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Yogurt maker breaks ground on Idaho plant

TWIN FALLS — Yogurt maker Chobani broke ground on a new domestic manufacturing plant in Twin Falls Monday. Chobani's state-of-the-art, high capacity production facility will be built on 200 acres and span 940,000 square feet.

Idaho Gov. Butch Otter, Mayor Don Hall, along with other Idaho dignitaries, joined Chobani representatives in the official groundbreaking ceremony.

"This is the next chapter in our four-year history. We feel the potential for goodtasting, healthy foods in America is limitless," said Hamdi Ulukaya, CEO and founder of Chobani. "We want to thank everyone who's helped us turn this plant into a reality, including our dedicated team, the people who've worked with us in Idaho and, of course, our amazing fans."

Production at the new plant is anticipated to start in the second half of 2012. Company officials said 400 new jobs will be created because of Chobani's expansion into Idaho. As a result, the company is planning to include an onsite 45,000 square foot employee facility featuring an open office plan, natural light, wellness area, cafeteria, lounge areas, training facilities, daycare center and conference rooms.

"Chobani needs a reliable supply of high-quality milk, motivated and well-trained employees, a supportive community and a business-friendly state government that understands industry and the value of great corporate citizens," Otter said. "Hamdi and his team found that and much more here in southern Idaho. We're proud to be Chobani's new home in the West."



State dignitaries and officials from Chobani take part in the company's ceremonial groundbreaking Monday in Twin Falls.



Local contractors are already seeing a boost from construction of the Greek yogurt plant.

Chobani Breaks Ground on Sprawling Yogurt Plant

By Ben Botkin bbotkin@magicvalley.com | Posted: Tuesday, December 20, 2011 1:15 am

TWIN FALLS • Greek yogurt maker Chobani formally broke ground on its Twin Falls plant on Monday in a celebratory event, but its work had begun much sooner.

Construction crews started excavation work earlier this month at the site along Kimberly Road. Before that, city and Twin Falls Urban Renewal Agency officials signed off in November on an agreement to lure Chobani's New York-based parent company, Agro Farma, to the region.

So, the audience of more than 100 at Monday's groundbreaking didn't hear any major surprises. But company leaders and government officials made it clear that there's plenty to look forward to when the plant opens in 2012 with up to 400 employees.

Hamdi Ulukaya, chief executive officer, president and founder of the company, said the 950,000-square-foot plant will have room for expansion in future years.

He said the plant will start producing Greek yogurt, including new products, in the second half of 2012.

"We have a tight timetable," he said, declining to give the specific opening date in his speech. "... I don't want to name the time because we have competition out there."

Ulukaya said the company will eventually open an office to take applications for the jobs, adding that he's had plenty of inquiries already.

"Please be a little bit patient," he said.

The Twin Falls location will become a hub for Chobani in the western U.S. The company, which launched in 2007, has grown rapidly.

Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter welcomed the company's entrance into Idaho.

"This is an exciting time," Otter said Monday.

Twin Falls Mayor Don Hall, noting the timing of the groundbreaking falling near Christmas, said: "I can't think of a better present to open than Chobani coming to our community."

Since the news, Hall said, the economic boost has lifted spirits.

"This gives us hope for our community," he said.

Already, the local economy is benefitting from the preliminary construction work.

Brian Hansen, co-owner of Gordon Paving in Twin Falls, is a subcontractor working on the plant's building pad for Tippmann, the general contractor overseeing the construction.

Because of the Chobani project, Gordon Paving has hired 30 to 40 more people beyond its 120 employees, Hansen said. That's in contrast with construction layoffs that are the norm for this time of year.

"This has been a shot in the arm," he said.

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December 19, 2011

New York's biggest yogurt maker breaks ground on Idaho plant

By Sandra Forester - sforester@idahostatesman.com

By the second half of 2012, Idahoans in Twin Falls will be making Chobani Greek yogurt.

Chobani is building a state-of-the-art, high-capacity plant of 940,000 square feet on 200 acres there.

"This is the next chapter in our four-year history," said Hamdi Ulukaya, CEO and Founder of Chobani. "We feel the potential for good-tasting, healthy foods in America is limitless."

The new plant will create about 400 jobs. The company's plans include a 45,000-square-foot employee facility with an open office plan, natural light, wellness area, cafeteria, lounge areas, training facilities, daycare center and conference rooms.

"Chobani needs a reliable supply of high-quality milk, motivated and well-trained employees, a supportive community and a business-friendly state government that understands industry and the value of great corporate citizens," Gov. Butch Otter said.

Ulukaya, a native of Turkey, founded Chobani in 2005 in central New York state, launching the product four years ago. Chobani is the Greek word for shepherd, and is a symbol of safety and good.

Idahoans looking for jobs at the plant should email employment@chobani.com.