FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE FOR INFORMATION:  
Tuesday, January 12, 2016 Muriel Mosher, 207-623-0680

New product development leads to dramatic increase in sales at Heiwa Tofu

AUGUSTA, Me. – When Jeffrey Wolovitz, founder of Heiwa Tofu in Belfast, Maine, needed help to increase the revenue that his small food business was generating, he called Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP). MEP Senior Project Manager Bill Whittier helped Heiwa Tofu launch a new product and design a packaging process. With MEP’s help, Heiwa Tofu saw an 81-percent increase in sales revenue, a 50-percent increase in capacity, a 50-percent reduction in process cycle time, a 21-percent reduction in labor costs and a 500-percent improvement in product shelf life.

“Bill shows me how I limit my options when I don’t step out of my comfort zone,” Wolovitz said. “That guidance moves my business forward in surprising ways. When he’s not around I often find myself asking, ‘What would Bill say to me right now?’ That’s how I know I’ve gotten great value out of the relationship.”

Founded in 2008, Heiwa (“hey-wa”) sells organic tofu that is handmade with non-genetically modified organism (non-GMO) soybeans from Maine and New England farms. Before 2012, Heiwa had relied on institutional sales of 10- and 25-pound pails of bulk tofu, but market saturation convinced Wolovitz in 2014 that he needed to enter the retail marketplace with 1-pound packages and post-packaging pasteurization. Product launch challenges included controlling the cost of initial investments, choosing the right packaging and labeling options, minimizing operating costs and overcoming technical challenges with precise, 1-pound portioning.

“I always enjoy working with Jeff,” said MEP’s Whittier. “He is open to new ideas and new ways of thinking about how to move his business forward.” Maine MEP helped the small, family-owned business meet space and production challenges, and significantly increase sales. Heiwa Tofu is available in over 100 locations throughout Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and has a loyal following among chefs and home cooks.

“Helping small manufacturers like Heiwa Tofu is the mission of Maine MEP. Often the outside perspective that comes from a different set of business expertise is precisely what a business needs to help it overcome challenges, grow and succeed,” said Muriel Mosher, Maine MEP president.

About Maine MEP

The Maine MEP is a program of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP system is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2,000 manufacturing and business professionals whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits and enhanced global competitiveness. For information on the Maine MEP program, please visit www.mainemep.org, or phone 207-623-0680.