

Minnesota Food Safety and Defense Task Force**July 2025– June 2026****Terms of Reference****Contents**

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1. Introduction

The Minnesota Food Safety and Defense Task Force has been established in statute to broaden views on foodborne outbreaks, food defense, and other food related hazards to improve the effectiveness of food safety control efforts in Minnesota. Additionally, the task force is established to advise the commissioner and the legislature on food safety and related issues, and to share information with stakeholders within and outside the Task Force.

2. Statutory Overview (MN Statute 28A.21)

2.1. The Minnesota Food Safety and Defense Task Force consists of:

- 2.1.1. the commissioner of agriculture or the commissioner's designee;
- 2.1.2. the commissioner of health or the commissioner's designee;
- 2.1.3. a representative of the United States Food and Drug Administration;
- 2.1.4. a representative of the United States Department of Agriculture;
- 2.1.5. a representative of the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute;
- 2.1.6. one member of the Minnesota Grocers Association;
- 2.1.7. one member from the University of Minnesota knowledgeable in food and food safety issues; and
- 2.1.8. ten members appointed by the governor who are interested in food and food safety, of whom:
 - 2.1.8.1. two persons are health or food professionals;
 - 2.1.8.2. one person represents a statewide general farm organization;

- 2.1.8.3. one person represents a local food inspection agency;
- 2.1.8.4. one person represents a food-oriented consumer group;
- 2.1.8.5. one person is knowledgeable in cybersecurity;
- 2.1.8.6. one person represents a Minnesota-based manufacturer of microbial detection equipment and remediation products; and
- 2.1.8.7. three additional at-large members representing interest in food and food safety.

3. Vision

A safe and secure food supply for Minnesota.

4. Mission

Continuously improve the safety and defense of the food supply by providing a forum for public and private professionals to present emerging research, discuss current issues, sponsor critical training, and advise on food safety and defense systems to enable a risk-based approach to protect public health.

5. Duties

5.1. As stated in MN Statute 28A.21 Subd.(5), the task force shall:

- 5.1.1. Identify possible nominees to the Task Force who can make significant contributions to the work of the organization.
- 5.1.2. Coordinate educational efforts regarding food safety and defense and serve as a source of information and referral for the public, news media, and others concerned with food safety and defense.
- 5.1.3. Provide advice and coordination to state agencies as requested by the agencies.
- 5.1.4. Make recommendations to Congress, the legislative committees with jurisdiction over agriculture finance and policy, the legislature, and others about appropriate action to improve food safety and defense in the state; and
- 5.1.5. Share strategies related to food safety surveillance and investigation of foodborne illnesses and deliberate attacks on the food supply.

6. Governance

- 6.1. The Task Force meets 4-6 times per year, as determined by the chair (MN Statute 28A.21 Subd. (3)(b)).
 - 6.1.1. All Task Force Meetings are open to the public.
 - 6.1.2. Those attending meetings can join sub-committees, present at meetings, and share information.
- 6.2. Appointed members will elect a Task Force chair every four years (MN Statute 28A.21 Subd. (3)(c)).
 - 6.2.1. The chair will be a member of the food industry or academia.
- 6.3. Appointed members will elect a vice-chair to serve in absence of the chair. The vice-chair will represent the Task Force for a period of four years at which time, if the appointed members choose, the vice-chair can become chair.
 - 6.3.1. The chair will be a member of the food industry or academia.

- 6.4. General attendees are not allowed to vote on Chair or Vice-Chair positions.
- 6.5. Appointed task force members serve four-year terms without compensation; (MN Statute 28A.21 Subd. (2) (b)).
- 6.6. Appointed members are expected to:
 - 6.6.1. Attend all Task Force and committee meetings and functions;
 - 6.6.2. Promote the Task Force with senior management in their respective organizations;
 - 6.6.3. Keep up to date on developments in the organization's field;
 - 6.6.4. Assist the Task Force in carrying out its fiduciary responsibilities, such as reviewing the organization's annual budget;
 - 6.6.5. Provide presentations by new representatives of the Task Force on their respective roles and responsibilities as they relate to food safety and surveillance;
 - 6.6.6. Review agenda and supporting materials prior to Task Force and committee meetings; and
 - 6.6.7. Serve on subcommittees and offer to take on special assignments.

7. Subcommittees

- 7.1. Subcommittees will be generated as needed based on the mission statement for the task force.
All work activities will be directed by the Food Safety and Defense Task Force.
- 7.2. The following is a list of example subcommittees:
 - 7.2.1. Training and Education
 - 7.2.2. Emerging Issues
 - 7.2.3. Outreach/Marketing/Communication
 - 7.2.4. Legislative Advocacy Committee
 - 7.2.5. Food Innovation Team
- 7.3. The Subcommittee will elect a chair or co-chairs to guide the subcommittee's work.
 - 7.3.1. The chair or co-chairs will represent the sub-committee for a period of two years.
- 7.4. The chair(s) will work with MDA staff to coordinate, schedule, and recruit members.
- 7.5. Subcommittee chairs or their designee will report on actions, activities and actionable items at each Task Force meeting and provide a written recap to be shared in the meeting notes.
 - 7.5.1. Subcommittee updates maybe be circulated by e-mail in the minutes as opposed to giving updates during the bimonthly meeting.
- 7.6. MDA staff will provide coordination for the subcommittees.

8. Administration

- 8.1. The commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture shall provide support staff, office space, and administrative services for the task force. (MN Statute 28A.21 Subd.(4))
- 8.2. The commissioner or the commissioner's designee shall convene the first meeting of the task force. (MS Statute 28A.21 Subd.(3)(a))
- 8.3. The Task Force will complete its work after one calendar year and may be re-constituted, with re- negotiated Terms of Reference.
- 8.4. Decisions will be reached based upon a consensus of the members.
- 8.5. Agendas, minutes, and relevant documents for each meeting will be distributed electronically prior to the meeting date.

- 8.6. Minutes of the meeting will be taken outlining Task Force discussion, decisions, and recommendations.
 - 8.6.1. Draft minutes will be distributed 14 days after the meeting for review, comments, and follow-up on action items.
- 8.7. The Governor's Office will reserve the right to sunset this Task Force at a time of their choosing.
- 8.8. These Terms of Reference will be reviewed and amended as needed by the Task Force's appointed members, but not less than once annually.

Appendix I

Minnesota Food Safety and Defense Task Force Management Plan FY 2025 – 2026.

Task Force 2025 – 2026 tentative meeting schedule

- a. July 21, 2025
- b. October 23, 2025
- c. January 20, 2026
- d. April 21, 2026

Active Subcommittees

- a. Food Innovation Team

Appendix II. Food Innovation Team

Background

The Food Innovation Team (FIT) is a subcommittee of the Minnesota Food Safety and Defense Task Force (FSDTF). The FSDTF created FIT to help answer questions and assist Food Business Owners (FBOs) in navigating Minnesota's food licensing and regulatory environment. Most food businesses in Minnesota receive a license to do business from MDA, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), or their delegated agencies with relative ease. However, some food business owners (FBOs) may encounter delays in licensing, or determination of exemption or exclusion from licensing due to a number of factors that may not be easily solved without assistance. The FSDTF is statutorily responsible (MN Statute 28A.21) for a number of duties related to assisting FBOs including providing advice and coordination to state agencies and serving as a source of information and referral for the public concerned with food safety. The FSDTF created FIT to help answer questions and assist FBOs in navigating Minnesota's food licensing and regulatory environment. A further goal of FIT is development of case documents for educational purposes. Understanding interpretations of statute and Rule, and reasoning used in resolving a case, helps those who advise FBOs to be more effective and accurate in their advice. The guiding procedural document for the Food Innovation Team will be MNTF.SOP.10.01, "Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force – Food Innovation Team." This standard operating procedure (SOP) provides the following and can be found on the FSDTF website.

FIT Subcommittee Activities and Task Force Governance

- 1. Submission of a Pre-Screening Intake Form to FIT Subcommittee**
 - 1.1. When an FBO has been working with a licensing agency and has encountered a barrier to licensing, or to operating with an exemption or exclusion from licensing, the FBO may submit a request to the FFSD Director, FIT subcommittee member, or their designee to have FIT to review the case in an attempt to clarify regulatory requirements and assist in identifying potential resolutions.
 - 1.2. A pre-screening intake form is completed and circulated to FIT subcommittee members prior to a FIT subcommittee meeting.
- 2. FIT Subcommittee Review of Case or After Action Review (AAR) and Submission of Report**
 - 2.1. The FIT subcommittee reviews the information, discusses the case, and makes recommendations in the form of a Case Report or AAR Report.
 - 2.2. The Case Report or AAR Report, as an official outcome of the subcommittee, is submitted to the FSDTF.
- 3. Task Force Review and Discussion of Case or AAR Report**
 - 3.1. During the next task force meeting, a FIT Subcommittee Chair or designee provides a summary of the case and report. A FSDTF Chair opens the floor to discussion of the report.
 - 3.2. FSDTF members could propose any further actions to be taken by the task force, including but not limited to creating an ad hoc subcommittee to explore further actions, sponsoring education and training opportunities, or making recommendations for changes to Minnesota laws.
- 4. Dissemination of the Report**
 - 4.1. Following the FSDTF review, the report is then shared with the FBO.
 - 4.2. After the FSDTF review, data from the report is included in a public database on the FSDTF website for future reference.

Exclusion of liability statement

The report generated is a non-binding review by the FIT Subcommittee; it is the role of the jurisdictional regulatory body to determine next steps for the FBO. Neither the FIT Subcommittee nor the FSDTF are the final decision maker regarding the future of a case. FSDTF and its subcommittees are advisory bodies only. The job of the FIT Subcommittee is to aid FBOs with complex questions as they relate to licensing, and offer suggestions based on member's experience and expertise. The FSDTF and its subcommittees do not have any enforcement or regulatory authority and are not liable for any issues or consequences arising out of the use of the FSDTF or any subcommittees thereof.