

FEASIBILITY STUDY & HACCP PLAN HELPS APPLE ORCHARD BRANCH OUT AND GROW

ABOUT GARDENER'S ORCHARD (BRIGHTON). The Gradinariu family immigrated to the United States from Romania in 1990, moved to Missouri in 2004, and purchased Gardener's Orchard in 2013. Since then, the family has added a host of new products and services while successfully growing the business. Their successful business additions include: a bake-from-scratch bakery, berry growing, selling locally grown produce, giving farm tours and hosting events. The Gradinariu family stresses the importance of knowing where your food actually comes from and they encourage people to find a local family farm in their area to support and shop for food.

THE CHALLENGE. Before meeting the experts at Missouri Enterprise, part of the MEP National Network™, Gardener's Orchard & Bakery was running a modestly successful small business producing various products they sold at the local farmer's market and area farm stores. Radu Gradinariu, who handles marketing and outside sales, wanted to build upon their success and grow, but as a small producer, it was tough to get access to the resources he needed. Who could help his small company identify new products they could sell, and how would he get those products to market? He felt like he was the little guy, and he and his family were on their own. He didn't know where to go or what to do, until he met the area business manager for Missouri Enterprise.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Missouri Enterprise was the ideal partner to help Gardener's Orchard & Bakery take their operation to the next level. Missouri Enterprise project managers worked with Radu to secure grant funding for a full-scale feasibility study designed to explore new products they could manufacture and to identify markets they could sell to. The feasibility study opened Gardener's Orchard to ideas and possibilities they hadn't recognized, and it guided them on how they would get their products to wholesalers and distributors so they could branch out into other markets.

One of the main products identified for growth was a pasteurized apple cider, and to produce this for wider markets, Gardener's Orchard needed to learn more about food safety manufacturing requirements for perishable goods. Missouri Enterprise's food safety experts developed a HACCP plan for Gardener's Orchard to identify and control biological, chemical and physical hazards through every step of the process - from sourcing through production, storage, distribution and sales - every step from farm to table. With the help of Missouri Enterprise, Gardener's Orchard is expanding their production, distribution and sales of new products, and growing the company sustainably into the future.

"The people at Missouri Enterprise went above and beyond! Their expertise, knowledgeable advice and their willingness to help gave us a roadmap to success, detailing the steps we needed to take to grow. As a small producer, I don't know anywhere else we could have gotten the help we needed. Missouri Enterprise gave us hope, and they showed us the way forward. I've referred a lot of producers to them."

-Radu Gradinariu, Chief Financial Officer

RESULTS



\$150,000 in increased and retained sales



\$75,000 invested in new products and processes



2 jobs created



\$30,000 invested in new equipment

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