

## Low Water Activity Foods PDG

**Members Present:** Elizabeth Grasso (Chair), Nathan Anderson, Samir Assar, Pardeepinder Brar, Polly Courtney, Carl Custer, Michele Evans, Peyman Fatemi, Jennifer Frankenberg, Dana Gradl, Paul Hall, Robin Kalinowski, Jeffrey Kornacki, Lisa Lucia, Pancita Manalili, Edyta Margas, Bradley Marks, Chantal Nde, Monica Ponder, Gale Prince, Jean Schoeni, Christine Strapp and Erdal Tuncan.

**Board/Staff Members Present:** Linda Harris.

**New Members:** Shirin Abd, Brent Brehmer, Nurliza Buyong, Wei Chen, Michelle Danyluk, Tanya D'Souza, Christine Endacott-Palmer, Teri Ehlinger, Carrie Ferstl, Judy Fraser- Heaps, Susan Frye, Max Golden, Kari Graber, Judith Hajdenwurcel, Ian Hildebrandt, Atef Idriss, Keith Ito, Michael James, Sanghyup Jeong, , Karim Khinouche, Yasu Komoto, Pichamon Limcharoenchat, Patrick Logan, Lisa Lucore, Wendy Maduff, Rachel McEgan, Armin Norouzi, Wilfredo Ocasio, Monica Ponder, Frank Ridgley, Joe Shebuski, Juming Tang, Chris Theofel, Alice Wei, Edith Wilkin and Guodong Zhang.

**Visitors/Guests:** Jean Anderson, Richard Brouillette, Elena Enache, Jeff Farber, Johnathan Flannery, Laurel Gann, Michele Gorman, Harsh Jhankhariya, Jeannie Kim, Amy Kramer, Laurie Post, Kelly Probasco, Laura Reina, Jenny Scott, Rico Suhalm, Danielle Voss, Yansong Xue and Meijun Zhu.

**Meeting Called to Order:** 9:02 a.m., Sunday, August 3, 2014.

**Recording Secretary of Minutes:** Dana Gradl.

**Old Business:** (E. Grasso).

- Review Board Responses to 2013 PDG recommendations.
- Previous minutes were circulated. Motion passed to approve minutes from July conference call (B. Marks- motion, N. Anderson-second).

**New Business:**

- 2015 Meeting dates- (L. Harris).
  - Meeting in Portland is from July 25-28th.
  - PDGs will be held on Saturday, July 25th.
- Election of Vice Chairperson – (E. Grasso)
  - Induae Mello had to step down due to having responsibilities no longer focusing on low water activity foods. Position will assist Chairperson with E-mails, planning webinars, etc.
- Nominations include:
  - Monica Ponder (Associate professor at Virginia Tech).
  - Edith Wilkin (Vice President of Food Safety at Leprino Food Company).
    - Voting: 9 for Monica, 19 for Edith.
- Student Liaison – (E. Grasso).
  - Motion passed for group to have a student liaison.
  - Nominations include:
    - Ian Hildebrandt nominated (Michigan State University).
    - Pardeepinder Brar nominated (University of Florida).
    - Linda Harris checked with the Board. While PDGs have not had more than one in the past it is not against the Bylaws. Group passed motion to have two student liaisons as the PDG has a large membership and is multi-faceted.
- Social Media – (E. Grasso).
  - Currently have a LinkedIn group.
  - A few members have previously expressed interest in a Facebook group. The topic was brought up for conversation. No members in attendance supported this decision, so it was not able to be brought to a vote. If membership changes their mind in the future, it can be discussed again.
  - FoodSafe – news list on the internet. It may be a good resource.
- Annual PDG Format – (E. Grasso).
  - The format of the Portland PDG meeting was discussed. The membership was interested in hosting a short (15 minute presentation) to kick off the meeting.

- The motion was accepted.
- The speaker will be identified at a future date.
- Frequency of conference calls (E. Grasso).
  - Have quarterly conference calls but can discuss “hot topics” as need arises based on things that come up in the news.
  - Contact E. Grasso or E. Wilkins if you think a topic warrants a special discussion.
- Discuss 2015 Activities.
  - Proposals for next year are due 10/14/14.
  - Previously identified ideas for discussion for webinars/symposia/roundtables/workshops.
    - Effect of pH and  $A_w$  on halophilic organisms and molds.
    - Policy and regulations.
    - Relationship of  $A_w$  to heat resistance and shelf stability.
    - Day to day information.
    - Pet food safety.
    - Molds in low  $A_w$  foods—can collaborate with other PDGs for content.
    - Industry concern with surrogates.
  - Policy and regulations have been big topics recently. Will have a final ruling soon with FSMA but for now better to shy away from this topic (N. Anderson).
  - Program committee looks for novelty and hot topics (B. Marks).
  - Brad Marks willing to work on pet food.
    - Consider facility and environment as well as the product itself (G. Prince)
  - Carl Custer: how to make standards for shelf stability work.
    - Ex. 0.85 molds still grow; industry perspective on what to do since standards often fail.
  - Address low  $A_w$  internationally—not too much currently occurring for this.
  - Current assumptions that plant is inherently dry are an issue. May be a good webinar idea. There is more to wet/dry cleaning than just the equipment. Need to take into account environmental monitoring, separation, etc. (L. Lucore).
  - What ways are there to educate those with this outlook on how to keep dry areas dry and still do wet cleaning requirements (ex. for allergen removal) (T. Ellinger).
  - One plant did not have *Listeria* on their radar, but it was found in the drains.
  - Plants now have better wet/dry separation but some are continuous processing (E. Wilkin).
  - Collaborate with other groups and industries doing similar work.
  - Food hygiene may be interested (their meeting was occurring simultaneously).
  - Jeff Kornacki is interested in heading up workshop on dry cleaning methods (novel) for controlling *Salmonella*. It may deal with challenges for completely dry sanitation, maintaining equipment, plant sanitation, cleaning approaches (dry ice blasting, hot oil, chlorine dioxide), how to restart after a recall, how to assess production risk, etc.
  - People that need to see this information may not be attending the meeting (M. Danyluk).
  - Quarterly webinar series leading up to a workshop may help address issues and increase interest (M. Danyluk, B. Marks).
  - May choose to partner with Food Hygiene and Sanitation and Equipment Design PDGs, involve plant engineers (G. Prince).
  - Hygiene group has a lot of interest in sanitation for low  $A_w$  foods.
  - Practical applications should be given in each webinar (M. Evans).
  - Broader audience than just scientists.
  - “Practical knowledge transfer” to audience could help with success.
  - People would be able to tell their bosses exactly what they are getting out of the webinars and workshops
- Pet food topics.
  - Ingredient issues.

- How to clean the facility and other controls.
- Is sometimes the “forgotten sector.”
- How to kill pathogens and know product will be safe.
- Old science, but is not always applied in smaller places.
- Create a series of webinars—one or two will not likely cover things (J. Frankenberg).
  - Bring attention and allow people to focus on the topic.
  - She is interested in helping organize the whole thing.
  - Focus on key topics since cannot cover everything.
  - Topics for webinar as well as symposia.
- Setting standards may not be as valuable as webinars and other educational tools since each plant likely has their own standards already.
  - Add a validation component.
  - Have topic on industry practices.
  - What is being done now compared to old standards, do they work with current products? (L. Lucore).
  - Industry should provide current product information for comparison and evaluation.
  - Industry development of own best practices is powerful, can use webinar as a tool to make a document (N. Anderson).
  - Gather info from industry and field members, compare to academic setting. It may lead to better research and plant outcomes by doing so.
  - Education component (C. Custer).
- “Low  $A_w$  = *Salmonella* risk” paradigm (J. Kornacki).
  - There are other areas that can be explored, such as *Cronobacter* in infant formula and other foods.
  - Especially important to explore for at risk populations.
  - MRSA in dry foods.
  - Workshop yesterday addressed what else is a concern besides *Salmonella* (E. Grasso).
  - It is a possible symposium idea.
  - Industry products tested by FDA (public data) includes tests for multiple organisms, they do not narrow focus to only *Salmonella* (L. Lucore).
- Would be helpful to scope all of these ideas for webinars.
  - Quarterly webinar that starts broad but narrows.
  - Use to prepare for IAFP the following year.
  - Practical application.
  - Focus in presentations tends to be North American despite having an international audience.
  - Make first webinar more global.
  - Hurdles unseen in US due to restriction and lack of knowledge.
  - World at large topic and then narrow.
  - What is happening and how to apply ideas.
  - Partner with the international PDG.
  - Middle market companies have no clue.
  - Think their products are safe and therefore nothing applies to their company.
  - What is hook to capture people’s attention so that they can watch and learn?
  - There should be concern about the facility, not just about the product.
  - Larger companies are usually better, so how can it be brought into smaller companies.
  - Microorganisms and other risks associated with imported ingredients.
  - Larger companies are international.
  - Cannot apply same standards across the board.
  - How to manage all aspects to achieve a safe product.
  - Health Canada has Hygienic low moisture codex. Can collaborate for an international talk.
  - Ongoing webinar process, not just for the next year only.
  - Question of which ones to do first.

## **Potential quarterly webinars identified as: Broad to narrow range à symposium/workshops**

1. Hook to interest large audience into webinar series
  - Risks of ingredients
2. Low water activity regulations in global arena (International PDG, GFSI).
  - Testing
  - Hurdles
3. Equipment (Equipment PDG).
  - Control measures
4. Cleaning/Sanitation (FHS PDG, Pre Harvest PDG).
  - What to do before it gets into facility
  - Allergens
  - Segregation of plant
  - Clean break

### **2015 Proposals:**

#### **Symposia Ideas**

- Pet foods (B. Marks heading).
- How to address allergens in dry environment.

#### **Symposia/Roundtable Idea**

- Pathogens beyond *Salmonella*.

#### **Workshop**

- Dry Cleaning (J. Kornacki).

[Members broke into smaller groups to discuss these topics, one person charged with giving the discussion notes to Chairperson.]

### **Recommendations to the Executive Board:**

1. Appoint Edith Wilkin to be Vice Chairperson.
2. Appoint Ian Hildebrandt and Pardeepinder Brar as student liaisons.
3. Try not to schedule Low Water Activity Foods PDG at the same time as Food Hygiene and Sanitation PDG. Many members of these PDGs overlap, as well as themes of discussion, and this would allow more robust attendance at each PDG meeting.

**Next Meeting Date:** Tuesday, September 9, 2014, 10:00- 11:00 a.m. Central Time.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 11:03 a.m.

**Chairperson:** Elizabeth Grasso.