



**For Immediate Release
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Moore County, NC

Organic Food Company Locates in Vass

Thanks to Youngs Road in Southern Pines' horse country, Moore County is now home to another niche manufacturing business. Sunpak Foods LLC, a processor of organic fruits, has relocated from California to a 16,000 square-foot building on five acres south of Vass.

Sunpak Foods is a private label manufacturer of organic fruit products including cranberry sauce, canned peaches and pears, and fruit cups for major retailers throughout the U.S.

An article in *USA Today* prompted Sunpak owner Ken Van Der Veen and his wife Michele to first consider Moore County as a new business location, but it was a ride down Youngs Road in Southern Pines that clinched the Van Der Veens' decision to move here.

Michele, an avid equestrian, had seen an article in a November, 2004 issue of *USA Today*, "10 Great Places to Romp With the Horsy Set", in which Olympic equestrian medalist David O'Connor named ten U.S. towns that cater to horse owners. Southern Pines was on the list.

However, it was not until Ken's third visit to Moore County that he discovered Youngs Road and its rambling horse farms. "I knew this was the place. Now we love all the natural beauty of the area," he said. The Van Der Veens and their three children moved to a 20-acre horse farm in Southern Pines.

Ken, a California native, founded his first organics food company in 1996 in the Sacramento area of northern California. After working for companies that imported avocados from Chili and chocolate from Belgium, Van Der Veen felt there was a future in the organics industry. The company's first product lines were organic peaches, pears and apricots, and then in 2000, cranberry and pumpkin products were added. Processing and packaging of the fruits were handled by a contract manufacturer.

Sunpak's decision to locate in Moore County represents the company's transition from contract manufacturing to in-house production. The facility in Vass will process the fruits through three production lines: cans, plastic jars, and cups. Within the next two weeks, the company will have all of its manufacturing and packaging equipment in place to start operations.

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Sunpak can boast that the vast majority of its products are U.S.-grown, which is not the case for its larger competitors. The organic apples and pears used are grown in Washington State. The cranberries come primarily from Massachusetts and Wisconsin, and the peaches are grown in California. The company is one of the largest buyers in the United States of organic peaches used in canning. At the Vass facility, Sunpak will be able to produce 120 cans per minute. Van Der Veen estimates that 300,000 cases of fruit products will be produced in-house during the first year.

The facility will also include a quality control lab to insure that all products meet the USDA's National Organics Standards to be certified as organic. Accredited agents through the USDA's National Organics Program must inspect Sunpak once a year for compliance with the USDA's standards.

Strict requirements dictate that organic food processing facilities must be "clean and green". For example, Sunpak Foods cannot use conventional cleaners to maintain its production areas, so instead uses only hot water and Simple Green products that are non-toxic and biodegradable. Sunpak uses recycled water during processing and all packaging is recycled so there is very little waste. The facility will have no emissions, discharge or other environmental impact.

Sunpak has already hired eight employees and expects to grow to fifteen by early next year. The company plans to add organic pumpkin to its product line next year, and has been talking with the Moore County Cooperative Extension office to find organic pumpkin growers in North Carolina.

"Sunpak Foods is a great example of the type of niche companies we are trying to recruit to Moore County," said Ray Ogden, Executive Director of Moore County Partners in Progress, the economic development organization serving all of the County. "It's not a huge business, but there are quality jobs, a significant capital investment, and it's a clean industry. It fits well in the community, and we're certainly glad they're here."

Ogden added, "With the Van Der Veens, Moore County, specifically Southern Pines, sold itself as a great place to live. We know that the reputation and natural beauty of the area is one of our best marketing tools, and we will continue to promote the exceptional quality of life as Moore County's best asset."

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