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Press Release

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IBA's Sterilization & Ionization Business Unit is the first to offer high-power x-ray food pasteurization in the USA

SteriGenics International, Inc., acquired by IBA in July 1999 and fully integrated into the Sterilization and Ionization Business Unit of the Group, has just announced that it will be establishing the first high-volume, high-power x-ray facility for food pasteurization in North America.

The x-ray food pasteurization process is a technology that ensures the safety of meat and other food products. The process exposes food to a carefully measured amount of x- rays, which kill harmful bacteria such as E. coli 0157:H7, Campylobacter, Salmonella and Listeria. In addition to this, the process extends the shelf-life of many food products, thereby increasing the value to consumers.

Located in Bridgeport, New Jersey, USA, the new combined x-ray and e-beam facility is scheduled to become fully operational between September and December 2000. This state-of-the-art facility uses IBA Rhodotron® accelerator technology which can deliver both e-beam and x-ray processes from a single machine at different voltage levels. Additional x-ray facilities are planned at sites to be announced.

"This x-ray facility will be a tremendous new tool in the continuing effort by the food processors in the USA to provide the safest food supply in the world," said Pat Adams, Head of the IBA Food Safety Division headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee. "Food pasteurization with x-rays offers many benefits to food processors. Our New Jersey facility will offer the food industry the first opportunity to conduct large volume market tests with x-ray technology. We have already experienced a high level of interest in this technology from some of the nation's top food processors."

X-ray pasteurization of food uses electricity as its source of energy, similar to the e-beam process. However, as Yves Jongen, President of IBA points out, "whereas e-beam is the most efficient process for thin pack treatment, the particular advantage of x-ray technology in the food area is that can penetrate all food thicknesses with uniform dose delivery. This makes it possible to treat full pallets of products at once with no repackaging or recasing necessary."

"The food pasteurization market using gamma and x-ray/e-beam technology is a market with high growth potential for IBA," emphasizes Pierre Mottet IBA Group CEO. "The potential growth for the US meat market alone is estimated at between 1 and 3 billion Euros for the next 5 to 10 years. The x-ray facility in New Jersey confirms the expansion possibilities IBA has in this market and consolidates our acquisition strategy since we can now offer customers global solutions based on combined technologies."

In the USA, this x-ray process is expected to become the preferred cold pasteurization method for many processed food providers once the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) approve the Food Irradiation Coalition's petition submitted in August 1999.