



Virginia's Food & Beverage Industry is Steeped in Success



Governor McDonnell presents Bill Kelly, Suffolk Supply Chain Leader, Unilever, with a commemorative share of stock in the Virginia Company at the Lipton Tea plant announcement event in Suffolk, Va.

As the main event of an aptly-named Tea Reception, Governor McDonnell was joined by the mayor of Suffolk and members of the Unilever management team to announce the company's plans to invest \$96.2 million to upgrade its Lipton Tea plant in Suffolk, Va.

The Lipton Tea plant has operated out of Suffolk since 1955 and is the largest tea-processing facility in the U.S., producing nearly all the Lipton Tea bags sold throughout North America.

The reception reflected the company's strong historical ties to Virginia, as attendees enjoyed country ham, sweet-potato biscuits and a congratulatory toast using Lipton's specially-blended iced tea.

This investment will allow Unilever to increase production of its Lipton Tea products by both expanding and upgrading to more modern equipment. The Suffolk plant already has a reputation for efficiency and sustainability—in 2009 it became a "zero-landfill" facility through a combination of recycling, composting and converting waste into usable energy.

Close proximity to the international Port of Virginia was a key deciding factor in the Commonwealth's favor. Unilever already utilizes the port to bring in

loose tea from all over the world for processing at its Suffolk plant. The Port of Virginia offers access to 250 ports in more than 100 overseas locations.



The strength of the Hampton Roads employee pool was another positive factor cited by the company. More than 300 highly-skilled workers currently support the Lipton plant.

According to Suffolk Department of Economic Development Director Kevin Hughes, "Unilever/Lipton's decision to stay, grow and reinvest

in Suffolk provides an immense amount of pride for our entire community. Lipton has been a strong corporate partner of ours for more than 58 years, and we are proud to have them invest their future in Suffolk."

This investment was part of a banner two-week period for Virginia's food and beverage cluster. With the Red Sun Farms, Shamrock Farms and Greencore Group announcements following just days later, Virginia saw the creation of 615 new jobs and more than \$181 million in capital investment in this thriving sector. ▶

Commerce Quarterly is published by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to keep our readers up to date on current events in the economic development community.

President & CEO:
Martin Briley

VIRGINIA ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Editor: Alex Henley

Contributors:
Vince Barnett, Martin Briley, Paul Grossman, Scott Kennedy, Charles Kennington, Mary Maier, Rob McClintock, Liz Povar, Suzanne West, Michael White
Cover photos courtesy of Unilever/Lipton Tea® and the Suffolk Department of Economic Development.

Write to:
Commerce Quarterly
Virginia Economic Development Partnership
P.O. Box 798
901 East Byrd Street
Richmond, VA 23218-0798
804-545-5600

Commerce Quarterly is a quarterly publication of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.

Copyright © 2013. Contents of the publication may not be reproduced without written permission.

Please email any content requests and comments to Alex Henley at ahenley@YesVirginia.org.