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## Group to invest \$1.5 million in R&D plant in Racine

The Business Journal of Milwaukee - by [Rich Rovito](#)

**Alliance Enterprises** of S.E. Wisconsin LLC is investing \$1.5 million in a pilot production plant in Sturtevant for the research and development of Benelact, which the company is touting as a new, healthy dairy ingredient that cuts cholesterol content by as much as 80 percent.

Benelact is based on patented technology licensed from the **Center for Advanced Technology and Innovation Inc.** (CATI), a Sturtevant-based nonprofit technology transfer organization that possesses about 40 patents.

The pilot plant will be based at the CATI Center, a business incubator and educational facility, 2320 Renaissance Blvd., founded in 2003 through a partnership between CATI and Gateway Technical College, Racine.

The new plant will be used for research and development as well as initial production of Benelact, said Brandon Malacara, dairy marketing director for Alliance Enterprises.

"We are trying to get more analytical data and will produce samples for interested parties," Malacara said.

CATI licensed the Benelact technology to Alliance Enterprises in 2006.

The all-natural process extracts cholesterol from milk to create a healthy milk ingredient without altering the taste, texture or properties of the milk, said Matt Wagner, CATI's executive director.

**Kraft Foods Inc.**, Northfield, Ill., originally developed the technology and donated it to CATI, which incorporates a technology transfer model to leverage underutilized intellectual property from industry. CATI manages a \$35 million patent portfolio from partnerships with global firms such as Kraft; **S.C Johnson & Son Inc.**, Racine; and The Boeing Co., Chicago.

Kraft had some success with Benelact, but it didn't fit the company's long-term plans, Malacara said.



Scott Paulus

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Alliance's dairy division is investing about \$1.5 million to equip the facility at the CATI Center, Malacara said. In addition to its dairy business, Alliance also operates a contract packaging business in Racine.

The dairy division, which had been housed in a Barneveld dairy until moving to the CATI Center, will have four or five full-time research and development employees, as well as interns from Gateway Technical College, the **University of Wisconsin-Parkside** and area high schools, once the facility becomes fully operational in mid-February, Malacara said.

Students will have the opportunity to work side-by-side with researchers and engineers from Alliance on "real-world applications" of new products and technologies, said Bryan Albrecht, Gateway Technical College president.

"The Alliance partnership is exactly what the facility was designed to do," he said.

The development of Benelact came in response to increased consumer demand for healthy, tasty food options, Malacara said.

The process removes up to 80 percent of cholesterol and saturated fat from milk, resulting in a healthier product that can function as milk in a variety of food products.

"Benelact will be marketed primarily to manufacturers in the dairy and bakery markets as an ingredient to drive healthy consumer options while still retaining the taste, texture and consistency that consumers desire," Malacara said.