



Fruit and Vegetable Safety and Quality PDG

Fresh fruits and vegetables are critical to a healthy, well-balanced diet; however, produce has been implicated in a number of foodborne illness outbreaks in recent years, significantly impacting the health of consumers and the economic viability of farms and packing-house operations. The Fruit and Vegetable Safety and Quality (FVSQ) Professional Development Group (PDG) was established in 1998 and provides a forum to discuss items of interest in the safe production, harvest, and handling of high quality fruit and vegetable products.

With nearly 500 members, the FVSQ PDG represents a diversity of individuals from all sectors of the food production system, including state and federal regulators, academia, laboratory and technical services, and produce growers, packers, and shippers. Addressing the unique food quality and safety challenges associated with fresh produce requires collaboration across many specialties, as highlighted by the broad range of IAFP symposia where produce is discussed. From the field to the consumer – the FVSQ PDG enables members to collaborate professionally and pursue multi-faceted approaches to address produce safety risks, troubleshoot quality issues, and provide solutions to emerging challenges.

During the IAFP Annual Meeting, PDG members have the opportunity to receive the latest updates from the United States Food and Drug Administration (U.S. FDA) on regulatory initiatives, educational efforts, and outbreak response team summaries. In addition, PDG

members have the opportunity to contribute to the development of symposia for the next Annual Meeting. In 2018, PDG members organized and proposed several pertinent symposia topics, including sanitary design of produce packing and processing equipment, traceability, agricultural water, regional differences of manure-amended soils, Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) on produce, and microplastics in agricultural production systems. These topics and more will be presented and discussed at the Annual Meeting in 2019.

The benefits of being an active member of the FVSQ PDG extend beyond just the Annual Meeting. The PDG is currently working on developing webinar opportunities for members to stay current on produce safety and quality initiatives throughout the year. In addition, professional connections made through PDG involvement have helped to advance our collective knowledge and continue to inform our efforts to protect public health.

Fruit and vegetable quality and safety is a dynamic and evolving field of study, with an incredibly diverse range of topics to be addressed. We welcome anyone with an interest in produce safety and quality to participate in our PDG activities, and hope to meet you in person in Louisville, KY in 2019!

Gretchen Wall, Co-chair
Humberto Maldonado, Chair