

MINNESOTA FOOD SAFETY AND DEFENSE TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2025

Today's meeting was held in Room B144, Orville L. Freeman Building, 625 Robert Street North St. Paul and via Microsoft Teams Video Conferencing platform.

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 PM.

Members present included: Amy Johnston, Jamie Kirkpatrick, Angie Wheeler, Julia Selleys, Steven Foster, Ruth Meirick, Erin Mertz, Carrie Rigdon, Derick Davis, Stanley Osuagwu, Tom Webber, Patrice Bailey, and Luke Meier.

Visitors present included: Keri Plude, Julie Wagendorf, Meghan Melheim, Steve Barthel, Alida (Sorenson) Siebert, Evan Powell, Jennifer Stepes, Kip Fondrick, Chris Gindorff, Conner McLaughlin, Jodie Burke, Sadie Gannett, Ellen Ciarimboli, Dan Opsahl, David Smith, Jill Herberg, Jacob Schmidt, Kim Carlton, Vonda Canaan, Melanie Harris, Jacque Janning, Gretchen Lindahl, Purnendu Vasavada, Andrew Siira, Jennifer van de Ligt, Courtney Bidney, Katherine Simon, Heidi Varberg, Gabriel Wilson, Barb Schroeder, and Megan Jansa

1. Dates and links

- [Apply to become a member of the Food Safety and Defense Task Force - Food Oriented Consumer Group Representative](#)
- [University of Minnesota Tier 2 Cottage Food Training](#)
- [Food Licensing Modernization and Potential Improvements](#)

2. The minutes from the November 2024 meeting were accepted with no comments.

3. Member and Visitor Updates

Amy Johnston (University of Minnesota (U of M) Extension): A new U of M Tier 2 cottage food course has been released with improved sanitation elements. U of M Extension is now offering "office hours" for cottage food producers (the first lunch session was well attended). New Extension Educator staff has been hired and will take over cottage food duties.

Tom Webber (Bizzy Cold Brew): Tom has transitioned from Buddy's Kitchen to a position with Bizzy Cold Brew.

Angie Wheeler (Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)): Angie shared that Norovirus outbreaks reported to the MDH are the highest they've seen in years.

Heidi Varberg (Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)): The Dairy and Meat Inspection Division (DMID). She shared that Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) surveillance sampling of raw milk will begin in February.

Kim Carlton (MDA): Kim is the Program Manager for the Retail Food Inspection Program within the Food and Feed Safety Division at the MDA. She shared that two new inspector positions will be posted this week.

Purnendu Vasavada (Professor Emeritus – University of Wisconsin - River Falls): Preventive Controls Qualified Individual(PCQI) course update: a new course instructor update is available, folks can talk with Katherine Simon about the course, too.

Jaime Kirkpatrick (Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)): Jaime shared that there is more focus on Listeria control with weekly surveys of facilities and environmental sampling nationwide. Salmonella is now officially an adulterant in breaded/raw products.

Melanie Harris (Caseys): Here from Des Moines for a meeting with the MDA Food and Feed Safety Division and decided to stay for the FSDTF meeting!

4. **Chair and Vice-Chair Discussion**

Chair nominee – Steven Foster (elected)

Vice-Chair nominees – Carrie Rigdon (elected), Erin Mertz, Stan Osuawgu

Steven Foster was elected as Chair with 11 votes, Derick Davis moved to elect, Amy Johnston seconded the motion. Carrie Rigdon was elected with 11 votes, Erin Mertz moved to elect, Steven Foster seconded the motion.

5. **MDA Food Licensing Modernization**

Katherine Simon, Division Director of the Food and Feed Safety Division at the MDA shared updates regarding a potential food licensing model. Her presentation slides are attached. Contact Katherine Simon or Jeff Luedeman with any follow-up questions.

6. **FSDTF Needs Assessment Survey Conversation**

Survey Results Review

Members and participants reviewed the FSDTF Needs Assessment Survey Report results in preparation for a focused discussion.

Focused Discussion

Thoughts and comments regarding the survey results included:

1. What Caught Your Attention About the Survey Results?
 - a. What are you most excited about:
 - i. Scheduling tours.
 - ii. Having the meeting in other locations (U of M was mentioned).
 - iii. Splitting the meeting format. Have a mix of virtual and in-person, (e.g., two in-person and two virtual meetings per year). Meetings should be a level playing field (pick all one or the other – virtual or in-person).
 - iv. The task force was glad to have thoughtful responses to work with in developing a plan moving forward.
 - b. What do you have questions about:
 - i. Food defense wasn't mentioned in the survey (part of the FSDTF mission). Ruth with Farm Bureau seconded this need and offered to share resources and documents on food defense and make connections with the FBI and other resources from the recent event she attended in Nebraska.
 - ii. The FIT (Food Innovation Team) group wasn't mentioned in the survey results. Amy mentioned the Local Foods Advisory Committee often covers topics then brought up in FIT ("same people, same conversations"). The group needs to determine what will happen with FIT moving forward. Kathy Zeman was not present on the call.
2. What is most exciting?
 - a. Interest in workgroups to tackle projects other than training. Subjects aren't currently identified but focus on other than training as it's been done in the past is good and different.
 - b. Resource development and sharing of existing resources – cottage food and licensing were mentioned.
3. What kind of decisions do we need to make as a group?
 - a. What does the task force want to do with FIT?
 - b. Thoughts on frequency of FSDTF Meetings (6x/year is current schedule). General thoughts are that 4x/year is okay if it provides a higher quality meeting. Should be open to adjusting frequency to more if the need is presented. Subgroups might alleviate the need for more frequent meetings; subgroups/workgroups could also push out updates during formal FSDTF meetings.

- c. Take a fresh look at the taskforce mission. With newer members coming on, does the group have a foundation on why it exists? Worth covering in a future meeting.
- d. Training has historically been more manufactured food-related but is that meeting the need? Are there other food production trends that might need more attention (e.g., retail, product of the farm, cottage food, home based food production)?
- e. Level of interest for topic-related workgroups?
 - i. Specific workgroup for resource development/publication
 - ii. Updating our website to include sections with resources based on topic (collecting existing resources for Minnesota in one place)
 - iii. Workgroups could drive the frequency of meetings (updates, votes on priorities, etc.)
 - iv. Carrie provided an example workgroup/idea:
 - 1. Workgroup on norovirus outbreaks (report out during meetings of epi and EH, outbreak management, specialized guest speakers, etc.).
 - 2. Goal to identify resources to help manage responses or prepare for the next one – push out resources to the public through lessons learned this year (for next year)
 - 3. Is there an unmet need the taskforce could help with?
 - v. Amy suggested it may be helpful to do a focused needs assessment of what the industry or consumers may need.
 - 1. Areas we represent
 - 2. Assets or inventory of existing resources
 - 3. Identifying gaps
 - 4. “Who are the people we are serving and what is the best pathway to get them the resources they need”

4. What are we really committed to?

- a. Continuing trainings
- b. Holding a workshop, not just meetings and trainings
- c. Developing resources for publication
- d. More clearly defining/understanding the needs and gaps for food defense education for industry

7. Potential Agenda Items for March

The meeting on March 18th may not work for some people as it is “Ag Day” at the Capitol. Between spring break and other events, we will need to do a survey of members to determine what day in March will work best.

Potential Topics:

- A deeper dive in new allergen guidance
- FDA presentation on the changes to their complaint process
- “Trends from inspections” – frequently-observed violations, current trends, recalls. This type of presentation could be helpful to determine/direct workgroups on specific issues or topics of interest. MDA and local agencies may be able to pull this data, MDH said they probably won’t be able to pull data for this by March. Jaime (FSIS) said they may be able to pull some Minnesota data from their inspection system to share.
- Task force discussion: would be helpful to assign “homework questions” in advance of the meeting to get the best reach
- Who are we serving?
- What are the ongoing or emerging/trending issues we are seeing? This should drive the topics being presented and worked on by the group.
- Where are our outreach gaps?
- From there, what type of workgroups would be helpful?