

## **Fruit and Vegetable Safety and Quality PDG**

**Members Present:** Jack Guzewich (Chair), David Gombas (Vice Chair), Larry Beuchat, Elizabeth Bihn, Alejandro Castillo, LeAnn Chuboff, Willette Crawford, Barry Eisenberg, Elena Enache, Marilyn Erickson, Jeffrey Farber, Payman Fatemi, Willis Fedio, Faye Feldstein, Bonnie Fernandez-Fenaroli, Sally Foong-Cunningham, Tong-Jen Fu, James Gorny, Robert Gravani, Stephen Grove, Linda Harris, Sanja Ilic, Keith Ito, Stephen Kenney, Sun Kim, Kalmia Kniel, Bob Koeritzer, Larry Kohl, Keith Lampel, Sharan Lanini, Alvin Lee, Jeffrey LeJeune, Wendy Maduff, Humberto Maldonado, Mayra Marquez Gonzalez, Sherri McGarry, Carlos Menes, Melissa Mundo, Brendan Niemira, Ynes Ortega, Mickey Parish, Courtney Parker, Jitu Patel, Monica Ponder, Jena Roberts, Donna Rosenbaum, William Schwartz, Thomas Schwarz, Manan Sharma, Amarat Simonne, Caroline Smith DeWaal, Michelle Smith, Anna Starobin, Stacy Stoltenberg, Trevor Suslow, Leslie Thompson, George Tice, Mary Lou Tortorello, Jason Wan, Randy Worobo, Zhinong Yan, Hyun-Gyun Yuk and Guodong Zhang.

**Board/Staff Member Present:** Donald Schaffner.

**New Members:** Sid Thakur, Bob Sanderson, Susanne Keller, Mario Estrada, Nurliza Buyong, Martin Martinez, John Meschke, Wilfredo Ocasio, Tanya D'Souza, Gary Gensler, Carrie Ferstl, Annemarie Buchholz, Diane Ducharme, Barakat Mahmoud, Li Ma, Ram Rao, Brandi Baros and Cathy Bureau.

**Visitors/Guests:** Anjana Agarwal, Maria Fernanda Castro, Bob Strong, Lori Ledenbach, Suresh Decosta, Rajko Platisa, Gayeon Won, Mieke Uyttendaele, Arlette Shazer, Jean Weese, Carl Custer, George Wilson and Joe Graham.

**Meeting Called to Order:** 1:03 p.m., Sunday, July 31, 2011.

**Recording Secretary of Minutes:** Sherri McGarry.

**Old Business:** Motion to accept Minutes from 2010 PDG Meeting was adopted.

### **New Business:**

*Outbreak Update:* Sherri McGarry, from FDA, provided an update of produce-related outbreaks from 7/2010 to present. They included *Salmonella* outbreaks associated with cantaloupe, tomatoes, sprouts, bagged romaine lettuce, blueberries, and tree nuts and several suspected to be produce that investigators were unable to narrow to a single food item; two *E. coli* O157 outbreaks associated with tree nuts and *Listeria monocytogenes* linked to celery. Notably were continuing outbreaks involving sprouts and tree nuts (one U.S. and one Canada both with U.S. source of nuts). Significant challenges remain with tracebacks, especially with tree nuts. Findings from sprout outbreak investigations indicate failure by many firms to follow the voluntary sprout guidance. Sherri covered the recent *S. Agona* outbreak associated with papaya imported from Mexico. FDA, CDC, and states used multifaceted approaches to narrow food causing illness.

*Produce Regulatory Process:* Michelle Smith provided the FDA regulatory update. She reported that in the last year FDA was very much in a deliberative process and requested comments in a public docket for a produce safety regulation. At this point FDA is further along with the recent adoption of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) which gave FDA specific directions to work with USDA, states, and other stakeholders to establish standards for raw produce to minimize risk of negative health consequences. FSMA provides for specifics such as soil amendments, water, etc., and makes sure there's sufficient flexibility for the regulated entities. FDA is currently involved in rule making it is somewhat limited on what can be shared but FDA can share some thoughts with the caveat that it's not final until it's final. The rule making continues to be an internal iterative process.

When the proposed rule comes out, Michelle requested that the group look at it carefully and provide comments so FDA can make the regulation as good as we can. FDA intends to have implementation dates tied to the size of the firm so that firms with fewer resources have more time. For smaller firms, there may be fewer requirements for record keeping. Current target for issuance of the Proposed Rule is early 2012. Dr. Smith indicated that it's very helpful if comments are consolidated by groups when submitted. There's still a great deal of work to be done with researchers.

*Center for Produce Safety:* Bonnie Fernandez-Fenaroli provided the update. CPS will announce awards in the next 60 days. If researchers are interested in applying for grants next year, a call for proposals is likely to be issued in February 2012 with similar grant size and a cap of \$200 k a year with a short targeted research focus. Final research reports are posted on the CPS web site. There have been 54 projects and \$9 million in awards in the last three years. If you have ideas, call or email Bonnie or reach out to the technical committee. CPS expects to expand their scope in the future. The Annual Symposium will be at UC Davis in June 2012.

*USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture:* Ram Rao gave the update and an overview of USDA NIFA. The Mission is to advance knowledge of agriculture. For food safety programs as it relates to fruits and vegetables, there's competitive and non-competitive programs with some capacity building. Under competitive programs there's agriculture and food, specialty crops, SERS, and the National Integrated Food Safety Initiative. Minor programs include, but not limited to, nanotechnology and traceback. Currently there's a food safety focus though in the future the focus may be climate change. The budget for food safety in past three years, though difficult to extract for just fruit and vegetables, is about \$60 million, rough estimate. The Secretary of Agriculture will be here on Wednesday and is announcing all the awarded projects. The range of grants is \$50 k to \$25 mil. The types of grants include conference, fellowship, research, education, and integrated programs.

*Produce Safety Alliance:* Betsy Bihn, Ph.D. from Cornell University gave the update and overview of the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA). The focus is on small farms that grow a diverse number of products. The PSA started in 2010 and has a Web site. The PSA has 10 working committees to identify areas of challenge. Participation by farmers is very helpful and informative. The PSA is a three year project. Betsy requested that if anyone knows any small farmers that would like to participate please let her know. About 12% on committee are farmers and she wants to increase that percentage.

### **PDG Activities:**

Mary Lou Tortorello, FDA, brought to the PDG a discussion item. She proposed the development of recommendations for conducting sanitizer efficacy experiments. It came to Lou's attention that there are differing approaches on how experiments are conducted making it challenging to compare findings. The idea is to come up with specifics like what strains to use, how to culture them, whether to stress them, etc. Lou suggested writing specifics for a commodity (i.e., leafy greens) and publishing it in *Food Protection Trends*. General discussion was that guidelines not be too prescriptive, that they allow scientific flexibility, and there may be greater statistic power with variation. After the meeting, Lou met with a group of researchers and they agreed to develop recommendations for sanitizer research methods.

*PDG survey and activities for 2012:* David Gombas, from United Fresh Produce, provided an update on 2010–2011 activities. He reported on the results of the four question survey and noted there was a low response. For those responding over 50% were interested in food safety risks and regulatory procedures. There was discussion on follow-up and topics with research still in forefront for the first PDG webinar. Suggestions for topics included regulatory update on produce safety rule, periodic updates on hot topics such as the sprout outbreak in Europe. Members were interested in more than just a PowerPoint presentation. They wanted

interpretation and discussion as well. There was a request for more than 50 phone lines for webinars.

**Recommendations to the Executive Board:**

1. Consider establishing a Discussion Board on the IAFP web site for more information exchange, collaboration, and networking among members. A model to consider is [www.chronicle.com/forum](http://www.chronicle.com/forum).
2. Provide more phone lines for Webinars.

**Next Meeting Date:** July 22, 2012 in Providence, RI.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 3:00 p.m.

**Chairperson:** Jack Guzewich