

Low Water Activity Foods

Names of Attendees: Ariel Buehler (Chair), Ren Yang (Vice Chair), Jennifer Acuff, Sam Alcaine, John Allan, Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez, Vera Arthur, Jakob Baker, Suhan Bheemaiah Balyatanda, Sherry Bansal, Larry Beuchat, Yannick Bichot, Ledon Black, Neil Bogart, Chad Boushee, Alana Bryant, Erdogan Ceylan, Alicia (Bairu) Chen, Han Chen, Aneta Cop, Paola Corea Ventura, Toni de Senna, Vaidehi Dendukuri, Natali Diaz-Yepes, Shivaprasad Doddabematti Prakash, Emily Durbin, Jodi DuVall-Robertson, Melanie Fabio, Daniel Fajardo, Natoavina Faliarizao, Megan Fay, Dennis Florentino, Rahul Fnu, Elise Forward, Zhujun (Abby) Gao, Beilei Ge, Jaber Ghorbani, Michele Gorman, Elizabeth Grasso-Kelley, Ben Graves, Roberto Guzman, Linda Harris, Minghao He, Ian Hildebrandt, Kristen Hunt, Keith Ito, Sheetal Jha, Carris Yatong Jiang, Sarah Jones, Veeramani Karuppuachamy, Pawan Khanal, Karuna Kharel, Martha Kimber, Katie King, Elma Kontor-Manu, Jasna Kovac, Girvin Liggans, Rob Limburn, Xiyang Liu, Max Lorcheim, Kevin Lorcheim, Leticia Mallmann, Bradley Marks, Ryan Maus, Ellie Meeks, LaDarius Millen, Molly Mills, Alexis Minnich, Nathan Mirdamadi, Razieh Sadat Mirmahdi, Yoshinori Mizoguchi, Andy Mollo, Jaqueline Moraes, Nadia Narine, James Nasella, Chantal Nde, Ruth Oni, Mike O'Rourke, Samet Ozturk, Kavita Patil, Brian Perry, Laurie Post, Grishma Prabhukhot, Timothy Pruitt, Raghu Ramaswamy, Narindra Randriamiarintsoa, David Rasmussen, Juliany Rivera Calo, Jena Roberts, Suyapa Rojas, Samantha Roldan Perez, Evan Rosen, Gaganpreet Saini, Joelle Salazar, Nirmal Thirunavookarasu Sankaranarayanan, Sofia Santillana Farakos, Michele Sayles, Ahnna Schulte, Xue Sha, Manoj Shah, Neelam Sharma, Arlette Shazer, Anru Shen, Dikshya Shilpakar, Pratiksha Shrestha, Amarat Simonne, David Singer, Amanda Slate, Bill Soest, Hailey Spray, Diana Stewart, Rico Suhalim, Aparna Tatavarthy, Abdullatif Tay, Leslie Thompson-Strehlow, Jodie Ulaszek, Ron Van Santen, Purnendu Vasavada, Stephen Walker, Benjamin Warren, Michael Wernigk, Anett Winkler, AIXIA XU, Romy Yu, Yang Zhai, Xiaojing Zhou.

Meeting Called to Order: Sunday, July 26, 2026, 3:02 P.M.

Minutes Recording Secretary & Student Liaison: Ren Yang & Dikshya Shilpakar.

Old Business:

The 2025 meeting minutes were reviewed. The minutes were approved with no objections following a motion and a second.

New Business:

Former PDG Chair Erdogan Ceylan introduced the incoming Chairperson, Ariel Buehler, and Vice Chairperson, Ren Yang. Dr. Purnendu C. Vasavada, Professor of Food Science at the University of Wisconsin River Falls, delivered a presentation titled "Myths and Misconceptions About Low Water Activity Foods". The presentation emphasized that low water activity and low moisture foods are not identical. Dr. Vasavada debunked common safety myths, noting that dry goods are not inherently sterile and that pathogens like Salmonella, E. coli, and Cronobacter can survive in dry processing environments for months or years. Contamination factors

discussed included ingredients, improper drying, contaminated processing equipment, and cross-contamination. Ariel Buehler reviewed the PDG's progress, highlighting a 55 to 60 percent acceptance rate with six symposia accepted for the current year. Accepted symposia topics cover smarter validation strategies, dry ingredients, natural mold inhibition, Salmonella in tahini, and dry sanitation solutions. The group hosted three pre-meeting workshops this year, including a dry cleaning workshop led by Neil Bogart and a session on validation and pathogen reduction processes. Jacob, representing Abby Snyder's group, announced an upcoming Dry Sanitation Research Advisory Council conference scheduled for October 26th and 27th in Beloit, Wisconsin. Ariel Buehler noted that September 29th is the deadline for next year's proposal submissions.

Breakout Group Discussion Results:

Topic 1, Infant Formula: The group discussed the lack of data for the presence of *C. botulinum* spores in infant formula. They also covered the use of indicators and raw materials in a round table format. **Topic 2, Ingredient Control:** Participants explored ways to reduce the impact of large recalls of dry ingredients. Suggested methods included lot size reduction, industry-wide surveillance testing, partnership with the FDA on risk assessments, and industry-wide validation of kill steps. The discussion also addressed cereulide toxin formation in infant formula and dietary supplements. Methods, policy, risk assessment, and applied methods were noted as a gray area. **Topic 3, Dry Cleaning and Sanitation:** The conversation focused on the validation of sanitation methods in the plant, surrogates for low moisture foods, and indicators. **Topic 4, Digital Tools:** The group discussed data collection for humidity in the environment and the use of real-time sensors to predict issues.

Recommendations to the Executive Board:

1. Recommend Ren Yang as Vice Chair for this PDG.

Next Meeting Date: Sunday, July 18, 2027, Kansas City, Missouri.

Chairperson Name: Ariel Buehler.