

Portlandbiz

Fluid Imaging Technologies lauded for international work

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Kent Peterson, CEO of Fluid Imaging Technologies, points to Namibia, the company's most recent international export destination

When Kent Peterson, CEO of Fluid Imaging Technologies, reflects on the Yarmouth firm's growth in overseas markets, he feels they are still just beginning.

"I would have hoped that would have grown even faster," says Peterson when he considers his company's growth in comparison to the worldwide push to advance life sciences and biotechnology industries.

But the company's accomplishments were not lost on state officials, which is why Fluid Imaging Technologies will receive the Maine International Trade Center's 2010 Exporter of the Year

award at the group's International Trade Day on June 3 for its commitment to international trade through increased exports and innovation.

Peterson says that when he was notified about the award, "my first reaction was I was humbled and appreciative. Humbled because there are far larger firms that are deserving of the recognition."

But Peterson says he is also proud. Fluid Imaging Technologies is a high value-added business, importing dollars from outside of Maine through sales of its innovative FlowCAM.

FlowCAM is a particle imaging and analysis system, which takes hundreds of high-resolution, digital images of individual particles and cells in a fluid in seconds, measures their size, shape and dozens of other parameters and saves the images and data for analysis using proprietary image management software.

Peterson says overall sales increased 10% in 2009 despite the recession and overseas sales made up 65% of the company's total sales. He says the number of employees at the Yarmouth facility increased by six people, or 33%. Inside the company's meeting room, red push pins in a world map indicate the more than dozen countries where FlowCAMs have been sold.

The latest international sale was in the southwestern African nation of Namibia, says Peterson. The Oceanographic Research Institute there is monitoring the levels of phytoplankton, which is part of the fish food chain, to identify specific types of plankton that could adversely affect that country's fisheries. A cluster of pins dot China, one of the strongest markets for the company, because of the need to monitor run off from its high-nutrient farm fertilizer into the ocean and to protect fisheries.

Peterson says international governments' support for their fisheries is a prime reason for Fluid Imaging's overseas sales.

"They have to feed people," he says.

The company has expanded its global reach to more than 25 firms and has regular overseas orders from Nestle in Switzerland; GlaxoSmithKline in the United Kingdom; the National Institute of Oceanography in India; and the Chongqing Institute of Environmental Science in China, the lead environmental agency managing the Three Gorges Dam. Companies in Spain use FlowCAM to measure the health of their shellfish, while French firms use it to test their sardine populations and Japanese companies are considering its use testing the health of oysters, says Peterson.

Closer to home, the Maine Department of Marine Resources recently purchased a FlowCAM so it could monitor toxic phytoplankton responsible for red tide algae blooms, he says.

Fluid Imaging Technologies was founded by Christian Sieracki in 1999 in West Boothbay. Today it employs 20 people, but expects as many as 40 employees within the next two years

based on the growth it has experienced so far, says Peterson. *Mainebiz* named Peterson its Small Company Business Leader of the Year for 2008.

The company is also penetrating the biopharmaceutical market by selling FlowCAMs to organizations such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Eli Lilly, GlaxoSmithKline, Abbott Molecular, BD Medical Pharmaceutical Systems and Genzyme.

"Fluid Imaging is not only deserving of this award, but is an exciting example of how Maine companies can innovate and successfully develop global markets," says Janine Bisailon-Cary, president of the Maine International Trade Center, in a press release. She notes the company was also named the New England Region Exporter of the Year last year by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

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