Fruit and Vegetable Safety and Quality


Number of Attendees: 213.

Meeting Called to Order: 1:00 p.m., Sunday, July 21, 2019.

Minutes Recording Secretary: Gretchen Wall (Vice Chair), Cameron Bardsley (PDG Student Liaison).

Old Business:

• The PDG welcomes Gretchen Wall as new Vice Chair of the PDG. The PDG will be holding elections for the next Vice Chair in May 2020 electronically. Contact Gretchen or Humberto with nominations and contact information. Self-nominations can be made.

• The 2018 meeting minutes were adopted without changes.

• A webinar was hosted by the PDG in June 3, 2019 and was attended by 149 individuals. The report covered key outcomes from a USDA Economic Research Service report published in August 2018 ‘Before Implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act’s Produce Rule: A Survey of U.S. Produce Growers’. The recording is posted on the IAFP website.

New Business:

Kali Kniel provided the Executive Board Report. Historically, the FVSQ PDG provides a series of updates to the members, which are outlined below.

1. Regulatory Update: FSMA Produce Rule Implementation – Dr. Samir Assar.

General inspection approach: education focused while regulating. Fostering consistency is very important and accomplished through communication and proper training (shadowing), to ensure a consistent roll-out across all farms. FDA will be addressing common issues going forward and making information available through informed research and policy development decisions. For example, challenges have been noted in grower’s compliance with Subpart L (equipment, buildings, tools, and addressing harborage sites) and recordkeeping requirements. Disseminating training and outreach to international audiences remains a priority for FDA, including the development of PSA Trainers and Lead Trainers. Several policy decisions are still in deliberation by FDA including Subpart E (agricultural water), Subpart F (biological soil amendments of animal origin), farm definitions, and written regulations. Fostering consistency is very important and accomplished through communication and proper training (shadowing), to ensure a consistent roll-out across all farms. FDA will be addressing common issues going forward and making information available through informed research and policy development decisions. For example, challenges have been noted in grower’s compliance with Subpart L (equipment, buildings, tools, and addressing harborage sites) and recordkeeping requirements. Disseminating training and outreach to international audiences remains a priority for FDA, including the development of PSA Trainers and Lead Trainers. Several policy decisions are still in deliberation by FDA including Subpart E (agricultural water), Subpart F (biological soil amendments of animal origin), farm definitions, and written assurances for processing activities. In addition, FDA is continuing to refine the Produce Safety Rule and Fresh Cut Produce draft guidance’s released based on stakeholder feedback.

2. Sprout Safety Alliance Update – Dr. Kaiping Deng. Over 90 sprout operations have been trained, including 138 individuals, 61 federal regulators (1
international), and 3 supermarket chain food safety managers. A focus has been placed on developing materials in other languages, including Spanish. The first Sprout Grower Training was conducted in Spanish in January 2019. No Spanish manuals are available yet, but the presentation slides are ready. Bilingual growers were asked to become trainers and to help identify other growers who needed to be trained. The SSA now has Spanish and Chinese trainers, but are currently in need of trainers with Vietnamese and Korean proficiency. On April 15, 2019, SSA partnered to host a webinar for water testing lab personnel titled “Water Testing Requirements of the Produce Safety Rule.” Going forward, SSA plans to have a second webinar for testing labs as well as webinars with the International Sprout Growers Alliance (ISGA). SSA is also focusing on training for retailers and support for small sprout growers.

3. **Produce Safety Alliance Update – Dr. Betsy Bihn (unable to attend, provided by Gretchen Wall).**

The PSA will be hosting a special session on Monday, July 22 from 5:30–7 p.m. where additional information and updates will be provided. Training reports were reviewed; a total of 42,578 participants have attended PSA Grower Trainings and 2,672 individuals have attended the PSA Trainer the Trainer Course. Reports are conducted quarterly and available by request on the PSA website. All 50 states have hosted PSA Grower Trainings. The PSA will be hosting fewer PSA Train-the-Trainer Courses due to lack of demand, so interested individuals are encouraged to attend the courses currently registered. New team member, Dr. Laura Acuna-Maldonado, was hired in October 2018 as the Spanish Extension Associate for the PSA and has been working on initiatives for Spanish-speaking audiences domestically and internationally. She recently translated and helped to launch the PSA’s website in Spanish (es.producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu). The PSA will be announcing the availability of a manual Version 1.2 shortly (currently in English, soon to be translated in Spanish). There has been significant progress in disseminating training, but there are still may growers who need trained. In addition, FDA updates, announcements, and the commencement of inspections underscore the need for educators to continue providing outreach to the growing community. International training has been progressing and the PSA has plans to translate curriculum materials in Mandarin Chinese, Haitian Creole, and through collaborator proposals, Korean and Thai/Ilocano. In the next year, PSA will be focusing on developing advanced training materials and workshops for PSA Trainers and Lead Trainers. The PSA thanks all individuals for their efforts in providing education and outreach to produce growers. Since the last meeting, there have been 26 outbreaks, with 10 linked to produce commodities. Seven of these outbreaks had known vehicles and three were unknown. One outbreak of interest was the *E. coli* O157:H7 in romaine which trace-back identified a reservoir sample with a strain very similar to outbreak strain. There also was a *Cyclospora* outbreak associated with salads and veggie trays. The salad was determined to be grown locally, and carrot samples were determined to be grown internationally. *Listeria monocytogenes* was also found in avocados and Salmonella outbreaks occurred in cucumber, papaya, melons, onions, cilantro, and basil. PDG members will be delivering presentations at the Annual Meeting on several of these outbreaks.

**Other New Business:**

- Reminder to log in to IAFP Connect as the PDG will be using the online platform more in the future for PDG communications. Next year, the PDG will also be pursuing a remote way to participate in the PDG meeting (e.g., Zoom) for those who are not able to attend the Annual Meeting.

- If there are any specific webinar ideas or suggested speakers, please reach out to Humberto or Gretchen to coordinate. The PDG no longer needs to find sponsorship to host webinars as the IAFP Foundation now assumes this cost.

- It was proposed and agreed upon by the PDG to host a teleconference in early September to discuss and refine PDG symposia and workshop proposals. Gretchen will follow up with more information after the annual meeting.

- Cameron Bardsley, the PDG’s student liaison, provided an update on behalf of the IAFP Student PDG. Participation in the student mentoring program was successful in 2019 and continues to match professionals in the industry with students for the upcoming year.

- At the end of the meeting, PDG members brainstormed ideas for symposia and roundtables and broke out into groups for further discussion. See Addendum A for preliminary topic ideas. These topics will be refined during the September 2019 conference call.

**Recommendations to the Executive Board:**

1. The PDG would like to propose to the Board that the IAFP Connect online platform be developed into an app for use on cell phones and tablets. This could be sponsored by industry to off-set the costs of development and make the platform more likely to be used by members.

**Next Meeting Date:** August 2–5, 2020, Cleveland, Ohio.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 2:40 p.m. (break out groups continued to meet).

**Chairperson:** Gretchen Wall.