Fruit and Vegetable Safety and Quality PDG


Meeting Called to Order: 1:00 p.m., Sunday, July 9, 2017.

Minutes Recording Secretary: Humberto Maldonado.

Old Business: Minutes from 2016 meeting were adopted without changes.

New Business: Chairperson Sherri McGarry thanked the PDG for their participation on the two brainstorm sessions that took place during the week previous to the IAFP meeting and introduced Humberto Maldonado as Vice Chair. No additional issues were added to the agenda.

Sherri McGarry shared some statistics with the PDG and congratulated them for the high level of acceptance on symposia and roundtable submission.

Historically, the FVSQ PDG provides a series of updates to the members, which are outlined below.

1. Regulatory Update: The regulatory update was provided by Samir Assar (FDA CFSAN). Produce continues as a top priority for FDA. FDA has a new Commissioner who is interested in what has been done until now and supportive of efforts moving forward. Compliance dates for Produce Rule are coming. Actually, first compliance date for sprouts was on January 2017, and for produce in general will be in January 2018. The Agency is continuing to look for opportunities foster compliance with the produce rule through education, training and other activities. The Sprout Safety Draft Guidance was issued on January 2017 and the FDA is still looking for comments. The Produce (in general) Draft Guidance is intended to be published before January 2018. NASA, ASTHO, and AFDO are involved in this Draft Guidance. Agricultural water will likely not be covered in the guidance in detail because Compliance dates on Agricultural Water will be extended. A notification from the FDA will come shortly about this extension. USDA and FDA have partnered to coordinate education/training/operative Agreements through the FSMA training collaborative training forum. FDA has granted $21.8 million to 42 different states (https://www.fda.gov/forFederalStateandLocalOfficials/FundingOpportunities/GrantsCoopAgrrmts/ucm517991.htm) to conduct inspectional and/or educational activities.

2. Diane Ducharme, FDA, presented the Produce Safety Network (https://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/fsma/ucm510261.htm), a new network that is currently staffed by seven produce safety experts and one team leader from FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN), and 11 investigators and two branch chiefs from the FDA's Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA), that will work closely with key produce stakeholders, such as state produce safety programs, to provide regulatory support and technical assistance. They are open to collaboration opportunities.

3. Sprout Safety Alliance (SSA) Updates: Kaiping Deng, Ph.D., IFSH(IL Institute of Technology commented that the biggest accomplishment for the SSA in the past year is launching the training program. In August 2016, the 1st edition of the SSA curriculum was finalized. Right after
that, they conducted the 1st TTT pilot, obtained constructive feedback and finalized version 1.1. In November, the 1st combo course was held for growers and SSA received plenty of comments; the discussion on a 2nd edition was initiated. FDA draft sprout guidance was released on January 2017. Information from FDA’s sprout guidance was incorporated throughout the SSA material for consistency with current regulatory thinking. The 2nd edition was finalized in April this year. After a few trainings, the SSA manual has evolved to version 2.3 and the online module development started in May. There might be ~200 sprout operations in the US. Trainings were held in IL, CA, TX, FL, MA, and Victoria Canada. To date, 53 sprout operations from 20 states have sent their staff to the SSA training. Lead instructor training and Combo course were held in Chicago and California and approved 28 SSA Lead Instructors application. Lead Instructors are extension specialists from universities, sprout growers, and regulators. They are located in 16 states in the US. The SSA training is a prerequisite training of the regulator training. Therefore, FDA inspectors and state regulators also attended the SSA training. The SSA online modules are being developed by the alliance and IFPTI. The 12 modules of the SSA curriculum will be available online.

4. Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Updates: Betsy Bihn, Ph.D., Cornell University, provided the update on the PSA (http://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/). PSA has conducted 31 PSA Train-the-Trainer Courses. There are 1,012 TTT Participant Trainers (28 are international) and 146 PSA Lead Trainers (42 state and 11 international). There have been 176 PSA Grower Training Courses in the U. S. covering 36 States with 4,205 Grower Participants. There have been 8 international grower trainings. While the PSA TTT launch was delayed, a massive PSA TTT effort followed it. Also, initially there was a delay on the PSA Lead Trainer Review Process, but the backlog has been resolved. There’s a concern about denied applications; collaborative solutions are being considered, without compromising the process integrity. The PSA Manual was released to the public. There were concerns from PSA about quality printing, so the release is including printing specifications. As a reminder, all PSA GT participants must have a printed manual in a language they understand. The PSA Manual translated in Spanish is now public and translation other languages is underway. International training collaborations are on-going.

5. Outbreak Update: The outbreak update was given by Diane Gubernot, Ph.D., Coordinated Outbreak Response and Evaluation, FDA. It included a summary of pathogen and foods involved in multistate outbreaks that FDA was involved. Since last year’s IAFP meeting, there were 34 outbreaks, 14 of them related to produce, including sprouts (5), leafy greens (2), pistachio (1), strawberry (1), cucumber (1), papaya (1) and an unknown (1). Seven outbreaks involved a food that was traced to a domestic source and 7 involved imported food items. The pathogens included Listeria, pathogenic E. coli, Salmonella, Cyclospora, and Hepatitis A virus. Information was shared about several outbreaks – Hepatitis A outbreak that involved frozen strawberries from Egypt and FDA prevention efforts, an outbreak of Salmonella infections linked to alfalfa sprouts where seed was tested and found positive, and the Cyclospora outbreak where the vehicle was not identified. CORE is working toward more trend analysis and sharing of information to aid in industry prevention efforts.

6. Other Topics: None.

New Business: The Chair shared information on symposium and topics sponsored and co-sponsored by this PDG, information on joining this PDG, and the plan to hold more conference calls and at least one webinar this year. Additionally, there would be an email asking for nominations followed by voting on a new Vice Chair.

Kali Kniel and Michelle Smith suggested exploring ways to enhance students’ participation and involvement in the PDG, including incentives such as sponsorships.

Melanie Avey asked for time to discuss the proposal and potential collaborations between the Fruit and Vegetable PDG and the APS-FSIG (American Phytopathological Society – Food Safety Interest Group).

PDG members expressed continued interest in webinars. Sherri McGarry recalled the topics that were suggested on last PDG meeting and asked for new suggestions.

PDG members brainstormed topics for symposia/roundtable and broke into smaller groups to help connect PDG members by topic areas. Plan is to have conference calls following IAFP meeting to further this initial work and before deadline to submit symposia/roundtable ideas in October.

Recommendations to the Executive Board: None.

Next Meeting Date: July 8, 2018, Salt Lake City, UT.

Meeting Adjourned: 3:00 p.m.

Chairperson: Sherri McGarry.