

Fruit and Vegetable Safety and Quality PDG

Members Present: David Gombas (Chair), Kalmia Kniel (Vice Chair), Bassam Annous, Atallah Baroudi, Larry Beuchat, Elizabeth Bihn, Alejandro Castillo, Michael Cooley, Mario Estrada, Harold Ewell, Santos Garcia, Steven Grove, John Guzewich, Keith Ito, Stephen Kenney, Karen Killinger, Sharon Lanini, Eden Lara, Yaguang Luo, Martin Martinez, Thomas McCaskey, Rachel McEgan, Sherri McGarry, Xiangwu Nou, Modesto Alanya, Mickey Parish, Jitu Patel, Juan Ponce de Leon, Manan Sharma, Otto Simmons, Amarat Simonne, Michelle Smith, Stacy Stoltenberg, Laura Strawn, Trevor Suslow, Thomas Taylor, Siddhartha Thakur, Zeynal Topalcengiz, Angela Valadez, Gretchen Wall, Ron Wasik, Randy Worobo and Hyun-Gyun Yuk.

Board/Staff Members Present: Linda Harris, Tong-Jen Fu and Don Zink.

New Members: Tim Jenkins, Justin Nguyen, Qinhong Wang, Margaret Hardin, Dumitru Macarisin, Michael Roberson, Gary Acuff, Jennifer Acuff, Evan Henke, Norma Heredia, Mieke Uyttendaele, Charles Seaman, Eduardo Lecea, Angela Shaw, Ruoyang Xu, Julia DeNiro, Hyun-Jung Chung, Faith Critzer, Lisa Lucia, David Kingsley, Les Bourquin, Antonio Cid, Morgan Wallace, Kevin Smith, Saeed Hayek, Nenge Njongmeta, Modesto Olanya, Sujata Sirsat, Yaixin Huang, Pat Spaninger, Miguel Gutierrez, Wenqing Xu, Kevin Edwards, Tracy DuVernoy, Kaiping Deng, Ganyu Gu, Juan Leon, Kevin Webster and Chris Seeber.

Visitors/Guests: Ashlina Chin, Darin Zehr, Dorothy Wrigley, Bart Hawcroft, Julie Borders and Linda Peng.

Meeting Called to Order: 10:00 am, Sunday, July 28, 2013.

Recording Secretary of Minutes: Sherri McGarry.

Request for changes to Agenda. None requested. The Chair noted that since this is such a large group, we'll skip self-introductions of attendees this year. The meeting minutes from last year were adopted with no changes.

Report from Executive Board:

- Linda Harris welcomed the PDG members to IAFFP.
New record attendance of IAFFP with 2700 registered thus far. Also, number of exhibitors exceeded last year with 150.
- Noted this is an active and one of the stronger PDG, holding webinars and having high attendance.
- Three new PDGs established (see program for details). Harris mentioned the overlap of PDG meetings on Sunday and offered holding meetings on Saturday as an option.
- Encouraged working with other PDGs to develop Symposia.
- Committee minutes are due by 1 pm on Tuesday.
- Other administrative updates provided.

Old Business: Other than adopting last year's minutes, there were no old business items to review.

New Business:

FSMA Rules affecting fresh produce: Samir Assar provided the FDA regulatory update. Two new proposed rules under FSMA, for verifying foreign suppliers and accrediting third-party auditors, were published today. These fit with the Preventive Controls (PC) and Produce Safety (PS) proposed rules. Fact sheets are available on FDA's Web site for all of the proposed rules along with a Decision Tree on how the rules may apply to the individual firm. Comment period for the two newly released proposed rules is 120 days. The comment period for the PC and PS proposed rules will be extended by 60 days until November 16, 2013, to allow review across all four rules to enhance comments in context of these four.

For the PS proposed rule, FDA has received about 1000 comments covering a broad range with respect to support for the rule. There's significant comment and concern for how FDA may implement the rule. Other areas with many comments include the 9-month soil amendment minimum time from application to harvest and also meeting agricultural water proposed requirements, particularly with respect to frequency of testing. It's recommended that stakeholders look at the suite of proposed rules then comment.

FDA issued an assignment that is a follow-up to observations and common themes recently seen in cantaloupe associated outbreak investigations and positive sample results. This is an effort to better understand the practices and conditions of cantaloupe packing operations and prevent future contamination events. The assignment is specific to inspection of packing houses and includes sampling. FDA is collaborating with state departments of agriculture in these inspections and has held several discussions with industry to communicate the purpose and scope of this assignment. Information gathering from the assignment will inform guidance, research, and policy.

Agricultural water considerations: Samir Assar and Linda Harris described various publications and outreach to address questions and concerns for Ag Water Quality Standards (proposed in rule), FDA has posted additional FACT Sheets on the FDA Web site and is planning outreach efforts to clarify the standards (proposed), hear from stakeholders, and engage in problem solving.

Dialogue among PDG attendees was fruitful and engaging for these above FSMA related topics.

Food Safety Preventive Control Alliance (FSPCA): P.C. Vasavada provided the update. The FSPCA is a public private alliance consisting of academia, industry, and government. Currently, FSPCA is developing a curriculum for preventive controls (proposed rule). This curriculum would be used to train regulators and industry. Attendance at a course with such a curriculum is proposed as a requirement for all operations subject to the PC rule. Next stage will be arranging for outreach and developing pilot projects, and Vasavada encouraged potential instructors for such a course to contact him. More information at <http://www.iit.edu/ifsh/> alliance.

Outbreak Update: Tracy DuVernoy, FDA CORE Network, provided an update of

produce related outbreaks from January, 2012 to present. She covered the caveats that go along with the data (FDA-regulated products, not person-to-person transmission, etc). The 18 outbreaks were associated with cantaloupe, cucumbers, leafy greens, mango, papaya, sprouts, and pistachios. Pathogens contaminating the produce items and causing illness included *E. coli* O157 and *E. coli* O145, both linked to leafy greens, and *Salmonella* spp. Notable were outbreaks with a few products not typically seen previously – cucumbers and grape or cherry tomatoes. The sources of the contaminated product were both domestic (5) and international (3) with the majority unable to be determined. More information on the outbreak investigations may be found on FDA CORE's Web site,

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Outbreaks/default.htm>, which includes an annual report and environment assessments reports for certain outbreaks, such as the 2012 *Salmonella* Typhimurium linked to cantaloupe (and to *Listeria* cantaloupe in 2011). Investigation of the current *Cyclospora* outbreak is ongoing with reports of cases increasing; produce is the suspect vehicle but not confirmed. As new information becomes available on this ongoing outbreak FDA will post it on the FDA Web site.

Produce Safety Alliance: Betsy Bihn provided an update on PSA. PSA is a cooperative agreement with USDA, FDA, and Cornell University. Focus of their efforts is on developing a standard training program to help growers prepare for requirements of the PS rule, with an emphasis to work with small growers. Current efforts involve developing a standard curriculum. Thus far, a curriculum and learning objective have been finalized and 4 of 7 training modules are under review. A key question that is being considered is who should be allowed to use the training materials and if there's a need to have prerequisite knowledge. There are two trains of thought 1) there's a need for the information and shouldn't turn anyone away and 2) a need for prerequisite knowledge to ensure accurate information is conveyed. There will be more on this issue and those interested should send an email to Gretchen Wall at glw53@cornell.edu. More generally, there's a listserv if members would like to receive announcements on PSA activities. More info on PSA Web site. PSA, in cooperation with FDA, held a Q&A session on each section of the PSA proposed rule and the session is posted on the PSA Web site. PSA is devoting time to encourage comments especially with small growers.

Sprout Safety Alliance: Stephen Grove provided an update. The SSA was formed in 2012 and began with support from FDA and currently is a public/private partnership. Purpose is to develop a curriculum and training program for industry both for PS requirements (currently proposed) and best practices. Immediate goal is to develop a training curriculum with best practices that align with the proposed FSMA rules. In the near future, SSA will become more involved in outreach with a focus on small sprout producers. Challenges being faced with engaging and learning practices of smaller sprout operations; there's a need to continue to build relationships with the small sprout producers. Many smaller sprout producers are unaware of FSMA. Some initial training was conducted in 2012 and a smaller session held in Chicago area. Also a webinar

was held in cooperation with FDA with good participation but participants still reflected a majority of large producers. SSA would like assistance from extension educators to assist in reaching small sprout producers.

NoroCORE update: Chip Simmons, NC State, provided the update. NoroCORE is a 5-yr grant project (CAP) that involves research, education, and outreach. Goal is to reduce foodborne viral illness, improve detection, and develop control and prevention strategies. They have linked in with the Produce Safety Alliance. In response to the recent Hepatitis A (HepA) outbreak, Information Sheets were developed and are available on the Web site. Future efforts will focus on outreach. Also on the horizon is a spin-off project from the *S. Typhimurium*/*S. Newport* outbreak examining environmental niches.

New Business:

PDG Activity Update: Considering a webinar around September 10, 2013 focused on how challenges can lead to change and build collaborations, using the 2011 Listeriosis outbreak linked to cantaloupe as an example. It would cover research, training, FDA follow-up. More info to come.

Request by Chair for ideas for webinars by PDG:

Ideas – Consider Symposia topics not accepted by the program committee (limited number can be accepted); Farm to School or Child Care and Produce Safety; Cyclospora outbreak once it's reached a point this would be useful and appropriate (members suggest working with others on this – CCFI, VPF PDG). Additional ideas can be provided by e-mail to the Chair and Vice Chair.

Request for Symposia Topics:

- Dr. Juan Leon, Emery University. How do you sample on-farm and in packing shed, especially environmental samples. This symposium would benefit researchers, industry, and government. Clarification requested on whether this would include methods, number of samples or both. Answer; both. How do you prepare to sample in the fields, how do you sample, number to sample, etc. Good support for the topic.
- Trevor Suslow: UC Davis. Microbial Metagenomics; Promise and pitfalls of metagenomic analysis on produce.
- Yaguang Luo, USDA. Sprouts vs MicroGreens: Differences and Similarities in botanical strain, ag practices, and risk.

Deadline for submission of symposia, roundtables and workshops to IAFP is Oct 15, 2013. Ideas should be submitted to the Chair and Vice Chair far in advance of the deadline so that they can be considered for PDG support. Vice Chair will follow-up with a conference call. Organizers should consider coordinating development of symposia with other PDGs.

Request for any other new business:

1. Linda Harris mentioned that some PDGs have considered writing papers for publication in *Food Protection Trends*.
2. No additional items.
3. Comment from PDG members: In response to the idea to schedule PDG meetings a day earlier, the PDG attendees voted unanimously that they would prefer not to meet on Saturday instead of Sunday.

Recommendations to the Executive Board:

1. Provide the name of the supporting PDGs for symposia and roundtables in the Program next year. This will help attendees as they make difficult decisions on which sessions to attend.

Next Meeting Date: August 2, 2014.

Meeting Adjourned: 11:59 a.m.

Chairperson: David Gombas.