IAFP 2026
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LOUISIANA
JULY 26–29

IAFP 2026 OPENING SESSION

SUNDAY, JULY 26

Great Hall

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OPENING SESSION

WELCOME TO IAFP 2026
Manpreet Singh, IAFP President

IAFP FOUNDATION
Gary Acuff, Foundation Chairperson

PEANUT PROUD STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP
Presented by: Darlene Cowart, Peanut Proud
Tejaswi Boyapati

TRAVEL AWARDS
Presented by Manpreet Singh, IAFP President, and Gary Acuff, Foundation Chairperson

STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIPS
Zoe Andersen
Charles Bakin
Rocio Barron
Auja Bywater
Chloe Castanon
Bhaswati Chowdhury
Yihong Deng
Shivaprasad Doddabematti Prakash
Natoavina Faliarizao
Julia Fukuba
Jean Paul Hategekimana
Yihan He
Zilfa Irakoze
Veeramani Karuppuchamy
Veera Venkata Praveen Raja Kosuri
Daniel Leiva
Sanyi Kim
Mallika Mahida
Monica Osorio-Barahona
Richard Otwey
Calvin Slaughter

HEALTH OR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES IN NORTH AMERICA
Amelia Ball
Justin McConaghy
Tania Rubyet Nur
Jeffrey Veesenmeyer
Bonnie Waldemarson

FOOD SAFETY PROFESSIONAL IN A COUNTRY WITH A DEVELOPING ECONOMY
Selim Alarape
Hussein Hassan
Shraddha Khanal

FELLOW AWARD
Presented by: Manpreet Singh, IAFP President, and Manan Sharma, IAFP President-Elect
Lee-Ann Jaykus
Kali Kniel
Alejandro Mazzotta
Panagiotis Skandamis

IVAN PARKIN LECTURE
Introduction: Manan Sharma, IAFP President-Elect
Gregory Astill
Elizabeth A. Bihn

An Engaging Exchange: Distilling Data for Impact

CLOSING COMMENTS
Manpreet Singh, IAFP President

CHEESE AND WINE RECEPTION
7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m., Exhibit Hall

Cheese provided by

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IVAN PARKIN LECTURE

GREGORY ASTILL, Ph.D.

Economist

Provo, Utah

Dr. Gregory Astill holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Washington State University and worked for 10 years as an applied economist focusing on issues impacting agricultural markets. Dr. Astill spent the first nine years of his career as a research economist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service. Most recently, he worked as a Senior Economist at DecisionNext, a commodity price and supply forecasting company, where he supported the development of statistical models and the delivery of constantly updating price and volume forecasts.

Dr. Astill's published research examines the economics of food safety practices in fresh fruit and vegetable production; of labor and mechanization in agricultural production; of agricultural risk management programs; and other issues related to agricultural commodity prices.

Using primary surveys and case study interviews, Dr. Astill has published on the cost of food safety practices on U.S. fresh fruit and vegetable farms. His research documents the clear economies of scale in food safety. Larger growers incurred costs-per-dollar sales 86% lower than smaller growers. He has identified other non-monetary costs of food safety including confusion about federal requirements and time spent on food safety activities and training. Most recently, Dr. Astill examined which aspects of food safety implementation are most challenging and concluded that high quality information networks are critical to improving knowledge gain and effective use of produce safety practices.

IVAN PARKIN LECTURE

ELIZABETH A. BIHN, Ph.D.

Director, Produce Safety Alliance
Cornell University

Ithaca, New York

Dr. Elizabeth (Betsy) A. Bihn is the Director of the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) and the National Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) Program based in the Department of Food Science at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. For more than 25 years, Dr. Bihn has worked to increase the implementation of food safety practices on fruit and vegetable farms and in packinghouses through applied on-farm research and the development of effective educational materials and training programs. Her research focuses on preharvest agricultural water quality assessment and vermicompost.

Dr. Bihn leads a multilingual team focused on providing accurate, science-based, produce safety information to fresh fruit and vegetable growers, packers, farm workers, regulatory personnel, extension educators, and others interested in the safety of fresh produce. These efforts support growers and packers as they strive to meet the U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule (PSR) requirements and buyer expectations. For this work, the PSA Team was awarded the 2025 Innovations in Regulatory Science & Policy Leadership Award from the Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA.

Dr. Bihn values the diversity present in agricultural communities and prioritizes inclusive communication strategies that build positive food safety cultures on farms and in packinghouses. An IAFP Member since 2002, she received the IAFP Elmer Marth Educator Award in 2021 and has served as President of the New York State Association for Food Protection, an IAFP Affiliate. She holds a B.S. in Zoology from The Ohio State University; an M.S. in Horticulture from the University of Florida; and a Ph.D. in Food Science from Cornell University.

IVAN PARKIN LECTURE ABSTRACT

An Engaging Exchange: Distilling Data for Impact

The systems and processes supporting food protection are complex and encompass a wide range of academic fields from chemistry, biology, physics, engineering, economics, sociology, statistics, and psychology. Data can be used to improve food safety systems and processes so that limited resources can be used efficiently to reduce food safety risks. Unfortunately, data can be distorted, misquoted, truncated, misunderstood, and misused. We all recognize the problem of GIGO: Garbage In, Garbage Out. Making food safety decisions in a world with so many data streams and opinions can be daunting. Working with colleagues who have different strengths allows for data assessment that leads to establishing meaningful food safety priorities while filling knowledge gaps.

For this year's Ivan Parkin Lecture, Dr. Greg Astill and Dr. Betsy Bihn will kick off the IAFP Annual Meeting by collecting real-time food safety views of the audience and analyzing this data from different perspectives to engage in a lively discussion of science, business, and policy. The goal is to interact with data that may inform your decisions at this year's Annual Meeting and impact your roles over the coming year. Perhaps it inspires you to do something new. Or to be more confident in how you experience IAFP 2026. Hopefully, this discussion gives you a moment to share with your colleagues, reacting to a live discussion which distills data to help you in your food safety journey.

FELLOW AWARD

LEE-ANN JAYKUS

Durham, North Carolina

Dr. Lee-Ann Jaykus is a recipient of the 2026 IAFP Fellow Award. Dr. Jaykus is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor Emerita affiliated with North Carolina State University in Durham, where she was a faculty member for 30 years. Her research efforts have focused on food virology; development of molecular methods for foodborne pathogen detection; application of quantitative risk assessment in food safety; and understanding the ecology of pathogens in foods.

Perhaps best known for her work in food virology, Dr. Jaykus was the scientific director of the USDA-NIFA Food Virology Collaborative (NoroCORE) from 2011–2018. She has authored more than 200 scientific publications; instructed more than 600 university students; and trained more than 60 young professionals as graduate students and post-docs. Her national and international activities are vast, spanning service to FAO-WHO; the U.S. National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF); and various National Academy of Sciences consensus panels, as well as serving as a member of the Food and Nutrition Board and the Food Forum. Dr. Jaykus also served with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Office of Foods, by inter-personnel agreement (2011–2013) and guest lectured at the U.S. Air Force Academy (2020–2021).

Dr. Jaykus has actively supported IAFP for decades since joining in 1993. She served as IAFP President in 2011 and received the IAFP Developing Scientist Award in 1993; the Elmer Marth Educator Award in 2006; and the Maurice Weber Laboratorian Award in 2016. She remains engaged in food safety in volunteer and consulting capacities and continues to actively support the mission of IAFP.

FELLOW AWARD

KALMIA KNIEL

Newark, Delaware

Dr. Kalmia (Kali) Kniel is a recipient of the 2026 IAFP Fellow Award. Dr. Kniel is the S. Hallock du Pont Chair of Microbial Food Safety and Professor in the Department of Animal and Food Sciences at the University of Delaware (UD) in Newark, where she currently serves as Associate Chair. She holds an M.S. in Molecular Cell Biology and a Ph.D. in Food Science and Technology, with a focus on the microbiology of foodborne pathogens.

Dr. Kniel teaches courses in foodborne disease, food microbiology, and food systems and security. Her research examines the environmental persistence of bacteria, protozoa, and viruses in pre-harvest agricultural environments, advancing understanding of food safety risks from a One Health perspective. She leads the One Health Certificate Program and directs the Center for Environmental and Wastewater Epidemiological Research, promoting interdisciplinary approaches to public, environmental, and food system health.

She is a co-author of the textbook, *Food Microbiology: An Introduction*, and has authored or co-authored more than 125 peer-reviewed scientific publications and more than 200 published abstracts. Her work has been widely recognized, including receiving the University of Delaware Outstanding Teaching and Advising Award; the UD Outstanding Researcher Award (2020); and the Career Distinguished Service Award from the Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association of Delaware (2025).

An active IAFP Member since 1999, Dr. Kniel served as IAFP President in 2020. She received the IAFP Elmer Marth Educator Award in 2015, the President's Recognition Award in 2019, and the IAFP Maurice Weber Laboratorian Award in 2022.

Dr. Kniel is also active in the Institute of Food Technologists and the American Society for Microbiology. She has chaired and participated in FAO/WHO expert meetings on foodborne viruses and was appointed to a National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine committee on Healthy Soils, Healthy People.

FELLOW AWARD

ALEJANDRO MAZZOTTA

New York, New York

Dr. Alejandro Mazzotta is a recipient of the 2026 IAFP Fellow Award. Dr. Mazzotta serves as Senior Vice President of Global Quality, Food Safety and Regulatory Affairs for Chobani in New York, New York. Prior to joining Chobani, he held positions in Food Safety, Quality and Microbiology at Campbell Soup Company; McDonald's Corporation; Pillsbury/General Mills; and The National Food Processors Association.

Dr. Mazzotta joined IAFP in 1999 and was elected in 2016 to serve as IAFP President. He presented the Ivan Parkin Lecture at IAFP 2025 in Cleveland, Ohio.

From 2004 to 2009, Dr. Mazzotta was appointed to the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF). He serves on the Center for Food Safety at the University of Georgia (CFS) and the bioMérieux Industry Advisory boards and is a Professional Member of the Institute of Food Technologists.

Prior to his career in the food industry, Dr. Mazzotta was appointed as Scientific Investigator by the Argentine Antarctic Scientific Institute where he served for four years, two of which were based in the Antarctic Peninsula, where he conducted research on the ecology of Antarctic fish under a national fisheries program.

Dr. Mazzotta has published more than 25 publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals in both English and Spanish and has spoken at numerous international meetings and symposia. He served on the Editorial Boards of the American Society for Microbiology's *Applied and Environmental Microbiology* and IAFP's *Journal of Food Protection*.

Dr. Mazzotta participates on the Cornell Food Science Advisory Council and was appointed as Adjunct Professor at Cornell University's Department of Food Science. A native of Argentina, he earned his B.S./M.S. degrees in Biological Sciences from the University of Buenos Aires, and a Ph.D. in Food Science from Rutgers University.

FELLOW AWARD

PANAGIOTIS SKANDAMIS

Kallithea, Greece

Dr. Panagiotis "Panos" Skandamis is the Food Safety Professor at the Agricultural University of Athens in Greece and Vice Chair of the BIOHAZ panel of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). His research interests include predictive microbiology, quantitative microbial risk assessment and methods to control pathogens in foods.

Since January of 2022, Dr. Skandamis has served as Editor-In-Chief of IAFP's *Journal of Food Protection*, and is a member of the Editorial Boards of *Applied and Environmental Microbiology* and *International Journal of Food Microbiology*.

In 2020–2021, Dr. Skandamis chaired IAFP's Microbial Modelling and Risk Assessment PDG and developed the predictive modelling and QMRA software tool, *"Growth Predictor."* He has served on the scientific committee of the International Conference on Predictive Microbiology in Foods (ICPMF) since 2008; the IAFP European Symposium organizing committee (2015–2021); and multiple IAFP award selection committees. He co-hosted the European Symposium in 2017; the FoodMicro Conference 2022; and the 13th ICPMF in 2025.

Dr. Skandamis has co-authored/authored 303 papers in SCI journals, which have attracted 15.049 citations (h-index=58); one student textbook, *Food Hygiene and Safety*; 31 book chapters; and co-edited one book. He has secured more than 6.0 million Euros from European and national competitive grants, as well as direct contracts with the food industry.

In February 2026, Dr. Skandamis was elected as a member of the International Committee of Predictive Modeling in Foods and of the Hellenic Agricultural Academy. He is also a member of the International Scientific Advisory Panel of New Zealand Food Safety Science & Research Center and the Working Group of ISO 23691, Microbiology of the Food Chain–Determination and Use of Cardinal Values.

Since 2017, Dr. Skandamis has served as the lead tutor in predictive microbiology and risk ranking modules of the EUFORA training program of EFSA. An IAFP Member since 2003, he received the IAFP Maurice Weber Laboratorian Award in 2021 and both the IAFP International Leadership Award and the President's Recognition Award in 2023.

TRAVEL AWARD FOR A FOOD SAFETY PROFESSIONAL IN A COUNTRY WITH A DEVELOPING ECONOMY

SELIM ADEWALE ALARAPE

University of Ibadan

IBADAN, NIGERIA

Dr. Selim Alarape is a Senior Lecturer and an Aquatic and Wildlife Disease Epidemiology and Toxicology Researcher in the Aquatic and Wildlife Unit of the Department of Veterinary Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. Dr. Alarape has extensive training in Veterinary Public Health, with his research focused on aquatic animal health, animal welfare, fish food safety, AMR, vaccinology, and One Health. His current research areas focus on the prevalence, characterization, and antibiotic resistance profiles of *Vibrio* species in culture and feral/wild-caught fish in Nigeria; isolation and characterization of zoonotic bacterial and viral pathogens in fish; and implications of animal welfare on animal health.

Dr. Alarape joined IAFP as a Student Member in 2019 and has been a Member since 2025. He previously received a BEP/CRDF Global Travel Grant (2015) and both USAID/MSU/FIL and NRF Travel Grants in 2023. Dr. Alarape was on a brief laboratory exchange program at the Moredun Research Institute (MRI) in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, through the International Veterinary Vaccinology Network (IVVN) Award in 2023. He is a member of several professional organizations and has many publications in international journals on topics such as Aquatic and Environmental Toxicology; Aquaculture Epidemiology and Biosecurity; One Health; Climate Change; Fish Food Safety (including Antimicrobial Resistance, and Chemical and Drug Residues); and Zoonosis.

Dr. Alarape holds a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM), as well as a master's degree and Ph.D. in Veterinary Public Health from the University of Ibadan.

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TRAVEL AWARD FOR A FOOD SAFETY PROFESSIONAL IN A COUNTRY WITH A DEVELOPING ECONOMY

HUSSEIN HASSAN

Lebanese American University

BEIRUT, LEBANON

Dr. Hussein Hassan is a Full Professor of Food Science and Technology and Director of Academic Compliance in the Provost's Office at the Lebanese American University (LAU) in Beirut. He served as Chairperson of the Department of Natural Sciences from 2018 to 2020.

Dr. Hassan's research focuses on non-microbial food safety, food processing, and food waste. He has published more than 100 articles in peer-reviewed journals and has presented extensively at international scientific conferences. In addition, he serves as a senior food safety and processing expert with several national and international organizations, including USAID, FAO, UNIDO, and UNEP.

Dr. Hassan is the co-founder and President of the Lebanese Association for Co-Existence and Development (LACODE), where he plays a leading role in the design and implementation of large-scale food security and community kitchen initiatives in the Bekaa region.

Dr. Hassan holds a B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Food Technology from the American University of Beirut, and a Ph.D. in Food Process Engineering from McGill University in Canada. He is a Fulbright scholar and a recipient of the George Stewart International Competition Award from the Institute of Food Technologists (USA) and the Stumbo Paper Competition Award from the Institute of Food Thermal Processing Specialists (USA). Dr. Hassan was awarded the Research Excellence Award and the Teaching Excellence Award at LAU in 2023 and 2024, respectively.

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TRAVEL AWARD FOR A FOOD SAFETY PROFESSIONAL IN A COUNTRY WITH A DEVELOPING ECONOMY

SHRADDHA KHANAL

Government of Nepal

KATHMANDU, BAGMATI, NEPAL

Ms. Shraddha Khanal serves as a Gazetted Food Research Officer in the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control (DFTQC) for the Government of Nepal, the central regulatory authority for food safety. Ms. Khanal is responsible for overseeing food safety and manufacturing compliance across establishments within the Kathmandu Valley, impacting millions of consumers daily. Her work spans regulatory inspections; laboratory investigations; risk-based reporting; and the initiation of legal and policy actions to address contamination, adulteration, and food fraud. Through these efforts, she contributes directly to strengthening national food safety systems and protecting public health.

Beyond regulatory work, Ms. Khanal is actively engaged in capacity building for small-scale and indigenous food entrepreneurs. She conducts training sessions on safe food processing practices, with a focus on microbial and chemical safety, spoilage prevention, and hygienic production. She also collaborates with national media to raise consumer awareness and promote a culture of food safety.

Ms. Khanal is excited to participate in IAFP 2026, as its themes closely align with her professional responsibilities and Nepal's evolving food safety priorities. She believes that the knowledge and global networks gained through the IAFP Travel Award will translate into actionable improvements in Nepal's food safety framework, ultimately strengthening protection for vulnerable populations.

Motivated by the vision to build a safer and more equitable food system, Ms. Khanal pursued a master's degree in Food Technology, graduating as the university valedictorian in 2018.

Outside of her professional responsibilities, Ms. Khanal enjoys spending time with her three-year-old–a reminder of the very lives her work seeks to protect.

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TRAVEL AWARD FOR HEALTH OR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES IN NORTH AMERICA

AMELIA BALL

Public Health–Seattle & King County

BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON

Ms. Amelia Ball serves as a Health & Environmental Investigator with Public Health–Seattle & King County in Bellevue, Washington, where she supports public health protection through retail food safety and foodborne illness response efforts. In this role, Ms. Ball conducts retail food and recreational water inspections; reviews Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plans for specialized processes; leads foodborne illness investigations; and supports recall verification and traceback activities. She has served in this role since September 2023.

Ms. Ball's professional interests include foodborne illness outbreak investigations, particularly the integration of environmental health and epidemiology; root cause analysis; and the application of food safety principles across the retail and broader supply chain. She is also interested in global food safety systems and the use of emerging technologies to enhance prevention and response activities.

Prior to her current position, Ms. Ball worked as an Environmental Health Specialist with Skagit County Public Health in Washington for four years. There, she conducted disease surveillance and case interviews for notifiable conditions, with a focus on enteric illness, and performed regulatory inspections and outbreak investigations while supporting public education on foodborne illness prevention. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she conducted COVID-19 case investigations; provided infection control support; and participated in Infection Control Assessment and Response (ICAR) visits in long-term care facilities in collaboration with the Washington State Department of Health.

Ms. Ball earned her B.S. in Microbiology from Washington State University, graduating from the Honors College with a research thesis focused on neurodegeneration.

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TRAVEL AWARD FOR HEALTH OR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES IN NORTH AMERICA

JUSTIN MCCONAGHY

Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

Mr. Justin McConaghy serves as the Produce Safety and Cottage Foods Program Coordinator for the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF) in Oklahoma City. In this capacity, he oversees outreach, education, inspection, and enforcement for the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule and the Oklahoma Homemade Food Freedom Act. His professional background includes experience as a USDA-licensed poultry and egg grader, Oklahoma State University (OSU) Extension Educator, and working on the family farm and ranch.

Mr. McConaghy currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Mid-Continental Association of Food and Drug Officials (MCAFDO), which provides professional development opportunities for members. As a 2019 International Food Protection Institute (IFPTI) Fellow, he conducted research examining how environmental variables–such as temperature, wind, and precipitation–may be correlated with generic *E. coli* levels in surface waters.

Mr. McConaghy frequently collaborates with the OSU Food and Agricultural Products Center to facilitate workshops and write factsheets that assist farms and entrepreneurs in navigating food safety regulations. In recognition of these efforts, this training team received the 2025 OSU Outstanding Collaborative Impact Award for the Homemade Food Freedom Act Workshop they developed and teach across the state. OSU and ODAFF also work together to teach the Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training Course and have taught nearly 800 attendees. In addition, he and a co-worker partnered with OSU Extension to develop an online curriculum for small-scale egg producers regarding egg grading standards and the state egg law.

Mr. McConaghy holds an M.S. in Agricultural Economics from Oklahoma State University.

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TRAVEL AWARD FOR HEALTH OR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES IN NORTH AMERICA

TANIA NUR

Franklin County Public Health

COLUMBUS, OHIO

Ms. Tania Nur is a dedicated public health professional and Environmental Health Specialist with a Master of Public Health (MPH), committed to advancing environmental safety and community well-being. Ms. Nur currently serves with Franklin County Public Health in Columbus, Ohio, where she applies her strong foundation in environmental health and regulatory practices to ensure safe, healthy environments. Her work focuses on protecting public health while addressing broader factors that influence community outcomes.

Ms. Nur is especially passionate about food safety and uses science-based inspection practices to reduce risks and prevent foodborne illness. She works closely with food operators and community members to uphold public health standards. She takes a balanced approach that emphasizes education alongside enforcement, helping establishments understand and implement safe food handling practices that are practical, sustainable, and compliant with regulations.

Beyond her local role, Ms. Nur contributes to the advancement of food safety at a national level. She serves as a subject matter expert on the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) Food Safety Committee, where she collaborates with professionals across the country to strengthen policies and improve public health practices. She also holds a leadership role as Vice President of the Ohio Association of Food Protection (OAFP), an IAFP Affiliate, where she supports professional development, builds partnerships, and promotes best practices in food safety throughout the state.

Ms. Nur is committed to ensuring that food establishments have access to clear guidance and resources to meet regulatory standards. She combines technical expertise with strong communication and community engagement skills, fostering trust between regulatory agencies and the populations they serve.

Outside of her professional work, Ms. Nur is devoted to animal welfare, rescuing and rehabilitating birds, and helping them find safe, permanent homes. Her compassion, leadership, and commitment to service define her work, making her a strong advocate for both public health and community well-being.

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TRAVEL AWARD FOR HEALTH OR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES IN NORTH AMERICA

JEFF VEESENMEYER

Arizona Department of Agriculture, State Agriculture Laboratory

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Dr. Jeff Veesenmeyer began his career with the Arizona Department of Agriculture State Agriculture Laboratory (SAL) in Phoenix in 2022, where he serves as a Public Health Scientist. The SAL currently performs routine regulatory testing of dairy products, ensuring conformance with the FDA's Grade "A" Pasteurized Milk Ordinance, as well as raw and ready-to-eat meat products, environmental samples, and pet food. As a designated Laboratory Evaluation Officer, Dr. Veesenmeyer also provides oversight of dairy testing laboratories throughout Arizona on behalf of the FDA.

In addition to his regulatory testing duties, Dr. Veesenmeyer is a member of Arizona's nascent outbreak Rapid Response Team (RRT). In particular, he serves as one of the laboratory leaders in the development and implementation of procedures for screening produce and other agricultural samples for pathogens including *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella*, and Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli*. Prior to the creation of the RRT, he played a critical role in the SAL achieving ISO 17025 accreditation.

Dr. Veesenmeyer earned a B.A. in Bacteriology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Following his undergraduate training, he worked at the Food Research Institute at UW–Madison, where he gained an interest in the field of food safety. He subsequently earned a Ph.D. in Microbiology & Immunology at Northwestern University.

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TRAVEL AWARD FOR HEALTH OR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES IN NORTH AMERICA

BONNIE WALDEMARSON

Public Health–Idaho North Central District

LEWISTON, IDAHO

Ms. Bonnie Waldemarson has worked for Public Health–Idaho North Central District, located in Lewiston, Idaho, since 2015. The health district has seven full-time general EHSs, who cover five counties–roughly 13,404 square miles of land. Ms. Waldemarson works in all areas of the environmental health program. In addition to the food program, she is the lead for the childcare program and the drinking water program. She started her public health career as a WIC clinical assistant, providing nutritional education to families, before moving into the world of environmental health.

Ms. Waldemarson is involved in all phases of implementing the food program at the local level and helping food operators grow their business. This includes plan reviews; compliance and enforcements; education; and training. She is proficient in HACCP plan reviews and aiding operators in creating proper control points and standing operating procedures.

Ms. Waldemarson is a central point of contact with city and county departments and has built close relationships with the planning and building, business licensing, and fire departments. This helps to ensure all departments and agencies can better serve food operators as efficiently as possible.

For the past six years, Ms. Waldemarson has served as the Secretary/Treasurer for the Idaho Environmental Health Association, an IAFP Affiliate. She volunteers as a 4-H judge and fosters senior cats for a local animal group. Ms. Waldemarson is thankful to IAFP for this opportunity to attend the 2026 Annual Meeting to learn more and take her experience and knowledge back to share with her community.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

ZOE ANDERSEN

Washington State University

PULLMAN, WASHINGTON

Zoe Andersen is a Ph.D. student in Food Science at Washington State University, based at the Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center in Prosser, where she conducts research under the mentorship of Dr. Claire Murphy.

Ms. Andersen earned her B.S. in Nutrition and Food Systems from University of Arizona in 2023. During her undergraduate studies, she developed a strong interest in food safety and microbiology at the Water & Energy Sustainable Technology (WEST) Center, where she investigated risks related to dust-mediated produce contamination, viral transmission from restroom use, and *Escherichia coli* in irrigation water.

Ms. Andersen completed her M.S. in Food Science and Technology at Oregon State University under the direction of Dr. Joy Waite-Cusic and Dr. Jovana Kovacevic. Her research focused on the behavior of *Listeria monocytogenes* in Hispanic-style cheeses and identifying interventions, such as salt and organic acids, to control pathogen growth. She also completed an internship with Tillamook Creamery, where she validated a novel method for moisture analysis in dairy powders. She defended her thesis in June 2025 and published her work in the *Journal of Food Protection*.

Ms. Andersen's current doctoral research focuses on postharvest water risk mitigation strategies, including intervention approaches for bacterial control in apple drencher systems; evaluation of essential oil coatings for nectarines and blueberries; and the application of structural equation modeling to predict the impact of water quality on microbial populations in flume water and fresh produce. During her Ph.D. studies, she plans to also pursue an M.S. in Statistics to further develop expertise in predictive modeling for food safety applications, with the goal to pursue a career in academia with a focus on research and extension.

Ms. Andersen is grateful to have received the Student Travel Scholarship and looks forward to engaging with the food safety community at IAFP 2026.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

CHARLES BAKIN

Johns Hopkins University

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Charles Bakin is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Environmental Health and Engineering at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland. Advised by Dr. Keeve Nachman, Mr. Bakin is in the Exposure Sciences and Environmental Epidemiology track. He holds an M.S. in Food Science and Technology from The Ohio State University in Columbus; a European Joint M.Sc. in Sustainable Food Systems from ISARA-Lyon in France; and a B.S. in Nutrition from the University for Development Studies in Ghana. He is a Center for a Livable Future-Lerner Fellow at Johns Hopkins and a Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research Fellow (2025–2028 cohort).

Mr. Bakin's dissertation research aims to address key knowledge gaps related to the effectiveness of preharvest interventions for controlling *Salmonella* in poultry in the U.S. through the application of Quantitative Microbial Risk Assessment (QMRA). The overall goal of his project is to develop and integrate a novel preharvest QMRA model with existing postharvest frameworks to establish the first comprehensive, U.S.-based *Salmonella* risk assessment for poultry. Findings will inform targeted risk-based control strategies and support decision-making to reduce foodborne disease burden and advance national food safety and public health goals.

Mr. Bakin is honored to receive the IAFP Student Travel Scholarship and looks forward to engaging with food safety professionals at this year's Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

ROCIO BARRON-MONTENEGRO

Pontificia Universidad
Católica de Chile
SANTIAGO, CHILE

Rocio Barron-Montenegro is a final-year Ph.D. candidate in Biological and Medical Engineering at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago, under the supervision of Dr. Andrea Moreno-Switt. She obtained her bachelor's in Biochemistry and her master's in Microbiology from the Universidad de Concepción in Chile.

With more than eight years of experience working with bacteriophages, Ms. Barron-Montenegro has developed a strong interest in the rational design, scale-up, and industrial application of phage-based technologies for food safety. Her doctoral research focuses on the development of bacteriophage-based strategies to control *Salmonella* Infantis in poultry production. Her work includes the design of targeted phage cocktails and edible antimicrobial coatings aimed at improving food safety and extending the shelf life of chicken meat.

Throughout her research career, Ms. Barron-Montenegro has worked on the development of proof-of-concept studies designed to closely resemble industrial conditions, with the goal of facilitating the transfer of laboratory-generated knowledge into practical, large-scale applications. Beyond her work on *Salmonella*, she has also conducted research on other food-relevant pathogens and bacteriophage systems, including *Aliarcobacter butzleri* in raw poultry, *Listeria* phages, and *Pseudomonas* phages. She has mentored undergraduate students, contributed to scientific publications, and presented her work at national and international conferences. Her recent achievements include competitive research funding; international research internships in the United States and Thailand; and participation in innovation and technology transfer initiatives, including the co-founding of SafeFood SpA.

Ms. Barron-Montenegro is deeply honored to receive this travel scholarship and sincerely grateful to IAFP for this recognition and opportunity. Attending IAFP's Annual Meeting represents an important opportunity to connect with leading researchers and industry professionals, and to foster collaborations that support the continued development, scale-up, and implementation of science-based solutions for real-world food safety challenges.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

AUJA BYWATER

The Pennsylvania State University
STATE COLLEGE, PENNSYLVANIA

Auja Bywater is a Ph.D. candidate with dual title in Food Science and International Agriculture and Development at The Pennsylvania State University in State College, under the guidance of Dr. Jasna Kovac. Ms. Bywater received her B.S. in Public Health and Epidemiology from Brigham Young University–Idaho and her M.S. in Food Science and Technology from Virginia Tech.

Ms. Bywater's research focuses on bacterial communities in controlled environment agriculture (CEA). She investigated differences in bacterial load and diversity across five soilless farming systems and seasons. She spent a summer in the Galápagos Islands working with farmers to understand food safety challenges in both soilless and soil-based systems. In addition, she studied the persistence of *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *Listeria* in hydroponic systems from seeding to harvest, as well as interventions to mitigate their survival.

Most recently, Ms. Bywater conducted research at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in Germany, investigating *Salmonella* gene fitness during lettuce germination in rockwool cubes. She is committed to bridging the gap between research and practice by building strong partnerships with farmers to ensure her work translates into meaningful, real-world impact.

Ms. Bywater advances this goal through active engagement in international collaboration and innovation. She co-leads the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Academic Delegation at Penn State and has presented twice at FAO headquarters in Rome on efforts to reduce food waste in North America. She also presented her own innovative approaches to improving access to beneficial bacteria for soilless farmers at FAO headquarters in both Rome and New York City. Additionally, she is involved with the FAO Youth Food Lab at Penn State, supporting entrepreneurs in translating innovative ideas into market-ready solutions.

Ms. Bywater is grateful to have been awarded an IAFP Student Travel Scholarship and is eager to learn from this year's conference and connect with fellow food safety enthusiasts.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

CHLOE CASTANON

Chapman University

ORANGE, CALIFORNIA

Chloe Castanon is an undergraduate student researcher at Chapman University in Orange, California, where she recently earned her B.S. in Biological Sciences in 2026. Ms. Castanon conducted research in the Food Protection Lab under the mentorship of Dr. Rosalee Hellberg and Dr. Lucas Krusinski, focusing on DNA- and RNA-based methods for food authentication and safety.

Ms. Castanon's earlier research focused on comparing PCR-based methods, including CR mini-barcoding, real-time PCR, and multiplex PCR, for the detection and identification of canned tuna species to address seafood mislabeling. She later co-authored a book chapter with Dr. Hellberg, included in *Advanced DNA Approaches in Food Analysis* (Springer Nature), where they describe the CR mini-barcoding PCR method.

Ms. Castanon's current research focuses on quantifying gene expression in beef from different finishing diets to develop reliable methods for authenticating grass-finished beef. This work aims to improve transparency in food labeling and strengthen consumer confidence. Her research has been supported by the Beckman Scholars Program at Chapman University, where she was awarded a Beckman Scholar Fellowship for this project. She is motivated by her interest in using molecular techniques to improve food authentication and prevent mislabeling, and plans to pursue her Ph.D., continuing research focused on strengthening food safety and consumer trust.

Ms. Castanon is honored to be a recipient of the 2026 Student Travel Scholarship and looks forward to presenting her research, connecting with scientists and industry professionals, and learning about current advancements in food safety.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

BHASWATI CHOWDHURY

Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University
BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

Bhaswati Chowdhury is a third-year Ph.D. candidate in the Food Science and Technology Department at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia, under the mentorship of Dr. Rachel Cheng. Ms. Chowdhury earned her B.Tech. in Dairy Technology from the National Dairy Research Institute, Haryana, India, before obtaining her master's in Dairy Science from South Dakota State University.

Ms. Chowdhury's research focuses on understanding how *Salmonella* interacts within and outside the host environment. Her work integrates proteomics, genomic analysis of plasmid-associated genes, and evaluation of natural water bodies as reservoirs to identify key drivers of *Salmonella* persistence and transmission. Through this work, she aims to advance rapid detection strategies and targeted interventions to reduce the incidence of *Salmonella* infections.

Ms. Chowdhury's research efforts earned her the 2023–2024 USDA-FSIS Graduate Student Food Safety Fellowship, reflecting her strong commitment to advancing food safety. Beyond the lab, she is equally dedicated to science communication and mentorship. As an NSF/EPSCoR Science Communication Fellow, she has led outreach initiatives, including extension publications, and community engagement on topics such as raw milk safety to improve food safety awareness. She has also mentored several undergraduate students, helping guide their early engagement in research and STEM careers.

Ms. Chowdhury is honored to receive the 2026 Student Travel Scholarship. She looks forward to leveraging this opportunity to connect with food safety experts and continue learning about emerging advancements in food safety research.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

YIHONG DENG

Cornell University
ITHACA, NEW YORK

Yihong Deng is a Ph.D. student in the Milk Quality Improvement Program in the Department of Food Science at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, under the mentorship of Dr. Nicole Martin. Ms. Deng earned her B.S. in Food Science and Technology with a minor in Chemistry from the University of Wisconsin–River Falls.

Ms. Deng's research focuses on the characterization and subtyping of dairy-associated *Microbacterium* species to better understand their diversity and persistence in dairy processing environments. Her work aims to support the development of improved monitoring strategies and provide baseline knowledge to help the dairy industry better manage this emerging quality concern. She also contributes to applied research evaluating sampling approaches that support improved microbial monitoring in dairy production systems. She is committed to advancing microbiological knowledge that supports milk quality and science-based decision-making in dairy processing environments.

Ms. Deng is honored to receive a Student Travel Scholarship to attend IAFP 2026 and looks forward to connecting with researchers and industry professionals while learning about current topics in food safety and dairy microbiology.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

SHIVAPRASAD DODDABEMATTI PRAKASH

Kansas State University

MANHATTAN, KANSAS

Shivaprasad Doddabematti Prakash is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Grain and Food Science at Kansas State University in Manhattan, specializing in food microbiology and the safety of low-moisture foods under the mentorship of Dr. Kaliramesh Siliveru. Mr. Prakash earned his master's in Food Safety and Quality Management from the National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management in India.

Mr. Prakash's dissertation research addresses critical global challenges associated with foodborne illnesses in grain-based products. His research explores the microbial ecology of grain-processing environments and investigates the inactivation kinetics and physiological responses of *Salmonella* to innovative non-thermal interventions, including pulsed light, cold plasma, and UV-C. By linking ecological understanding with intervention efficacy, his work aims to develop science-based strategies that strengthen pathogen control throughout the grain supply chain. He has also led and contributed to industry-driven projects on pathogen reduction, process validation, and regulatory compliance, translating research into practical interventions adopted by food manufacturers.

Mr. Prakash is deeply grateful and honored to receive the 2026 Student Travel Scholarship. He looks forward to attending IAFP 2026 to present his research, learn about emerging advancements in food safety, and network with experts and peers from around the world.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

NATOAVINA FALIARIZAO

Michigan State University
EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN

Natoavina (Nato) Faliarizao is a Ph.D. student in the Departments of Food Science and Biosystems Engineering at Michigan State University in East Lansing, under the co-supervision of Dr. Teresa Bergholz and Dr. Kirk Dolan. Mr. Faliarizao earned his undergraduate degree in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Antananarivo in Madagascar.

Mr. Faliarizao's research primarily focuses on the application of mathematical modeling to enhance the safety of dried foods and plant-based ingredients. He expanded his previous research on chili pepper drying and moved on to pathogen survival on low-moisture food during high temperature processes. Usable data and robust models are needed to describe pathogen thermal inactivation during food processing with dynamically changing elevated temperatures, such as drying, cooking, and baking. He developed an innovative non-isothermal approach to predict *Salmonella* inactivation on plant-based low-moisture foods at high temperatures (90–150°C) to advise industries on process parameters that ensure adequate pathogen control to meet regulatory requirements. He is also exploring the combined effects of process parameters and food composition on pathogen behavior.

Mr. Faliarizao is extremely honored to be selected as one of this year's Student Travel Scholarship awardees. He is excited to attend IAFP 2026 to present his research, to learn about the latest developments in the field, and to network with food safety experts from all over the world.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

JULIA AI FUKUBA

University of Massachusetts Amherst

AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS

Julia AI Fukuba is a Ph.D. candidate in Food Science at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in Amherst, working under the guidance of Dr. Matthew Moore and Prof. Amanda Kinchla. She received her B.S. in Biochemistry & Molecular Biology with a minor in Food Science from UMass Amherst.

Ms. Fukuba's applied food safety research evaluates key process parameters in fermented foods to generate validation data that supports small- and medium-scale processors in developing FSMA-compliant food safety plans. In parallel, she investigates the antiviral efficacy of peracetic acid and essential oil-based formulations, and studies the molecular dynamics of viral capsid protein for understanding how human norovirus surrogates may develop enhanced recalcitrance upon exposure to sub-fatal conditions created by improper sanitation practices. This work will inform the development of risk assessment models and training on proper disinfectant selection and use.

Ms. Fukuba is actively involved in IAFP, serving as the International and Affiliate Representative for the Student PDG and as a Student Liaison for the Beverages and Acidified Foods PDG. She also contributed to organizing an IAFP 2024 symposium on fermented foods and regulatory challenges.

Ms. Fukuba is truly honored to receive the 2026 Student Travel Scholarship. She looks forward to engaging with experts across academia, industry, and government to learn the current trends in food safety and public health.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

JEAN PAUL HATEGEKIMANA

University of Rwanda
KIGALI, RWANDA

Jean Paul Hategekimana is a Ph.D. student in the School of Agriculture and Food Sciences at the University of Rwanda in Kigali, where he also serves as a lecturer in the Department of Food Science and Technology. His academic and professional work centers on food safety, food quality management, and risk-based approaches across agricultural value chains.

Mr. Hategekimana completed his undergraduate studies in Food Science and Technology at the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology in Rwanda, and earned his master's in Food Safety from Wageningen University & Research in the Netherlands. His research focuses on food safety risk analysis, mycotoxin contamination, and strengthening food safety systems in developing countries. His current doctoral research investigates the prevalence of mycotoxins in the Rwandan maize value chain and aims to develop practical, scalable mitigation strategies to support safe maize production and handling, particularly among small- and medium-scale actors.

Mr. Hategekimana has contributed to multiple peer-reviewed publications addressing aflatoxin contamination in peanuts; the burden of foodborne diseases linked to dairy products; and the role of risk-based frameworks in advancing food safety systems in the East African region. He is also a co-founder and Principal Investigator of the Mycotoxin Laboratory at the University of Rwanda, an initiative dedicated to enhancing laboratory testing capacity, advancing research, and supporting stakeholder training in mycotoxin risk management.

Beyond academia, Mr. Hategekimana actively engages in technical support and capacity-building initiatives to advance food safety system implementation, regulatory compliance, and value chain improvement in Rwanda and across the region. An IAFP Student Member, he is honored to participate at IAFP 2026 and looks forward to engaging with the global food safety community.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

YIHAN HE

McGill University
MONTREAL, CANADA

Yihan He is a Ph.D. candidate in Food Science at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, under the supervision of Dr. Xiaonan Lu. Prior to joining McGill, she earned her bachelor's degree in Food Science and Engineering from Zhejiang University in China.

Ms. He's research focuses on developing rapid, portable, and intelligent analytical tools for food safety applications. She is particularly interested in integrating microfluidics, molecular detection, and digital technologies to improve the speed, accessibility, and practicality of food hazard detection. During her doctoral studies, she has worked on innovative sensing systems for food quality monitoring and rapid pathogen detection.

Ms. He's current research further extends these efforts through the development of smart diagnostic strategies for multiplex detection of viable foodborne pathogens, with a particular focus on 3D-printed device design and next-generation food safety monitoring. She is also interested in applying advanced imaging approaches to better understand microbial physiological responses, including protein condensation-related phenomena associated with bacterial stress adaptation and persistence.

Through her work, Ms. He aims to bridge the gap between conventional laboratory-based methods and field-deployable diagnostics while also deepening the understanding of microbial behavior relevant to food safety. Her broader goal is to contribute to reliable and accessible technologies that strengthen food safety surveillance and support public health protection.

Ms. He is honored to receive the 2026 Student Travel Scholarship and looks forward to engaging with food safety professionals from both academia and industry while further deepening her knowledge in this field.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

ZILFA IRAKOZE

The Pennsylvania State University
STATE COLLEGE, PENNSYLVANIA

Zilfa Irakoze is a passionate food safety and extension scientist trained in applied food microbiology, food quality, and value-added food processing, with expertise in multi-sector collaborations across academia, government, industry, and international development. She is currently a dual title doctoral candidate in Food Science and International Agriculture & Development (INTAD) at The Pennsylvania State University in State College and holds a master's in food science from Kansas State University.

Ms. Irakoze's dissertation investigates the chemical signals used by beneficial *Trichoderma* molds to suppress aflatoxin-producing *Aspergillus* molds in food. Drawing on fungal ecology, metabolomics, and participatory community research, her work examines how *Trichoderma*'s volatile and non-volatile metabolites, environmental conditions, and traditional farmer practices collectively enhance biocontrol strategies for aflatoxin management. By bridging laboratory research with traditional agriculture knowledge and educational outreach, her work advances both the scientific understanding of fungal interactions and the development of practical, sustainable solutions to food safety challenges.

Beyond the lab, Ms. Irakoze is passionate about expanding food safety knowledge. As an INTAD student, she has worked with growers and educators to translate research into practical tools for safer, more sustainable food production and handling, both in the U.S. and internationally. Upon graduation, she aspires to pursue a career in research, extension, and leadership roles that bridge scientific findings with locally relevant, real-world impacts to strengthen food safety and food security globally.

Ms. Irakoze is beyond honored to have been awarded the 2026 Student Travel Scholarship. She looks forward to learning about the latest cutting-edge discoveries in the field, novel policies, and networking with like-minded professionals who are dedicated to improving food safety.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

VEERAMANI KARUPPUCHAMY

The Ohio State University

COLUMBUS, OHIO

Veeramani Karuppuchamy is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Food Science and Technology at The Ohio State University in Columbus. In his most recent master's research, he worked on a USDA-funded collaborative research project titled "Transforming Sanitation Strategies in Dry Food Manufacturing Environments." In his research, Mr. Karuppuchamy evaluated the application of air impingement technology as a potential dry-cleaning method for low-moisture food products such as nonfat dry milk. He studied the influence of water activity, sample thickness, and conditioning time after reaching equilibrium on the removal efficiency of deposits from stainless steel surface. His passion for food safety has been recognized with scholarships, including the 3-A SSI Dr. Ron Schmidt Student Travel Award (2025); the Peanut Proud Scholarship (2023); and the FMI Foundation Food Safety Auditing Scholarship (2020).

Mr. Karuppuchamy has eight years of food industry experience in lab management and quality assurance roles. After conclusion of his Ph.D. program, he plans to resume as a food safety/quality manager for ten more years before pursuing a career in food safety auditing. He is a student member of professional organizations such as IAFP and the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT).

Mr. Karuppuchamy is very grateful and honored for being selected as a recipient of the 2026 Student Travel Scholarship. He looks forward to attending IAFP 2026 and networking with aspiring professionals in the food safety field. This scholarship will serve as an inspiration for a rewarding career in food safety.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

SANYI KIM

Konkuk University

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Sanyi Kim is a master's candidate in Veterinary Public Health at Konkuk University in Seoul, South Korea, under the supervision of Prof. Kun-Ho Seo. She earned her B.S. in Food Science and Biotechnology with a focus on animal products from the same institution.

Ms. Kim's work centers on bovine mastitis and antimicrobial resistance (AMR), with an emphasis on understanding pathogen behavior and developing sustainable alternatives to antibiotics. Using next-generation sequencing and culture-based approaches, she investigates the microbiome and virulence characteristics of bacteria isolated from healthy and mastitis milk. This work has highlighted the role of biofilm formation in multidrug resistance and treatment failure.

Building on this foundation, Ms. Kim further explores postbiotic-based antimicrobial strategies derived from kefir-isolated lactic acid bacteria, demonstrating inhibitory effects against mastitis pathogens and biofilm formation. These findings support the potential use of postbiotics as alternative control strategies. She also evaluates their anti-inflammatory potential against pathogen-induced responses, aiming to reduce both infection and associated inflammation in mastitis. She has contributed to the development of rapid detection tools for foodborne pathogens, supporting practical applications in food safety management.

Ms. Kim received this year's Student Travel Scholarship under a sponsorship from IAFP's Affiliate, the Korea Association for Food Protection. She is honored to be selected as the recipient of this scholarship, and looks forward to engaging with researchers and professionals in the field. She hopes to expand her research perspectives and contribute to the development of effective and sustainable approaches to food safety within a One Health framework.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

PRAVEEN KOSURI

University of Connecticut
STORRS, CONNECTICUT

Praveen Kosuri recently completed his Ph.D. in Animal Science with a focus on Food Microbiology and Safety at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, under the guidance of Dr. Mary Anne Amalaradjou. His doctoral research focused on developing comprehensive probiotic and postbiotic-based strategies to control *Salmonella* Enteritidis across the broiler production continuum. His work integrates innovative intervention approaches with practical applications to improve food safety in poultry systems.

Dr. Kosuri's current research focuses on developing and evaluating novel antimicrobial strategies including probiotics, postbiotics, and aerated nanobubble water, to control foodborne pathogens such as *Salmonella* and *Listeria* in poultry and food processing environments. His research combines applied microbiology, processing interventions, and translational approaches to address real-world food safety challenges.

Dr. Kosuri has been actively involved with IAFP, where he has presented his research and engaged with the global food safety community. His participation in previous IAFP Annual Meetings has contributed to his recognition as a Developing Scientist Award finalist and receiving Second Place in the 3-Minute Thesis Competition, highlighting both his research and communication skills.

Dr. Kosuri has led and contributed to multiple research projects, resulting in nine peer-reviewed publications and presentations at various conferences. He is also actively engaged in outreach and education, delivering workshops for producers and stakeholders.

Dr. Kosuri is honored to be a recipient of IAFP's Student Travel Scholarship and will be presenting his research at the Annual Meeting. He views participation in IAFP as an important opportunity to disseminate his findings, engage with leading experts, and gain insights into emerging food safety innovations, while strengthening collaborations that advance the translation of research into practical industry application.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

DANIEL LEIVA MURCIA

Louisiana State University

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

Daniel Leiva Murcia is from Copán Ruinas, a town located in the mountains of Honduras, where he grew up among fresh produce, cattle, and coffee farms which sparked his passion for agriculture and food systems. He earned his B.S. in Food Science and Technology from Zamorano University and came to Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge for an internship during his senior year to work on fresh produce safety.

Upon graduating from Zamorano, Mr. Murcia returned to LSU to pursue an M.S. in Plant and Soil Sciences, conducting on-farm food safety research and bringing together food, soil, and plant sciences. His work is focused on studying how microorganisms are introduced, survive, decline, and transfer within agricultural environments and what factors influence their behavior.

Mr. Murcia is currently a Ph.D. candidate in LSU's Food Safety & Microbiology Laboratory, where he continues to develop practical, data-driven approaches to improve preharvest produce safety and better-informed risk management strategies. He is committed to translating research into action through extension and outreach activities. He has assisted in the delivery of numerous food safety trainings and workshops for home gardeners, farm workers, growers, processors, and retailers across Louisiana.

Mr. Murcia feels deeply honored and grateful to be the recipient of the IAFP Student Travel Scholarship. He looks forward to engaging with the food protection community, learning from experts, and sharing insights from his research. In the future, he aspires to return to Honduras to strengthen its local food safety and quality system, helping growers and food processors meet national and international standards, access competitive markets, and sustainable economic development.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

MALLIKA MAHIDA

The University of Georgia
ATHENS, GEORGIA

Mallika Mahida is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Georgia in Athens, where she conducts research under the mentorship of Dr. Carla L. Schwan, integrating food safety with Extension-based outreach to support safe home food preservation practices. She holds a B.S. in Microbiology and an M.S. in Food Science and Technology from India, providing an interdisciplinary foundation for her research.

Ms. Mahida's dissertation research focuses on evaluating the survival of foodborne pathogens (*Salmonella* and *E. coli*) in freeze-dried, ready-to-eat meat products; and developing predictive models to characterize microbial behavior during storage. Her research investigates the effectiveness of acid-based marinades and thermal interventions as pretreatment strategies to achieve microbial reductions prior to freeze-drying. By integrating experimental microbiology with predictive modeling, her work aims to generate research-based, consumer-relevant guidance and represents a paradigm shift in addressing emerging food safety risks associated with the rapidly growing practice of home freeze-drying.

In addition to her research, Ms. Mahida contributes to Extension programming through the National Center for Home Food Preservation, where she has developed consumer-focused educational resources on fermented foods like kombucha and kimchi. She has also participated in statewide outreach efforts to translate research findings into accessible, evidence-based guidance for home food preservers across Georgia.

Ms. Mahida is honored to receive the IAFP Student Travel Scholarship. She looks forward to sharing her research and engaging with fellow students, researchers, and food safety professionals at this year's meeting.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

MONICA OSORIO-BARAHONA

Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University
BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

Monica Osorio-Barahona is a Ph.D. student in Food Science and Technology at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, where she conducts research under the mentorship of Dr. Laura Strawn. Her work focuses on fresh produce safety, with an emphasis on microbial risks across production and post-harvest systems.

Ms. Osorio-Barahona completed her undergraduate studies at Zamorano University, gaining hands-on training in agricultural systems and food production. She later completed a meat safety internship at Kansas State University, where she built a foundation in microbiology and food safety.

At Virginia Tech, Ms. Osorio-Barahona's research combines field-based and laboratory approaches to better understand contamination risks under real operating conditions. She has worked directly with produce packinghouses, conducting sampling to evaluate water quality, sanitizer performance, and cross-contamination in post-harvest systems. Her work focuses on generating data that is relevant to industry and supports practical improvements in produce safety.

In addition to her research, Ms. Osorio-Barahona is a certified Produce Safety Alliance advanced trainer and has participated in grower trainings to support the implementation of science-based food safety practices. Through this work, she is especially interested in translating research into clear, practical guidance for diverse audiences. Her long-term goal is to contribute to data-driven, preventive food safety systems for fresh produce and to support approaches that are both scientifically sound and feasible for industry.

Ms. Osorio-Barahona is excited to attend IAFP 2026 and looks forward to engaging with professionals in the field, expanding her knowledge, and continuing to grow within the food safety community.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

RICHARD YAW OTWEY

University of Maryland Eastern Shore

PRINCESS ANNE, MARYLAND

Richard Yaw Otwey is a doctoral student in the Department of Agriculture, Food and Resource Sciences at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne under the mentorship of Dr. Janak Dhakal. Mr. Otwey completed his undergraduate education in Nutrition and Food Science and later earned his MPhil in Food Science from the University of Ghana before pursuing doctoral studies in food microbiology and food safety.

Mr. Otwey's research focuses on pet food safety and the role of pet foods as potential vehicles for foodborne pathogens in pets and humans. His doctoral research investigates the prevalence of *Salmonella* across major pet food types and evaluates antimicrobial resistance profiles of the isolates. His work also examines pathogen behavior under different antimicrobial intervention strategies, including chemical antimicrobials and bacteriophage-based approaches, with an emphasis on microbial adaptation through molecular and phenotypic analyses. In addition, he contributes to poultry-associated *Salmonella* research to better understand transmission pathways and control strategies, as poultry is a common ingredient in many pet foods. Through this work, Mr. Otwey aims to develop innovative and practical mitigation strategies that reduce contamination risks and strengthen the resilience of pet food and broader food systems while supporting evidence-based food safety interventions that protect public health.

Mr. Otwey is honored to receive the 2026 Student Travel Scholarship and looks forward to presenting his research, learning from global experts, and connecting with fellow food safety professionals at this year's meeting.

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STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

CALVIN SLAUGHTER

Cornell University

ITHACA, NEW YORK

Calvin Slaughter is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Food Science at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, under the advisement of Dr. Abigail Snyder. After earning his B.S. in Food Science from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he conducted research at the Food Research Institute, Mr. Slaughter pursued graduate research focused on improving food safety through stronger sanitation validation frameworks and environmental control measures.

Mr. Slaughter's graduate research primarily focuses on microbial food safety in low-moisture food environments, with an emphasis on risk trade-offs between wet and dry sanitation. His work has examined how wet sanitation can unintentionally increase relative humidity in otherwise dry processing facilities, creating conditions that may support pathogen survival and growth on soiled surfaces. Building on this research, he is currently developing a quantitative microbial risk assessment (QMRA)-based framework for sanitation validation to evaluate both wet and dry sanitation methodologies and support risk-negotiation between the two approaches.

In addition to his research, Mr. Slaughter is committed to making food safety research practical and accessible for industry through extension. Through his Cooperative Extension and Outreach Assistantship, he has developed free statistical process control tools to support sanitation programs and has presented food safety workshops on topics including sanitation in produce packhouses and the ethical use of artificial intelligence in food safety. After graduate school, he hopes to serve as an extension specialist at a land-grant university, helping companies collect, analyze, and use data to strengthen their food safety programs.

Mr. Slaughter is honored to receive this travel scholarship and could not be more excited to attend IAFP 2026. He values this opportunity to engage with fellow food safety professionals and looks forward to applying what he learns from them to his current research and future career in extension.

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PEANUT PROUD STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

TEJASWI BOYAPATI

South Dakota State University

BROOKINGS, SOUTH DAKOTA

Tejaswi Boyapati recently defended her Ph.D. in Biological Sciences-Agricultural & Biosystems Engineering at South Dakota State University in Brookings, under the guidance of Dr. Kasiviswanathan Muthukumarappan and Dr. Ren Yang. Ms. Boyapati earned her BTech in Food Technology and her MTech in Food Processing Technology, both with distinction, from Vignan's Foundation for Science, Technology and Research in Andhra Pradesh, India.

Ms. Boyapati's doctoral research focuses on cold plasma technologies for food safety and water disinfection, with an emphasis on the kinetics of *Salmonella* inactivation by plasma-generated reactive species. She worked with bubble-spark and dielectric-barrier discharge cold plasma reactors and has applied this work to the inactivation of foodborne pathogens in water and on fresh produce. In addition, she contributed to research published in *Food Research International* that quantified bacterial thermal resistance under high-temperature, low-humidity conditions, the precise environment encountered during drying and roasting, which would benefit the food industry with validated models to ensure pathogen reduction during processing.

Ms. Boyapati has authored or co-authored more than 11 peer-reviewed publications and book chapters. She has presented her research at various conferences and earned medals or prizes. She is a member of IAFP, IFT, ASABE, and the Phi Tau Sigma Honor Society of Food Science & Technology.

Ms. Boyapati is honored to receive the 2026 Peanut Proud Student Scholarship and looks forward to connecting with leading researchers, industry professionals, and fellow food safety advocates at IAFP 2026. She is eager to explore new collaborations, gain insights from global experts, and carry the knowledge and connections from this experience into the next chapter of her career in food science.

PEANUT PROUD STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

The Peanut Proud Student Scholarship Award provides a $2,000 academic scholarship and travel funding for a U.S. student in the field of food microbiology–specifically in the area of peanuts and peanut butter food safety–to attend the Annual Meeting. Peanut Proud is a nonprofit industry organization based in Georgia.

Peanut Proud

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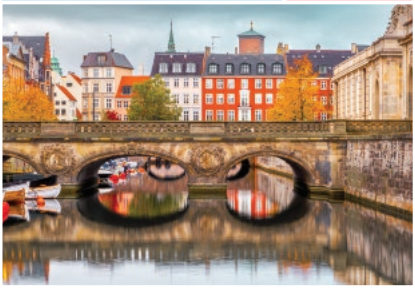
21 SEPTEMBER 2026

TECHNICAL AND POSTER ABSTRACT SUBMISSIONS
19 OCTOBER 2026



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