

Pre Harvest Food Safety PDG

Members Present: Sid Thakur, Divya Jaroni, Sarah Smathers, Walid Alali, Carl Custer, Marilyn Erickson, Mario Estrada, Paula Fedorka-Cray, Mitchell Gilgour, Keith Ito, Kalmia Kniel, Jitu Patel, Jeffrey LeJeune, Jack Guzewich, Claudio Zweifel, Mario Estrada Jr., Mitchell Gilgour, David Gombas, Sanja Illic, Susanne Keller, Eric Line, Guy Loneragan, Jeffrey Lucas, Mayra Gonzalez, Randall Phebus, Ellen Thomas and Michael Villaneva.

Board/Staff Members Present: Don Zink.

New Members: Jacqueline Fletcher, Michael Rothrock Jr., Eric Moore, Vanessa Cranford, Robert Salter, Kenneth Shenge, Angela Shaw, Harshavardhan Thippareddi, Francisco Diez, Robert Buchanan, Navneet Gill, Michael Bradley, Rodney Moxley, Pete Snyder, Patrick Spaninger, Rachel McEgan, Shannon Coleman and Montserrat Hernandez Iturriaga.

Visitors/Guests: Emmanuel Casasola, Dale Grinstead, Pardeepinder Beer and Frederick Adzitey.

Meeting Called to Order: 8:00 a.m., Sunday, July 22, 2012.

Recording Secretary of Minutes: Divya Jaroni.

Sid Thakur (Chair) called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. by welcoming PDG members. Divya Jaroni (Vice Chair) was appointed the recorder of the meeting minutes. Sign-up sheets were passed around for new and existing members. After a brief round of introductions, Sid Thakur highlighted the “What you can do” and “What you cannot do” excerpts from the antitrust guidelines for Association meetings for the audience. The PDG members were made aware that this document is also available on-line through the IAFFP Web site.

Old Business:

1. PDG Objectives and focus areas were introduced again for new members. It was clearly highlighted that this PDG is restricted to research and education strictly in the area of pre-harvest and not peri- or post-harvest levels.
2. Call for comment or additions to last year meeting minutes – none raised.
3. The symposia topics discussed in last year’s meetings were briefly discussed. A total of three symposia were introduced and finalized. These included two from the Pre Harvest Food Safety PDG, which were accepted as mini-symposia and one in conjunction with the Meat and Poultry Safety and Quality PDG. A total of two symposiums from our PDG were selected this year by the program committee. These include:

- a) S10 "The Pre-harvest Conundrum: Efficacy versus Adoption of Food Safety Interventions," Monday, July 23rd; Time 10:30—12:00 p.m.; Room: 552.
- b) S25 "Local Foods: Food Safety Risks and Benefits," Tuesday, July 24th; Time: 1.30—3:00 p.m.; Room: Ballroom BC.

The organizers for each symposium, Guy Loneragan and Jeff LeJeune, introduced the symposium to the PDG and briefly explained the significance and the sub-topics of the symposiums.

4. No new chair or vice chair was selected. Sid Thakur and Divya Jaroni will continue as the PDG chair and vice chair till 2014, respectively.

New Business:

1. Based on email feedback and ideas from PDG members, potential symposiums, workshop and/or webinar topics for IAFP 2013 were brought forth in the meeting by Divya. These include:

a) Workshops

- i. Biotechnology and Pre-harvest Food Safety.
- ii. Rapid Detection and Quantification of Foodborne Pathogens at Pre-harvest.

b) Symposium

- i. Impact of Farm Management Practices on Food safety.
- ii. On-farm Critical Control Points to Ensure Food Safety.
- iii. Emerging Pathogens and Sustainable Agriculture.

2. Navneet Gill emphasized the need for on-farm training and that it should take into consideration the risks that have strengthened over time and the ones that have been reduced. She suggested that we need to be aware of the trends and where the focus should be on interventions. *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination on romaine lettuce and other leafy greens and mitigation strategies was suggested by Jitu Patel. Another member talked about "Farm to Fork" approach and suggested submitting a symposium with Food Safety and Quality PDG. He also talked about focusing on the hazards coming into retail due to the increasing trend of buying "farm fresh" and "local".

3. Jackie Fletcher highlighted the cross-contamination issue and stressed the need for control of plant pathogens along with foodborne pathogens. Carl Custer talked about the use of bacteriophages as an intervention at the farm level. A member from the industry mentioned his lack of knowledge in the area of pre harvest food safety and talked about risk from equipment at the farm level due to poor sanitation systems or risks associated at the farm management level (e.g., risk of *E. coli* O157:H7 during cultivation or ploughing).

4. Angela Shaw emphasized the need to consider small-scale farms and their practices especially with designing cheap, easy and useful intervention alternatives at pre-harvest

level. Sid Thakur pointed out the example of use of manure by cattle farmers for their home-grown fresh produce and the risks associated with this practice on transmission of foodborne pathogens and public health. Jeff LeJeune mentioned that some of these topics will be covered in their short symposium on “Local Foods-S25” on Tuesday.

5. Randy Phebus talked about the need for “Validation of Food Safety Systems at the Pre-Harvest Level”. He also emphasized the need to work with other PDGs and work on the symposia on food safety systems organized by Gary Acuff. Sid suggested a symposium on food imported into the U.S. He also mentioned that in the last PDG meeting a substantial amount of time was spent on discussing the challenges of importing food and other products in the U.S. These challenges were primarily related to regulation of practices and quality control based on U.S. standards which is very difficult to control. Walid Alali mentioned that many aspects of international trade will be covered in the full symposia chaired by him (S15-Food Safety and International Trade). Discussing the new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) role of monitoring production practices in other countries that export food products to the U.S., Don Zink highlighted some of the potential challenges associated with it. He pointed out that the entire process of validation at the farm-level is tough and that field interventions can take a long time to “kick in”. He suggested the need for development of future treatments that can be made to agricultural products at post-harvest level. Paula suggested a “holistic approach” and “specific approach” towards pre-harvest food safety interventions. Carl Custer pointed out that interventions used by plant and animal pathologists for plant and animal pathogens may work for food pathogens.

6. Bob Buchanan discussed the metrics in produce industry and the huge regional differences that exist between the production practices from one part of the country to the other. He pointed out that what works for one state or region may not work for another. Jeff pointed out the differences in pathogen prevalence based on regions and scaling (small-scale vs large-scale operations). Navneet emphasized the need to consider commodities associated with small-scale farms especially with the growing trend of multiple commodities on a single farm.

7. Paula Cray (Program committee member) suggested submitting short symposia with a combined effort from two PDGs that have similar interests. She pointed out that we need to look at “how symposia are put together”. These talks should be broad, thought provoking and serve as a basis to drive future research. They must “stand out” to get accepted. She emphasized the need for involvement of younger people at pre-harvest level and that students needed more mentoring at pre-harvest level. Don talked about increasing communication between PDG members via emails or through “Google Groups” which the Student PDG is using for the first time this year. Don thought it was a good idea for other PDGs to adopt it. He also talked about the webinars that were free for PDG members and the new IAFP mobile app that was introduced for the first time this year. He encouraged the PDG to provide input and feedback on the IAFP strategic plan.

8. To increase communication between the PDG members through the year Sid suggested forming smaller PDG-subgroups that would relay important information in the area of pre-harvest food safety area to the PDG group. These subgroups could be in the area related to food animals, fresh produce and outbreaks etc. This could enhance collaboration and increase activity. Students attending the meeting expressed the desire to get more involved. Allison Smathers (student liaison) and Jack Guzewich suggested including at least one student as a liaison for each subgroup, which was agreed upon by all. Sid suggested that we include a 15–20 minute presentation by a speaker from industry/government/academia in next year's meeting.

9. Jeff LeJeune mentioned the S-1033 and Rod Moxley mentioned the S-1002 Multistate Project group in that context. Bob Buchanan suggested maintaining a reference database that could be used by the members. He highlighted the database that has been created at UMD and offered it to be used by the students and the members.

10. Dave Gombas pointed out the lack of day-to-day interaction between researchers and the industry. Dave talked about the gap between research done in the lab and the extension of the findings at the field level. Rodney Moxley asked the PDG to think about reasonable outcomes for some of the research that we do since these are transient outcomes that change on a day-to-day basis. The main goal should be reduced pathogen load from the farm to the packing plant.

Recommendations to the Executive Board:

1. There was some concern where the student members mentioned about not being involved with the day to day business of the PDGs. A similar request was made last year by the students and faculty members about not being clear of the role and objectives of the PDGs. We are aware that the IAFP executive board took necessary steps to highlight the role of the PDG to the members including students. Our recommendation to the Executive Board will be to request the chair of different PDGs to actively solicit student participation in their groups.

Next Meeting Date: IAFP 2013, Charlotte, North Carolina.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:45 a.m.

Chairperson: Dr. Siddhartha Thakur.