task Force for every Packers touchdown. Since 2003, the company has contributed more than \$700,000.
- As a Habitat for Humanity sponsor, Sargento has built 21 homes since 1991.
- Matching employee donations to United Way, Sargento pledged more than \$500,000 in 2011.

Gentine donates his time to the dairy industry, local businesses and the community as well. He has served as chairman of IDFA and NCI and continues to serve as an NCI board member. He also is a member of the board of directors for The Boys and Girls Clubs of Milwaukee, The Oldenburg Group, VPI Inc., Road America in Elkhart Lake and the Milwaukee Chapter of Legatus.

A video honoring Gentine as the 2012 NCI Laureate Award winner is available at <http://www.youtube.com/user/dairyIDFA/>.

Lou Gentine's father, Leonard Gentine, was honored with the NCI Laureate Award in 1991. Other cheese industry pioneers who have won the NCI Laureate Award include Mark Johnson, Jerome Schuman, Larry Ferguson, John Jeter, Mark Davis, Wes Allen, Elmer Marth, Max Gonzenbach, Rudy Nef, Betsy Holden, Don Storhoff, Lester Kielsmeier, Hans Epprecht, Norm Olson, Dave Nusbaum, John Nelson, Harold Steinke, Raymond Goldbach, Jack Budahn and Vince Zehren.

NCI will issue a call for nominations for the 2013 NCI Laureate Award this fall.

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The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Washington, D.C., represents the nation's dairy manufacturing and marketing industries and their suppliers, with a membership of 550 companies representing a \$110-billion a year industry. IDFA is composed of three constituent organizations: the Milk Industry Foundation (MIF), the National Cheese Institute (NCI) and the International Ice Cream Association (IICA). IDFA's 220 dairy processing members run more than 600 plant operations, and range from large multi-national organizations to single-plant companies. Together they represent more than 85 percent of the milk, cultured products, cheese and frozen desserts produced and marketed in the United States. IDFA can be found online at www.idfa.org.