

Japan's Shinmei Foods opens West Sacramento production facility

HIGHLIGHTS

Regional rice growers will contribute to production of company's rice patties

28,000-square-foot facility in Southport Business Park will employ 20 initially

City touts its 'food hub' status with latest addition



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Shinmei Foods USA on Wednesday Aug. 12, 2015 opened its 28,000-square-foot American headquarters and food-production facility in West Sacramento's Southport Business Park. It specializes in making gluten-free rice patties. **Mark Glover** - mlvellinga@sacbee.com

BY MARK GLOVER
mglover@sacbee.com

Shinmei Foods USA had its day in the sun Wednesday, opening its 28,000-square-foot food production facility in West Sacramento's

Southport Business Park.

But West Sacramento also shined, with Mayor Christopher Cabaldon proclaiming that his city “has emerged as a global food hub.”

Few would argue the point. Over the past several years, West Sacramento has been chosen as a destination for multiple international food industry firms. That includes the 70,000-square-foot U.S. headquarters of Nippon Shokken USA Inc. The Japanese food-maker opened its facility in 2013, perhaps a quarter mile from the Shinmei site.

Other international food firms landed by West Sacramento include Germany-based agrochemical company Bayer CropScience and TOMRA Sorting Solutions, the Norwegian conglomerate. TOMRA’s equipment processes most of the world’s french fries. West Sacramento also touts its local food enterprises, including the headquarters home of Raley’s.

And now, Shinmei Foods USA is part of the mix.

The 20-employee plant – Shinmei’s first in the United States – accommodates production, sales and administration in support of Shinmei’s gluten-free rice patties. Patties produced at the plant will include rice grown by farmers throughout the Sacramento region.

Shinmei Co. Ltd., Shinmei USA’s parent and one of Japan’s largest rice millers and distributors, announced in 2013 its plans to build the \$10 million facility on a 6-acre site in the Southport park. Shinmei is banking on the growing popularity of gluten-free products and Asian food in the U.S. marketplace and beyond.

“The standard American diet has become more Asian,” Shinmei Foods USA President Mitsuzo Fujio said during ribbon-cutting ceremonies on Wednesday.

Fujio also noted that West Sacramento was an ideal location for the company’s first U.S. plant “because the Sacramento Valley produces high-quality rice,” adding that the city is ideally located for “domestic and international distribution.”

Shinmei is targeting sales of its rice patties in the overseas markets of Australia, China, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Indonesia.

Initially, the West Sacramento factory aims to produce 28 million rice patties a year. Long term, depending on the national and

international acceptance of rice patties, the facility could be expanded to produce 130 million rice patties a year on as many as four production lines, with more than 100 employees on site.

Shinmei is promoting the healthy aspects of its rice patties. Also, the company says its patties are easier to prepare than standard rice – they can be heated in a microwave oven – and flavored in numerous ways. The company says the patties can be eaten as a snack, a side dish or used in place of bread in hamburgers and other sandwiches.

The West Sacramento Shinmei facility was constructed by a partnership that included Sacramento-based Potter-Taylor & Co., the MacLaughlin Co. and global management consultants Victus Partners.

Mark Glover: 916-321-1184, @markglover