

## **A wealth of knowledge at industry's fingertips**

Vineland Research and Innovation Centre offers its Consumer Insights programs to business, industry associations

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Vineland Research and Innovation Centre's Consumer Insights program is offering its expertise to local business or organizations seeking help on new product lines or other product details. From left: research technician David Ly, research director Amy Bowen, senior research technician Amy Blake - Vineland Research and Innovation Centre

Have a new flower variety you think is going to go gangbusters but aren't quite sure how to market it? Or maybe you're questioning whether to take the expensive and time-consuming step of full commercialization and need a little evidence your idea won't flop?

Well, it just so happens there's a team of experts in Vineland that can help.

Vineland Research and Innovation Centre (VRIC)'s Consumer Insights program offers its expertise in uncovering how the public will view a product to local businesses, trade associations, colleges and universities.

"There seems to be a need for it within the fresh produce and horticultural area," said Amy Bowen, Consumer Insights research director.

The services offered are no different from what VRIC has done since its inception, only in this case it takes what traditionally is part of large multi-year, multi-disciplinary grant projects and applies it more specific and shorter term projects for those in the industry.

Bowen said businesses have been telling them, "We just want to be able to pay for the service and be able to get the results back so we can use them ourselves."

Consumer Insights offer sensory profiling by its trained panel, digging into the defining characteristics of a product. It will also do consumer taste tests, online surveys, focus groups, demographic data and instrumental and statistical analysis of product characteristics. Bowen said these services can be useful for a business bringing a new product line to market but is deciding between different prototypes, or for understanding how a new product will be positioned within the marketplace. They can also provide input on whether a business should dive in with two feet on a new product.

"You put a lot of time and effort into getting to a certain point, but now you've got to ramp it up and actually get it onto the market, and that's a whole new beast," she said.

"Does it have what it needs to have in order to put that time, effort and money into it going forward?"

Even those who are ready to take that leap into commercialization could use the service to decide who to market it to and what makes the product unique. Consumer Insights can help with naming, tag lines, what type of packaging to use and how to describe the product on their packaging.

Projects are customizable and flexible, Bowen said, and can take as little as six weeks — though on average, it's three to four months long.

Much of the work is covered by confidentiality agreements, but Bowen was able to point to one group they've worked with: Vinters Quality Alliance (VQA), where they've helped define Ontario wine styles.

Any business or group interested in working with the Consumer Insights program can email [info@vinelandresearch.com](mailto:info@vinelandresearch.com).

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