

# Hanford firm's plans for food processing at old Pirelli Tire plant could be worth billions

By Joe Johnson  
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The old Pirelli Tire plant in Hanford's industrial park will soon breathe with life again when it becomes the new home of a revolutionary food processing plant, utilizing technology that Global Food Technologies CEO Keith Meeks said "could be worth billions."

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 76 million people are affected by food poisoning every year in the United States, though most cases are mild and only cause symptoms for a few days. The report goes on to say that 325,000 cases require hospitalization and that more than 5,000 deaths result from foodborne disease every year.

"Consumer confidence in food safety is at an 18-year low right now," Meeks said. "Most people believe that there are not enough steps being taken to safeguard our food.

"We're going to change that."

Global Food Technologies, a life-sciences company which houses its corporate offices in Hanford, unveiled its plans for the old plant at a crowded Thursday afternoon press event, where more than 100 people gathered to see the iPura "clean step" program.



The idea behind the iPura program is to eliminate pathogens and contaminants that invade food products before they reach the consumer. Boasting "green technologies" and a "non-thermal organic process," the iPura system uses a combination of high-temperatures, a pressure chamber and a simulated vacuum to kill harmful microbes on foods, while ensuring that the natural taste isn't lost in the process.

A large crowd of stock holders and press jammed the information seminar at the new Global Food Technologies plant on Thursday afternoon. (Gary Feinstein/The Sentinel)

After initial processing, the food product is then individually packaged in a "clean room," or a sterilized and controlled environment that eliminates the chance of contaminants coming into contact with the food before it is shipped out. Each product is packaged separately, to prevent potential cross-contamination,

and each product is tracked throughout the process, so the on-site microbiologist can trace potential infections back to the source long before it becomes an issue of public concern.

"The entire process is state-of-the-art and this will be a world class science facility," said Aaron Ormond, director of science for Global Food Technologies. "We can output a higher volume of product while remaining cleaner than any other program to date."

The company has already started work on the plant, making changes to its infrastructure to support the iPura system when it is eventually put in motion. Soon, work will begin on creating the inner facility, as part of a timeline that was put into place six months ago.

It is unknown at this time exactly when the facility will open, but John Lehn, CEO of the Kings County Economic Development Corporation, said that the project could mean more than just new jobs for Hanford residents in the future.

"We don't have a lot of companies in Hanford with international reach," Lehn said. "We have some, but this is absolutely one of those companies with the capability and the promise of worldwide applications. When the iPura name gets out there, people will trace it back to Hanford and ask themselves, 'What does Hanford have to offer?'"

The reporter can be reached at 583-2425.



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— Keith Meeks, CEO, Global Food Technologies

## A clean sweep



Gary Feinstein/Sentinel photos

A portion of the stacking racks for the new Global Food Technologies plant during the press conference on Thursday afternoon. The company is opening its new plant in a section of the old Pirelli tire plant on Idaho Avenue.

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## Food processing technology



Gary Feinstein/The Sentinel

The iPura food processing system is presented at a Thursday afternoon press event in the Pirelli Tire Plant, which is scheduled to be turned into a Global Food Technologies plant in the future. Roger Bennett, a member of Global Food Technologies' management staff and a former executive with NASA, presents their newly developed equipment that will one day "maintain the highest standard in food safety." A story on the system and new plant will run in Saturday's Sentinel.