

MINNESOTA FOOD SAFETY AND DEFENSE TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes

April 15, 2025

Today's meeting was held in Room A462, Orville L. Freeman Building, 625 Robert Street North St. Paul and via Microsoft Teams Video Conferencing platform.

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM.

Members present included: Amy Johnston, Jamie Kirkpatrick, Angie Wheeler, Julia Selleys, Steven Foster, Erin Mertz, Derick Davis, Stanley Osuagwu, Patrice Bailey, Lorrene Occhino, and Luke Meier.

Visitors present included: Matthew Gerths, Julie Wagendorf, David Boberg, Meghan Melheim, Heidi Varberg, Matthew Walburger, Michelle Medina, Jane Jewett, Gretchen Lindahl, Alida (Sorenson) Siebert, Jennifer Stepes, Kip Fondrick, Chris Gindorff, Sadie Gannett, Ben Miller, Dan Opsahl, Robert Meyers, David Smith, Jill Herberg, Jacob Schmidt, Kim Carlton, Vonda Canaan, Courtney Bidney, Katherine Simon, Brian Yager, Barb Schroeder, Megan Jansa, and Natasha Hedin

1. Dates and links

- [Register for "Ask an AURI Expert" open office hours](#)
- [Retail Food Program Risk Factor Study](#)
- [Food Related Emergency Exercise Bundle \(FREE-B\)](#)

2. The minutes from the January 2025 meeting were accepted with no comments.

3. Member and Visitor Updates

Lolly Occhino (Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI)): Lolly shared information about the monthly "Ask an AURI Expert" office hours. The registration link is provided above. She also shared that she is retired in June.

Kim Carlton (Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)): Kim shared that the Retail Food Program is in the process of evaluating local delegated agencies. She also recently attended the Biannual Conference for Food Protection.

Katherine Simon (MDA): Katherine shared that some of the Food and Feed Safety Division cooperative agreements are slotted for reductions next year. These agreements include the Rapid Response Team, the Manufactured Food Program, and the Food Safety and Defense Task Force. She also provided updates regarding a couple of bills moving

through the legislative process. Feel free to reach out to her or Jeff Luedeman with any questions.

Alida Sorenson (MDA): Alida shared that Minnesota is currently Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) free!

Ben Miller (The Acheson Group (TAG)): Ben shared that the FDA extended the timeframe for the traceability rule and opened it back up for public comment. TAG is doing a lot of work regarding best practices around traceability lot codes and running simulations/pilots to test assumptions. If you have interest or questions, feel free to reach out to Ben.

4. **Retail Standards and Risk Factor Study**

David Boberg, Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards Coordinator, Food and Feed Safety Division, MDA provided a presentation on the Retail Risk Factor Study. His presentation slides are attached.

5. **Food Safety Observations and Trends**

David Smith, Manufactured Food Program Manager, Food and Feed Safety Division, MDA provided a presentation on observations and trends in the field. His presentation slides are attached.

6. **Updates on Recent Recalls**

Jaimie Kirkpatrick, DVM, Frontline Supervisor, Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), U.S. Department of Agriculture, shared information about recent recalls. Her presentation slides are attached.

7. **FSDTF Needs Assessment Follow-up Survey Discussion**

Background

A Needs Assessment Survey in November 2024 to collect information on how to improve and "refresh" the work the task force does. The survey results were compiled in a Needs Assessment Survey Results Report and discussed at the January 2025 meeting. During the January 2025 meeting, it became apparent that additional questions still needed to be answered before the group could move forward.

Follow-up Survey

An additional five-question survey was drafted to help clarify the interests of task force members and inform decisions moving forward. There were 13 respondents out of 16 task force members. The results can be found in the attached slides.

Next Steps

After reviewing the results, the following ideas were gathered from participants:

- Conduct a training needs assessment (beyond the task force participants)

- Collaborate with the MDA to target licensees. Consider specific audiences, including cottage foods registrants.
- The task force could use the information to determine current priorities for this coming year.
- Volunteers: Amy, Luke, and Erin
- Conduct a FREE-B exercise related to food trucks. This could be nested into a larger training.
- Consider pausing FIT. More information is needed before members can take a vote.

8. Potential Agenda Items for July

Potential Topics:

- FIT presentation
- Terms of Reference
- Legislative Updates

Minnesota Food Safety and Defense Task Force

April 15, 2025

Agenda

1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	Welcome and Around the Room	FSDTF Members and Participants
1:30 p.m. – 1:50 p.m.	Retail Standards and Risk Factor Study	David Boberg, VRFPRS Coordinator, MDA
1:50 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Manufactured Food Program - Field Observations and Trends	David Smith, Manufactured Food Program Manager, MDA
2:00 p.m. – 2:05 p.m.	Break	
2:05 p.m. – 2:25 p.m.	Food Safety and Inspection Service	Jaime Kirkpatrick, DVM, USDA FSIS
2:25 p.m. – 2:50 p.m.	Solicit Agenda Items for the Next Meeting	FSDTF membership and participants
2:50 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Solicit Agenda Items for the Next Meeting	FSDTF membership and participants

Welcome and Around the Room

- Call for changes to the January Meeting Minutes
- Around the Room
 - Share any updates regarding your organization, conferences, or trainings you attended, job opportunities, etc.
 - Type your name into the meeting chat box
 - Call on the individual after you



Retail Standards and Risk Factor Study

David Boberg | Retail Program Standards Coordinator

Shared understanding:

- Retail Program Standards - background and initiatives
- What are inspectors seeing in the field?
 - Risk Factor Study
 - Interventions and collaborations



Why do we do inspections?



Why do we do inspections?

To:

- Assess food safety plans,
- Evaluate facilities,
- Assess employee knowledge and performance,

With the goal of verifying food establishments have the capacity to protect food and consumer health, as required by law



Why Do We Inspect? - Regulatory Foundation

- MN Statute 28A – MN Consolidated Food Licensing Law
 - Firms excluded/exempted under 28A.15, 28A.151, 28A.152, or 28A.16
- MN Statute 31 – MN Food Law
- MN Statute 34A – Food Law; Inspection and Enforcement
 - Exclusions under 34A.012
- MN Rules, Chapter 4626, Food Code



FDA Guidance

FDA Model Food Code

- Model = set of recommendations and guidelines
- New editions every 4 years, with supplements every 2 years
- Adopted by jurisdictions = enforceable
- Science based regulation of industry
- Promotes uniformity and reduction of foodborne illness risk factors

Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (VNRFRPS)

- Nine Standards = Establishes a foundation for regulatory program
- Strives for consistency & quality
- Continuous improvement

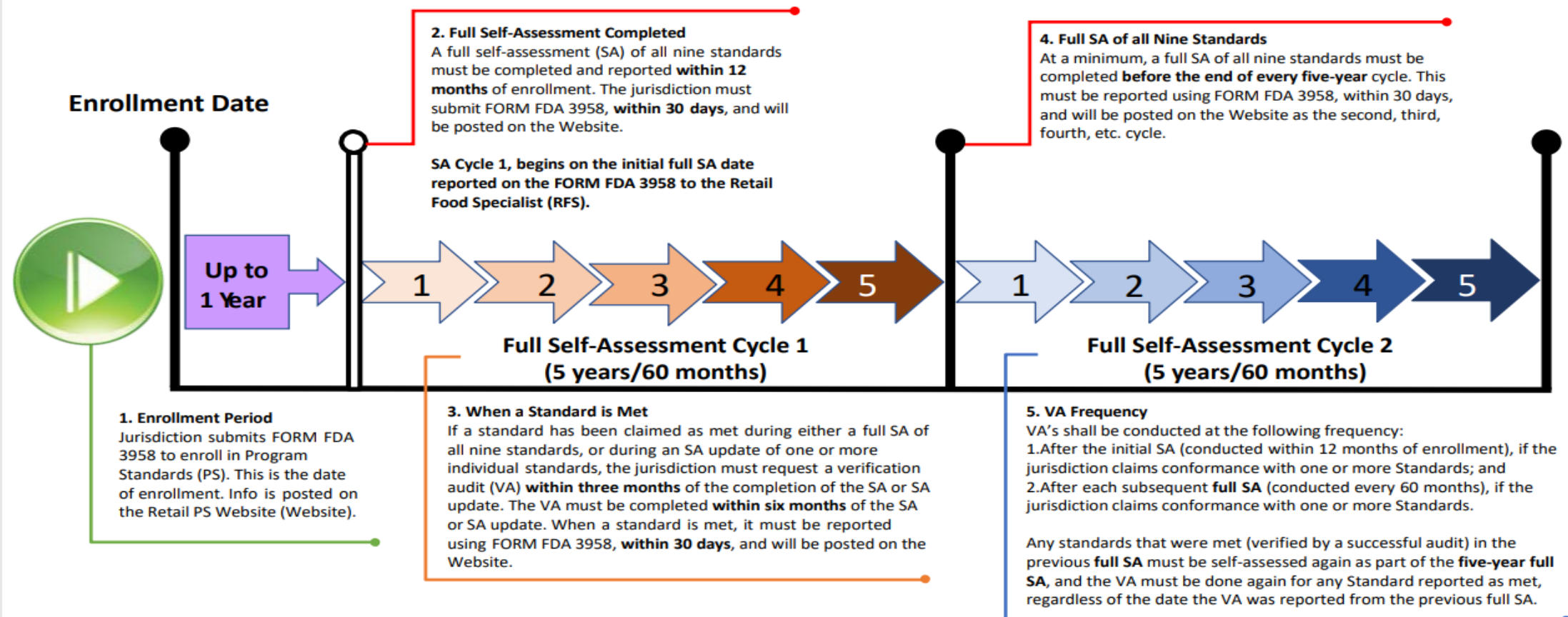
Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards

Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards | FDA

1. Regulatory Foundation
2. Trained Regulatory Staff
3. HACCP-Based Inspections
4. Uniform Inspection Program
5. FBI and Food Defense
6. Compliance and Enforcement
7. Industry & Community Relations
8. Program Support and Resources
9. Self-Assessment/**Risk Factor Study**

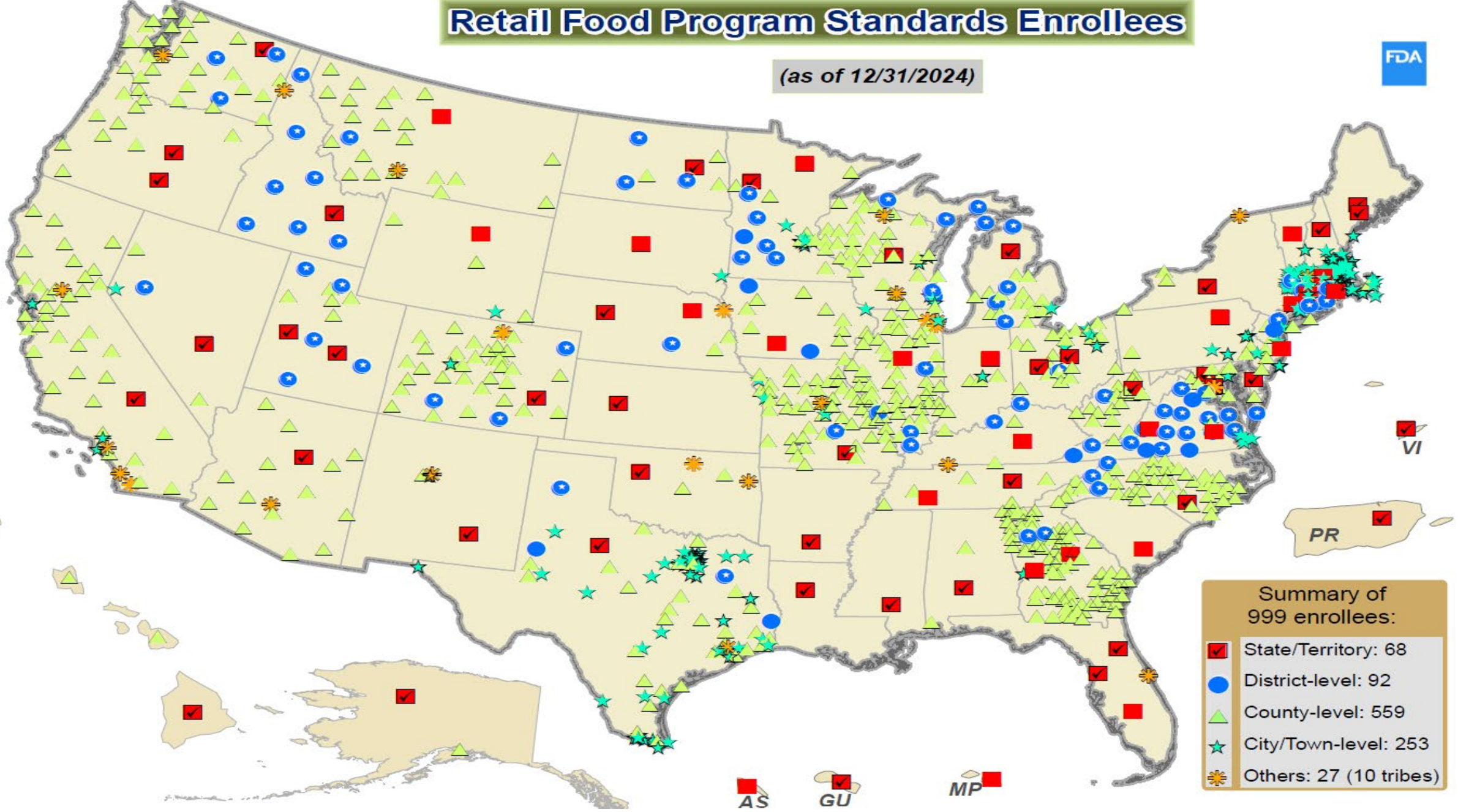
Retail Program Standards Timeline

This standard timeline represents information from the Administrative Procedures Manual only. Questions should be referred to your Retail Food Specialist (RFS). This document was last updated in June 2022.



Retail Food Program Standards Enrollees

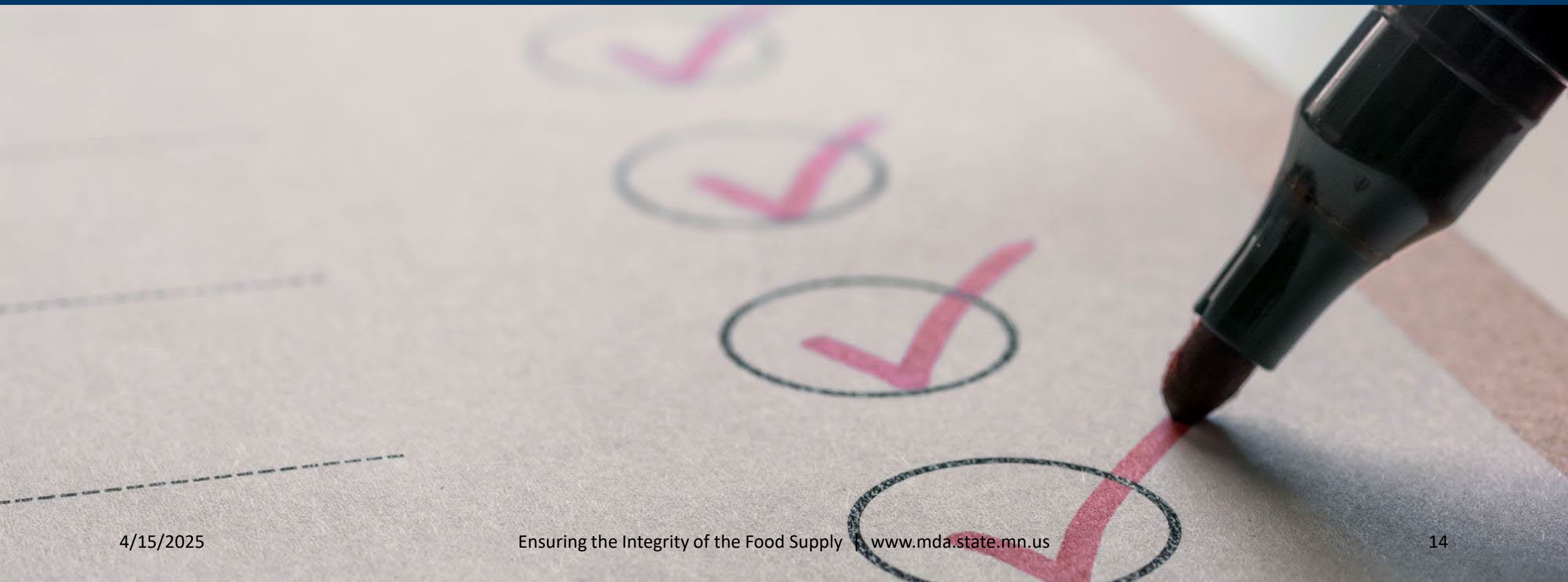
(as of 12/31/2024)



Summary of 999 enrollees:

- State/Territory: 68
- District-level: 92
- County-level: 559
- City/Town-level: 253
- Others: 27 (10 tribes)

What are inspectors seeing in the field?



Retail Program Standard 9 Overview

RFRPS Standard 9 – Program Assessment

1. Conduct a Risk Factor Study (RFS) on the occurrence of the five foodborne illness risk factors and repeat at least every 60 months to measure trends in the occurrence of risk factors.
2. Analyze collected data and write a report on the outcomes and conclusions of the RFS.
3. Design and implement targeted interventions to address the occurrence of risk factor(s). Evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention/strategy by subsequent RFSs or similar tools.

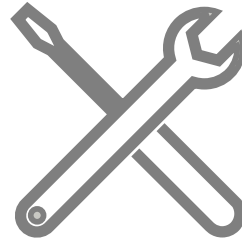
Risk Factor Study

- A structured process used to measure the effectiveness of a jurisdiction's retail food program
- Data collected and analyzed to measure trends in the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors
- Identify food safety practices in need of priority attention, and develop tools to address them

RFS Objectives



Identify Risk Factors (Rf) in need of priority attention



Develop intervention strategies for reduction in occurrence of Rf.



Evaluate trends over time

Why?

- **Continuous improvement!**
- Evaluate Trends over time
- Risk based approach – Focus resources on greatest problems
- Reduce illness

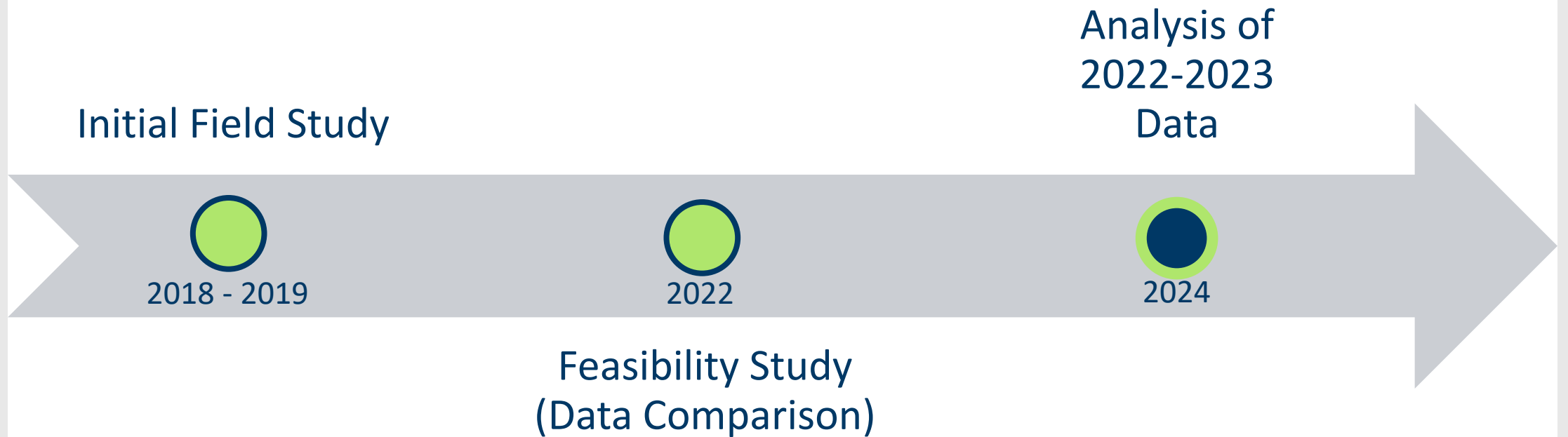
Foodborne Illness Risk Factors

- Poor personal hygiene
 - Handwashing, barehand contact
- Improper holding time and temperatures
 - Hot holding, cold holding, cooling, date marking
- Inadequate cooking temperatures
 - Cooking from raw, reheating
- Contaminated equipment/protection from contamination
 - Food contact surfaces, cleaning & sanitizing, cross-contamination
- Unsafe sources
 - Approved sources, not adulterated

MDA Risk Factor Studies

- Observational (field) Study
 - Retail staff conducted in 2018-2019
 - Further improvements needed: Contaminated equipment, Datemarking, Cooling, Improper holding (hot/cold)
- Inspection Data (retrospective) Study
 - Data from 2018-2019 was analyzed with comparable results (baseline)
 - Then analyzed data from July 1, 2022 to December 31st, 2023

MDA Risk Factor Studies



Inspections vs. Data Collections

Inspection Data

Pros

- Less field resources utilized
- Can use all establishment data
- Expand scope
- Data for other areas of interest

Cons

- Can be confusing
- Retrospective
- QA challenges-> accuracy
- Different forms/crosswalk
- Missed observations
- Additional admin work

Data Collection

Pros

- Standardized, focused on data items
-> Consistency
- Enter data as you go
- Non-regulatory visit; engagement
- Collect data on special areas of interest

Cons

- Additional resources
- Specific training
- Sampling
- QA for different protocol and data entry

2018-2019 RFS Data Results

Risk Factor	% IN – Field Study	% IN – Retrospective/Data Study
Personal Hygiene	90	95
Approved Source	97	97
Contaminated Equipment	84	85
Improper Cooking	96	98
Improper Holding	81	87

- Interventions focus

- contaminated equipment (FCS – cleaned/sanitized)
- datemarking
- cooling
- improper holding (hot/cold holding)



Action Plan

Targeted Interventions - Baseline



Corrective Action Plans/Risk Control Plans (CAPs/RCPs)



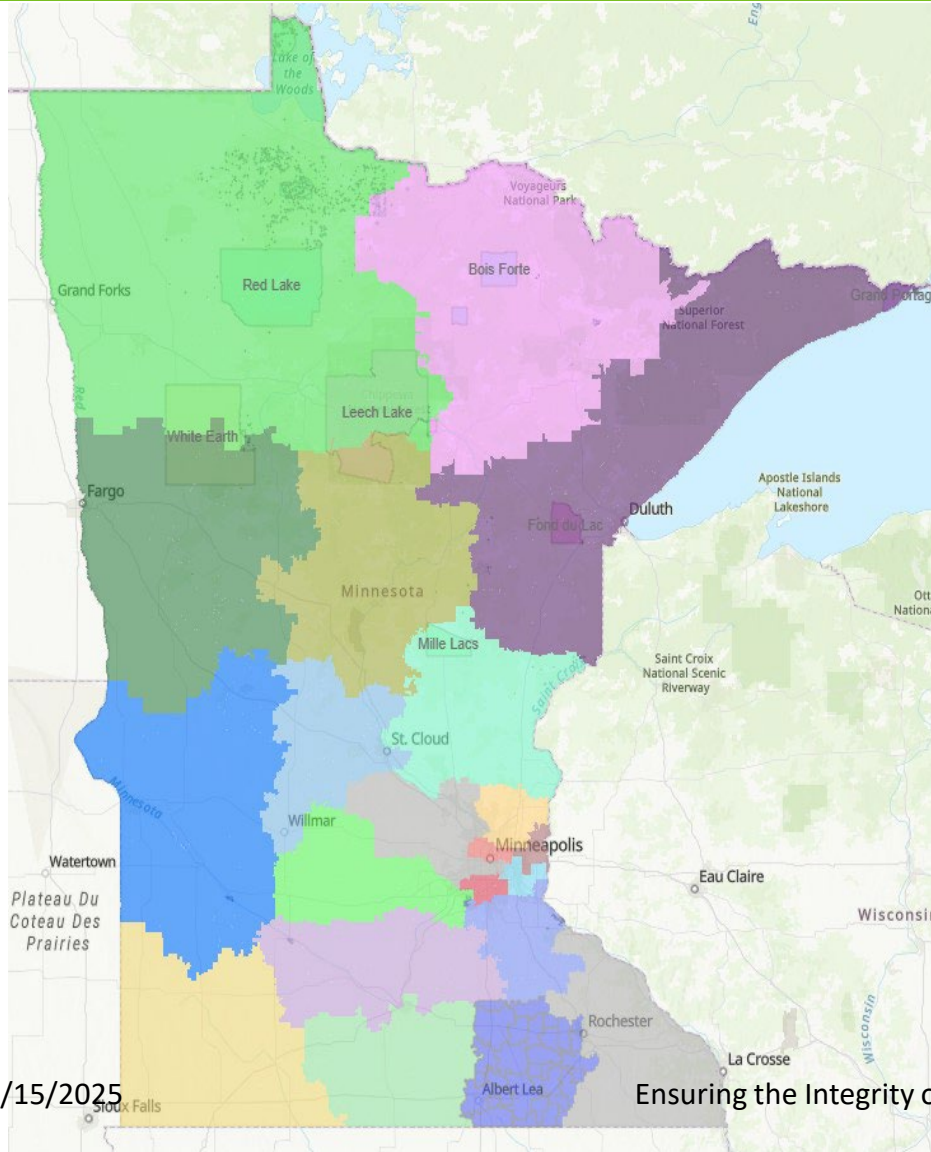
Education/Outreach

- Staff training – inform, inspection approach, resources, customer survey
- Updated website – [Risk factors on Keeping Food Safe](#), [MN Food Code factsheets](#)
- Featured articles in [Retail Food for Thought newsletters](#)

Corrective Action Plans – MDA Goals

- Protect public health by reducing repetitive violations
- Assist in developing written plans in the field with the PICs
- Have the PICs take responsibility and ownership for developing their long-term corrections
- Intervene in the field with written action plans prior to an Enforcement Action

Other Outreach - FFSD Retail Food Territories



- [Find Your Retail Inspector map: https://www.mda.state.mn.us/find-your-retail-food-inspector](https://www.mda.state.mn.us/find-your-retail-food-inspector)

MDA Risk Factor Studies



Risk Factor Study – Overall Results (2023-24)

Risk Factors most out of compliance:

1. Improper holding
2. Contaminated equipment
3. Personal Hygiene
4. Improper Cooking
5. Approved Source

Risk Factor Study - Results

Most out of control Risk Factor by Dept:

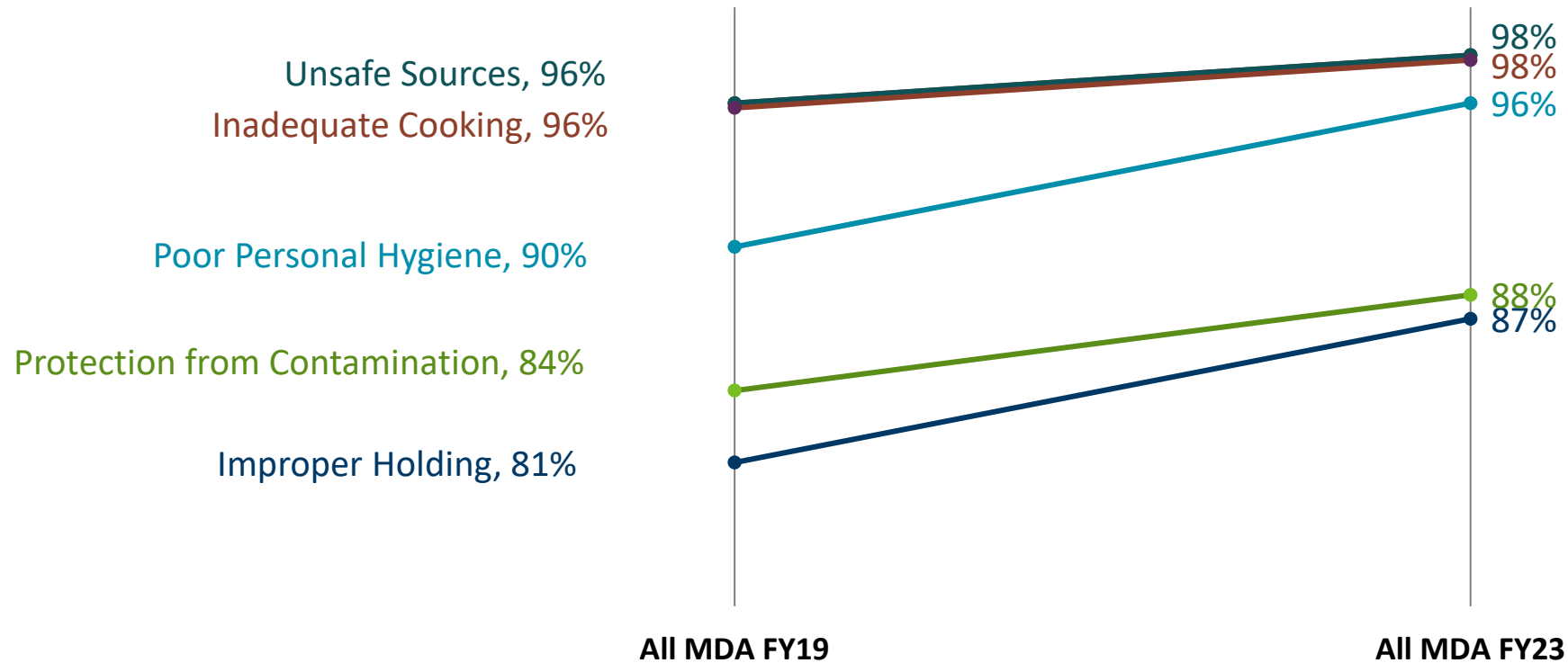
- Bakery - Contaminated Equipment (90% IN)
- Deli - Improper Holding Temp (76%) & Contaminated Equipment (83%)
- Meat - Contaminated Equipment (87%)
- Produce - Improper Holding Temp (92%)
- Seafood - Improper Holding Temp (93%)

Compared to 2018/19 baseline:

- Contaminated equipment reduced
- Improper Holding was now most cited overall.
 - Items 20, 21, 22, 23
- **Overall risk factors were reduced in primary categories.**

Foodborne Illness Risk Factors – Trend Analysis

Foodborne Illness Risk Factors – High & Medium Risk Firms In Compliance Increased Between FY19 and FY23



Why the Change?

- Some thoughts...
 - MDA Risk Factor Study and subsequent interventions – improvement overall?
 - Increased focus on risk-based inspections nationally?
 - Updated Food Code = training?
 - Changing workforce?



Next Steps

- Complete Risk Factor Study Report 

- Reassess targeted interventions 

- Continue to monitor trends overtime 

Thoughts or Questions?



Thank You!

David Boberg

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Food Safety, Observations and Trends

David Smith, Manufactured Food Program

Food Feed & Safety Division

- **Produce Safety Program**

- Raw agriculture produce
 - Produce Safety Rule (21 CFR 112)

- **Commercial Feed Program**

- Animal Feed Manufacturer/Distributors
- Pet Food
 - MN Commercial Feed Law/Rules
 - Preventive Controls for Animal Food (21 CFR 507)

- **Retail Food Program**

- Retail Food Establishments (prepackaged foods)
- MN Retail Food Code (FDA Food Code)

- **Manufactured Food Program**

- Manufacturers/Processors/Wholesalers
 - CFR Title 21

Manufactured Food Program Overview

- Staffing
 - 14 Field Based Inspectors
 - 2 Inspection Supervisors
 - Program Manager
 - Division Support for Logistics, Compliance, Outreach, Emergency Response
- Annual Inspections
 - 1,200+ Routine
 - 120+ Licensing
 - 100+ Complaint, Consultation, Compliance, Out of Business Inspections

FDA and MDA Top Violations

FDA

1. Personnel Practices
2. Sanitary Operations – Plant Maintenance
3. Pest Control
4. Manufacturing Controls
5. Identification of Hazard (Preventive Controls)
6. Equipment and Utensils
7. Plant Constructure and Design
8. Sanitary Operations
9. Sanitation of food-contact surfaces
10. Storage and Distribution

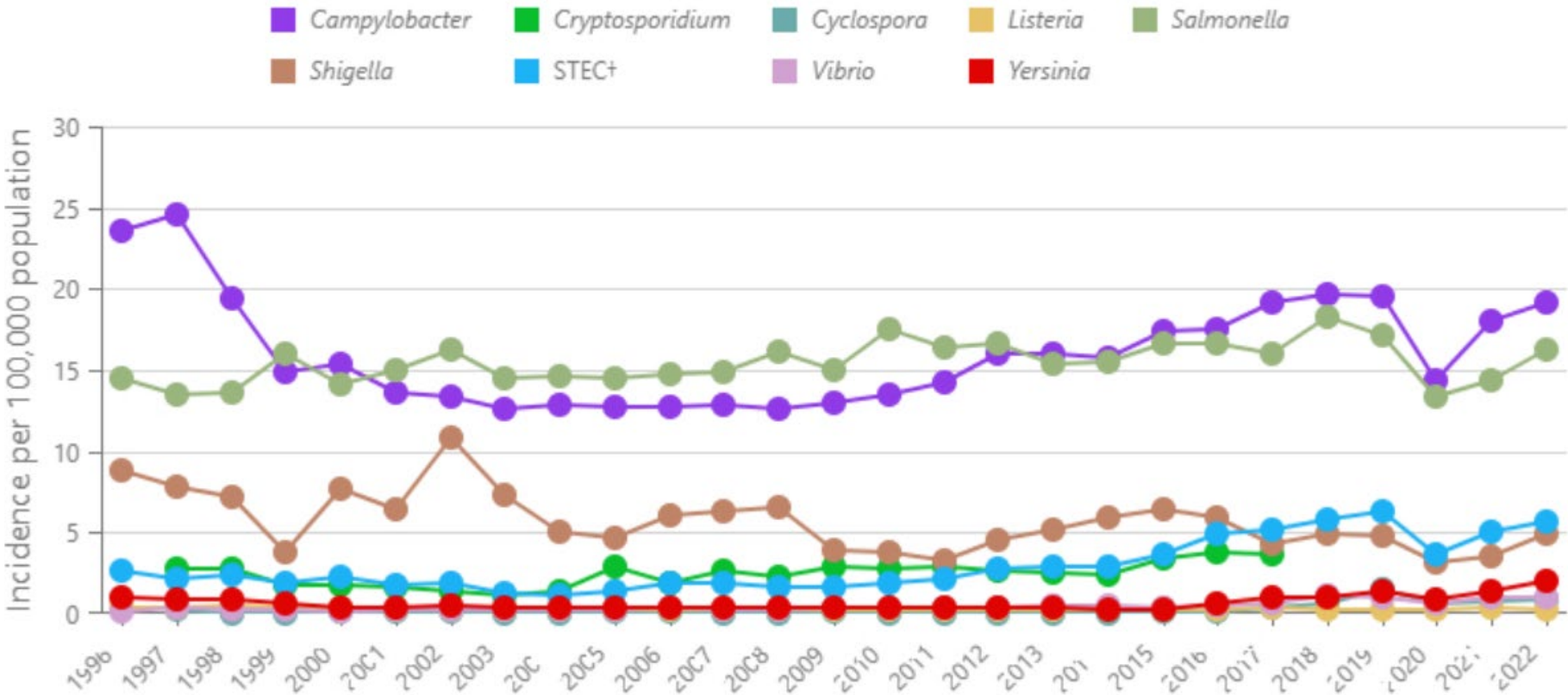
MDA

- A. Sanitary Operations
- B. Equipment and Utensils
- C. Personnel Practices
- D. Plant Construction and Design
- E. Plant Operations to prevent contamination.
- F. Sanitary facilities and controls
- G. Pest Control
- H. Controls for processing, packing and holding
- I. Cleaning substances – safe and adequate
- J. Qualifications of Individuals

[CDC Link to Data](#)

Infections by year; 1996-2022

Incidence per 100,000 population – FoodNet sites; all test methods
† Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli*
Source: FoodNet, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



- Trends of the types of inspectional observations hasn't changed significantly.
- Foodborne Illness trends haven't changed significantly.
- What are some of your thoughts about why?

Food Safety = Behavior

What is a Food Safety Culture?



Culture is shared patterns of thought and behavior that characterize a social group, which are learned through socialization processes and persist through time.

**- Social & Behavioral
Foundations of Public Health**

Why do we care about culture?

In major safety incident investigations of all types, an underlying roots cause often can be linked to which:

1. Faulty Design
2. Operator Error
3. Improper Training
4. Organizational Culture

Food Safety Management - traditional vs behavior based

Traditional Food Safety Management	Behavior-Based Food Safety Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focuses on processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focuses on processes and people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primarily based on Food Science.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Based on Food Science, Behavioral Science, and Organizational Culture.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simplistic view of behavior change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavior change is complex.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Linear cause and effect thinking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Systems thinking.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates a food safety program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates a food safety culture.

Educational Resources

- MDA - [LINK](#)
- FDA - [LINK](#)
- Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance - [LINK](#)
- International Food Protection Institute – [LINK](#)
- Alliance to Stop Foodborne Illness - [LINK](#)

LINDA FOR FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES

**ALLIANCE TO STOP FOODBORNE
ILLNESS VIDEO SERIES**





Thank you!

David Smith – david.e.smith@state.mn.us



USDA FSIS

Updates on Recent Recalls



Listeria Recalls

- Boar's Head
 - July 26, 2024
 - Liverwurst, followed by other deli meats produced on the same line
 - Illness outbreak with 33 hospitalizations and 2 deaths linked to sliced meats at delis (later increased)
 - Maryland sampled product in commerce and detected the outbreak strain of Listeria
 - Recall expanded to include 71 products and over 7 million pounds of product
 - <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls-alerts/boars-head-provisions-co--recalls-ready-eat-liverwurst-and-other-deli-meat-products>

Listeria Recalls

- Boar's Head
 - Establishment operations suspended
 - Establishment was inspected under the state inspection program with FSIS oversight (Talmadge-Aiken Cooperative Inspection Program)
 - Building will likely remain closed indefinitely

Listeria Recalls

- BrucePak
 - October 6, 2024
 - Recalled over 11 million pounds of ready-to-eat products
 - Prepared meals, home delivery meals, emergency rations, salads, wraps
 - *Listeria monocytogenes* found during routine FSIS product sampling
 - RTE chicken determined to be the source of Listeria contamination
 - No illnesses directly attributed to this contamination

Listeria Recalls

- Yu Shang
 - November 9, 2024
 - Over 72,000 pounds of RTE meat and poultry products
 - Chicken – whole and parts, pork snout, duck necks/wings/tongues, chicken feet/gizzards/livers, pork belly/hock/ear/feet, sausages, lamb head meat/tripe, beef tendon/shank/tripe
 - *Listeria monocytogenes* isolated from FSIS routine Listeria sampling
 - Associated with an illness outbreak
 - Plant suspended pending corrective actions

Other Notable Recalls

- Wolverine Packing
 - November 20, 2024
 - *E. coli* O157 infections in Minnesota
 - 15 cases of illness related to *E. coli* from November 2-10, 2024; total of 29 cases identified
 - Affected individuals had eaten undercooked ground beef at one of two restaurants in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area
 - Ground beef sample taken at restaurant tested positive

Other Notable Recalls

- Beef Tallow
 - Requires inspection if for human consumption
- Products imported without import reinspection or ineligible items
 - Fish products, frozen RTE chicken products, canned chicken chili
- Allergens
- Foreign material

Agency Response to *Listeria* Recalls

- **Effective January 2025, FSIS will add broader *Listeria* species testing to all samples of ready-to-eat product, environmental and food contact surfaces.**
 - Currently only test for *Listeria monocytogenes*
 - Adding additional species will allow FSIS to better monitor sanitation and potential for *Listeria* harborage in the establishments
 - Follow up when trends are identified - Food Safety Assessment, intensified sampling, or enforcement actions

Agency Response to Listeria Recalls

- **FSIS will leverage the expertise of its National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF).**
 - Federal advisory committee that provides scientific advice and recommendations to USDA and other government agencies on microbiological and public health issues
 - FSIS will recruit new committee members with expertise in *Listeria*

Agency Response to Listeria Recalls

- **FSIS will update its instructions and training for food safety inspectors to better equip the workforce to recognize and highlight systemic problems in a standardized way.**
 - Updated instructions and training for inspectors
 - Increased supervisory review of understanding of requirements
 - Supplemental *Listeria monocytogenes* control training for inspectors

Agency Response to *Listeria* Recalls

- **FSIS will conduct Food Safety Assessments (in-depth food safety reviews) at ready-to-eat meat and poultry facilities.**
 - Prioritizing completion of Food Safety Assessments at ready-to-eat meat and poultry facilities that rely exclusively on sanitation measures to control for *Listeria*.

Agency Response to Listeria Recalls

- **FSIS field supervisors will conduct in-person, follow-up visits when systemic issues are identified during a Food Safety Assessment.**
 - Follow-up visits by FSIS field supervisors will bolster oversight
 - Field supervisors will work with inspectors to ensure the facility stays in compliance.

Agency Response to Listeria Recalls

- **FSIS inspectors will verify specific *Listeria monocytogenes*-related risk factors at ready-to-eat facilities weekly.**
 - Changes in physical plant modifications – new construction, remodeling
 - Indicators of sanitation problems – condensation, roof leaks, damaged equipment, cracked floors
 - *Listeria* species or *Listeria monocytogenes* positive test results from company testing

Agency Response to Listeria Recalls

- **FSIS will clarify state and Federal requirements for consistent oversight of Talmadge-Aiken (TA) programs through updated cooperative agreements and instructions.**
 - Clear expectations for oversight
 - Enforcing federal food safety laws
 - Comprehensive federal training for TA inspectors
 - Enhanced regular coordination with FSIS
 - Designate field and headquarters positions assigned to TA oversight
 - Clarify training requirements and criteria to start, maintain and terminate state inspection coverage

Agency Response to Listeria Recalls

- **FSIS will revise establishment-review alert triggers.**
 - Monthly list of facilities with higher rates of noncompliance related to public health that is generated using an algorithm to determine PHRE rate
 - FSIS intends to update its algorithm and triggers to better identify high-risk facilities.



Questions?

Task Force Follow-up Needs Assessment Survey

Needs Assessment Survey Follow-up Results

Background

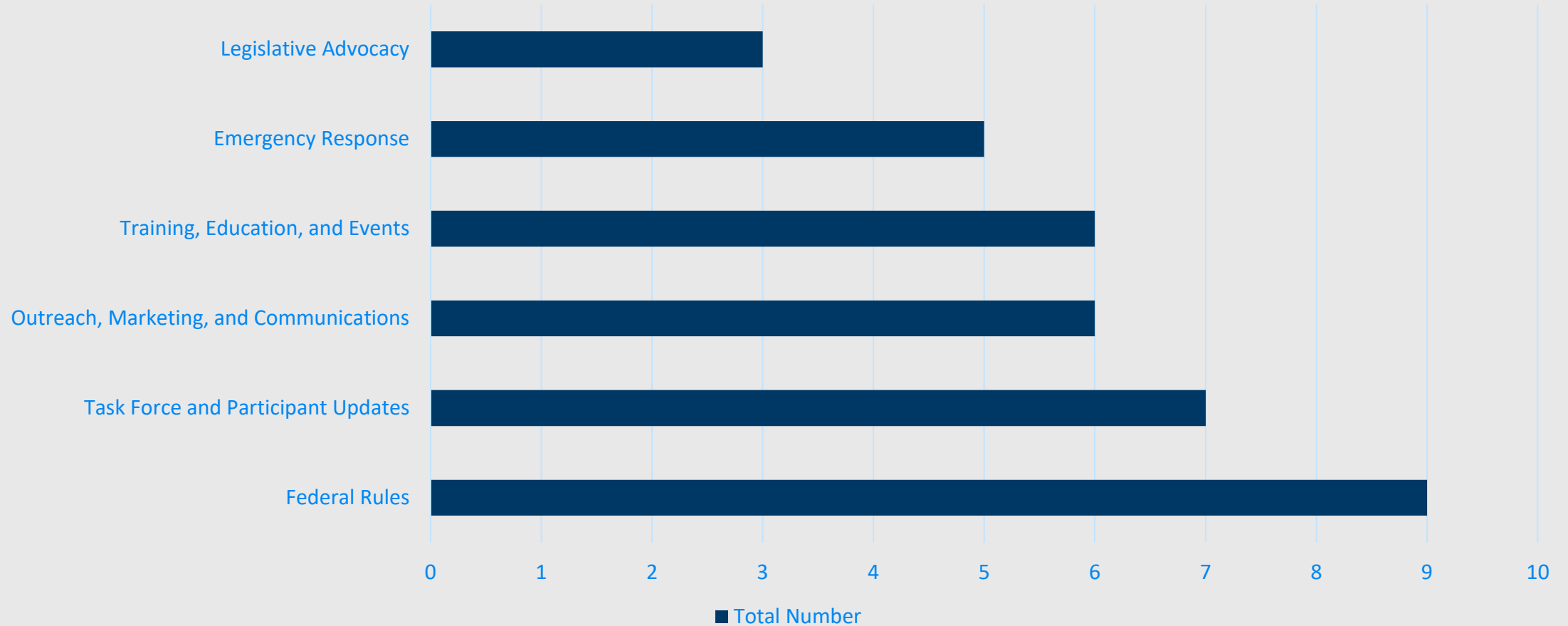
- Initial survey November 2024
- Results discussed in January 2025
- Questions remained

Follow-up survey to clarify interests of members and inform direction

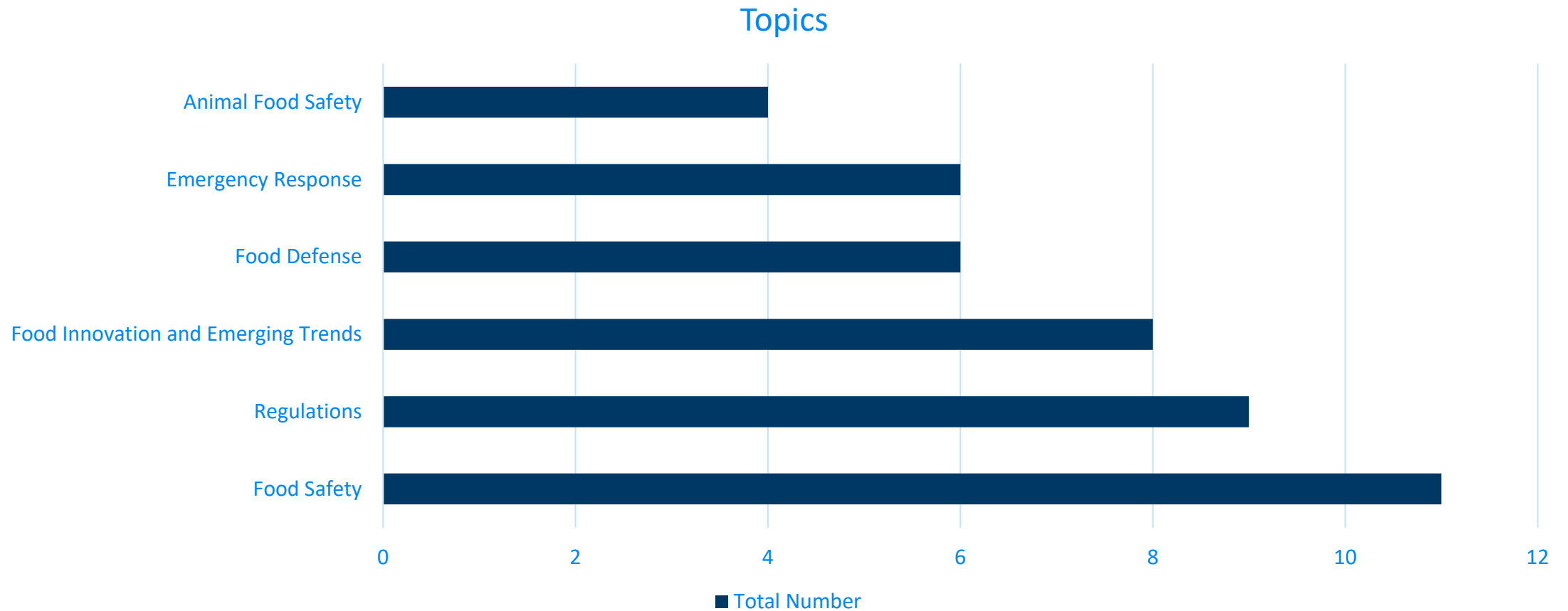
- 13 Respondents (out of 16 members)
- 5 Questions

What subgroup would you be most excited to participate in?

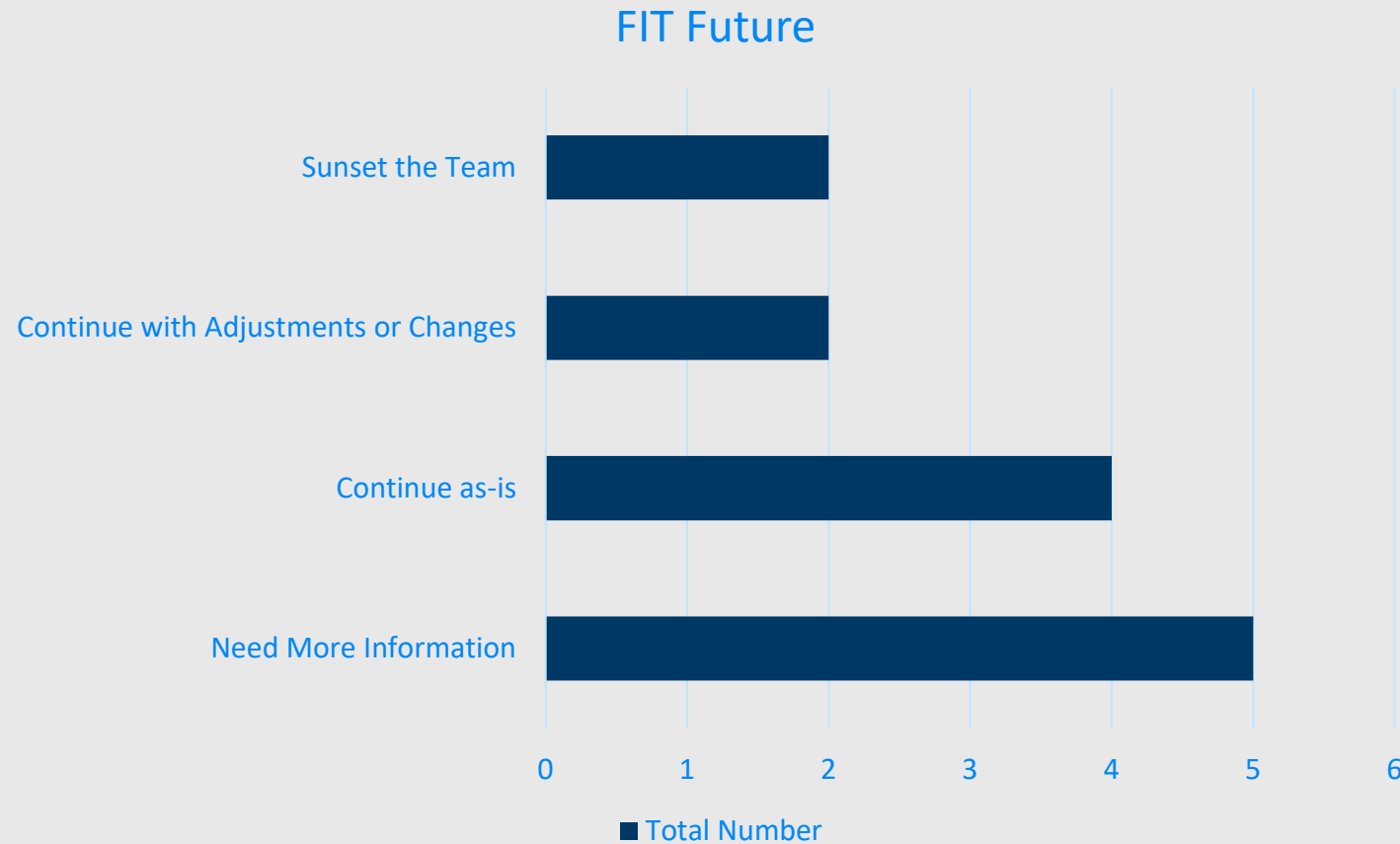
Subgroups



What topics do you have the greatest interest in?



Where do you see the Food Innovation Team going?



Continue with adjustments or changes suggestions:

- Still needed with changes to MDA licensing?
- The group should gather additional input from the stakeholders and groups it was formed to serve and identify needs.

Other Thoughts

- Hard to make recommendations due to recent appointment but looking forward to participating in any way that brings value and keeping the meetings a priority.
- Enjoy the meetings and understand what is going on around our local industry and government agency, but feel we could do more with the right feedback
- Starting each meeting with a quick “refresher” regarding the FSDTF mission, function, and audience it serves
- Conducting a training needs assessment with constituents

Next Steps - Discussion

- What caught your attention about the survey results?
- What kind of decisions do we need to make as a group?
- What decisions can we make?

Open Meeting Law Updates

- Holding meetings at other locations
 - OLF is the regular meeting location
 - Any meeting not at OLF would be considered a special meeting
- Tours
 - Considered a special meeting and would have to be noticed and open to the public
- Meeting format
 - In-person only meetings are allowed; do not need to provide a virtual option
 - Virtual meetings require one person present at the regular meeting place (OLF)

Call for Agenda Items

- Identify upcoming meeting dates and times:
 - 7/9/25
 - 7/21/25
 - 10/20/25
 - 10/23/25
- Terms of Reference
- Legislative Updates

Thank you