We WELCOME our partners to the Partnership for Food Protection (PFP) newsletter! Our intent is to spread the word on all the great work the PFP Workgroups are accomplishing.

This edition features partners at work to safeguard food served at special events during Super Bowl XLVIII weekend, the release of the Animal Feed Regulatory Program Standards (AFRPS), projects from the PFP Response and Recall Workgroup, and updates on the PFP leadership structure.

As always, please let us know what you are working on. This newsletter will be published on a quarterly basis. If you have contributions to future newsletters, please send them to Cathy McDermott, catherine.mcdermott@fda.hhs.gov.

The PFP is a group of dedicated professionals from federal, state, and local governments with roles in protecting the food supply and public health. PFP is the structure used to meld and coordinate representatives with expertise in food, feed, epidemiology, laboratory, animal health, environment, and public health to create a national Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS).

WORKING TOGETHER

Local, State & Federal Government Work Together to Ensure Safe Food at the 2014 Super Bowl XLVIII

By Barbara Kitay, FDA Regional Food Safety Specialist

When you think about the National Football League’s annual Super Bowl, and all of the food that is consumed at football-related events and parties, do you think about a comprehensive food safety assessment? Conducting inspections and offering investigations training on food safety? What about an incident management team? In the months leading up to the 2014 Super Bowl, the safety of the food and drinks served in and around the Super Bowl’s location was on the mind of New Jersey State Department of Health (NJDOH), USDA and FDA’s Central Region (CER) and New Jersey District Office (NWJ-DO) Incident Management Team (IMT).

Fans from all over the country flocked to the site of the Super Bowl XLVIII at Meadowlands Sports Complex in East Rutherford, New Jersey. This complex consists of several sports venues such as MetLife Stadium, where the Super Bowl was played, Izod Center, Meadowlands Racetrack, along with others. In addition to the fans, food and drink vendors also settled into this arena to provide refreshments for all the festivities.

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Protecting the food supply at such a large event required coordination from a number of food safety partners. After reviewing the level of coordination needed and the scope of the Request for Assistance (RFA), the decision was made to set up the IMT, because that was the best structure to meet the needs of the NJDOH. The IMT included representatives from FDA and USDA. USDA-regulated products were served at the event, and this event served as an excellent opportunity for the two federal agencies to work with their state and local counterparts. The IMT was the ground team responsible for coordinating the FDA’s response to the RFA.

In August 2013, NJDOH submitted a RFA to the NWJ-DO for help during the Super Bowl. Under the supervision of Joann Givens, Supervisory Consumer Safety Officer (FDA, Deputy Regional Food Drug Director), the CER and the NWJ-DO were happy to assist the NJDOH by providing the support requested for inspection of venues involved in pre-game special events that occurred prior to kick-off on Super Bowl Sunday. The RFA identified the following four items in which NJDOH required assistance: 1) retail food safety related training to local health department inspectors and industry, 2) food defense/safety assessments at event venues, 3) verifying supplies to MetLife Stadium vendors, and 4) providing district investigators with retail food experience to assist state inspectors during the week of the Super Bowl thru Super Bowl Sunday.

The IMT operated between November 12, 2013 and February 2, 2014, and in conjunction with NJDOH, IMT coordinated and developed food safety training materials for 60 local health department inspectors.

It also provided food defense presentations to 20 firm representatives that were contracted to provide food service for events within the Meadowlands Sports Complex.

Safety and vulnerability assessments were jointly conducted during site tours. NJDOH and FDA inspectors worked together to conduct pre-operational inspections and investigations at retail vendors at the Meadowlands Sports Complex. Inspections were conducted on four event venues that held pre-game special events: NFL Tailgate Party at the Grandstand Meadowlands Racetrack, Host Committee Reception at new Meadowlands Racetrack, NFL V.I.P. Part at the IZOD Center, and Fox Sports Network Party at Pegasus Restaurant. These four events, combined, provided food service to 20,000 people.

The efforts of the inspectors and the training had an impact on the vendors. NJDOH and IMT witnessed the voluntary destruction of 2,500 chicken wraps, meat balls, and 20 pounds of beef brisket due to improper receiving/holding temperatures. In addition to improper receiving and holding temperatures, some barehanded contact with Ready to Eat (RTE) foods was also observed and addressed.

The training provided an excellent opportunity for the inspectors to receive risk-based inspection training and to exchange field experiences to help them prepare for the responsibilities of being a host state for the Super Bowl.

The New Jersey Department of Health, FDA, and USDA were grateful for the opportunity to partner and work together to help ensure food safety at one of this year’s largest sporting events. Whether you were cheering for the Seattle Seahawks or Denver Broncos, we should all cheer for this example of coming together in partnership to protect the food supply.
Animal Feed Regulatory Program Standards (AFRPS)

In February 2014, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) announced the launch of a new program, the Animal Feed Regulatory Program Standards (feed standards), for state animal feed regulators. The feed standards are now available for implementation by state programs.

By Jenny Murphy

The key principal of an IFSS is the uniform application of model program standards so that regulatory agencies conduct inspections using the same standards. Model regulatory program standards currently exist for human food programs (Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards and the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards), but prior to the development of the feed standards, there were no recognized uniform standards for state feed regulatory programs. As development of the IFSS progressed, there was a recognized need to develop standards for animal feed regulatory programs. One of the primary recommendations from the 2010 PFP 50-State Workshop was to develop such standards. Following the workshop, AAFCO and FDA formed a partnership to develop the feed standards. As the U.S. moves toward integrating food safety resources, uniform standards across feed regulatory programs are critical.

The feed standards establish a uniform foundation for the design and management of state programs responsible for the regulation of animal feed. Through implementing the feed standards, a state program will be better able to achieve and maintain programmatic improvements that help ensure the safety and integrity of the U.S. animal feed supply. A state’s implementation of the feed standards also helps to ensure a uniform and consistent approach to feed regulation among jurisdictions, allowing the sharing of information and the coordination of resources.

The feed standards are composed of eleven standards that serve as an objective framework to evaluate and improve components of a state feed program. The feed standards cover the state feed program’s regulatory foundation, training, inspection program, auditing, feed-related illness or death and emergency response, enforcement program, outreach activities, budget and planning, laboratory services, sampling program, and assessment and improvement of standard implementation.

A copy of the feed standards can be accessed at the following website: http://www.fda.gov/ForFederalStateandLocalOfficials/AnimalFeedRegulatoryProgramStandardsAFRPS/default.htm
Check-in from the PFP Response and Recall Workgroup

Preview of New Response and Recall Workgroup’s “Quick Start Food Emergency Response Job Aids to Facilitate Initial Planning in an Integrated Food Emergency Response Event”

By: Travis Goodman

The PFP Response and Recall Workgroup is working on the release of a new resource document entitled, “Quick Start Food Emergency Response Job Aids,” known familiarly as job aids. Job aids will facilitate coordination and planning among programs and agencies early in an investigation, when an adverse food event such as an outbreak or food contamination is initially suspected or detected.

Job aids are designed primarily for food emergency response coordinators and response team members including epidemiologists, laboratory, and food regulatory program officials in local, state, and federal agencies that coordinate public and environmental health authority for food emergency response. Users may also include persons with response functions such as local, state, and federal law enforcement officials in the event of intentional contamination.

A total of five job aids have been developed. The first three are flow diagrams (general, epidemiology and environmental) that highlight key tasks based on response best practices and principles identified by the Council to Improve Foodborne Illness Outbreak Response (CIFOR), the FDA-sponsored Rapid Response Team Program (RRT), the International Association of Food Protection (IAFP), and the Department of Homeland Security’s National Incident Management System (NIMS). They focus on information gathering and planning in the initial stages of the investigation.

The remaining two job aids are related to tracebacks and are to be used when considering or pursuing tracebacks during an outbreak. One of these documents is specifically designed to help identify the information that is needed to determine if an ill patient is a good traceback candidate, and the other document is a reference guide on information to collect at a point of service (POS) during traceback investigations.

Once this document is made available, the PFP Response and Recall Workgroup hopes that food regulatory programs will share these with industry, food protection task forces, and other stakeholders to increase awareness about the role of government and to assist them in preparing their own complimentary response protocols.

“Improving Recall Coordination between Federal, State, and Local Governments”

By: Brad Honold

The Response and Recall Workgroup is currently working on a project entitled “District and State Recall Cooperative Plan,” which is intended to establish uniform cooperative recall procedures for quick communication and sharing of recall information between FDA headquarters staff, FDA district staff, and FDA field recall staff, as well as state headquarters staff and field recall or investigative staff.

The workgroup was divided into sub-workgroups. Members consist primarily of federal and state employees actively associated with recalls. The subgroups are utilizing survey data collected in 2013 by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and

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FDA’s Office of Imports and Enforcement from district and state respondents. The survey had a higher than 60% return rate. The survey information will be used to improve recall efforts, in line with IFSS, in hopes of reducing redundancies and shorten recall timelines for improved food safety.

The following areas were developed directly from the survey results for further consideration:

- Recall Notifications – communication methods, timeliness, minimum recall data requirements, and creation of contact lists
- Sharing of Customer Lists – identify and explain regulations impacting sharing of information and look for ways to expedite the process
- Effectiveness/Audit Checks – timeliness and format of communication, assignment and completion of effectiveness checks to enhance audit coverage and to avoid duplication of efforts

This project intends to harness the knowledge, expertise, and innovation of the regulatory agencies in order to develop and present a best practices document on recalls to the PFP Governing Council by late August 2014.

Workgroup Leads:
Wanda Lenger, FDA
Brad Honold, Minnesota Depart. of Agriculture

LETTER FROM THE PFP GOVERNING COUNCIL

Dear Valued Partner,

As the PFP continues to evolve, on behalf of the Governing Council, we want to communicate with our partners changes in PFP leadership and activities.

The PFP Governing Council met for a face-to-face meeting in November 2013 in Kansas City, Missouri. At the meeting, the GC continued work on PFP strategic vision and thorough assessment of roles and responsibilities of PFP Workgroups, Coordinating Committee, and GC.

In Kansas City, the GC put pen to paper to begin developing the path forward for the partnership for the next five years. The steps to develop this plan involved identifying the critical components, from the perspective of the partnership, of an integrated food safety system. The next step was to identify where gaps lie within those critical components, and then develop ways to address those gaps. This assessment of an IFSS will be used to develop the PFP Strategic Plan for the next five years, keeping in mind the partnership’s objective of Mutual Reliance for a Safer Food Supply thru collaboration, sharing solutions, and solving problems.
Also in Kansas City, after thoughtful deliberation and assessment of feedback from our members, the GC made the difficult decision to formally retire the PFP Coordinating Committee. The conclusion was reached that the current structure and format had not proved to be the most useful way of obtaining feedback and involvement from our partners.

The original governance structure for the PFP was designed around a PFP Coordinating Committee and a PFP Steering Committee. The role of the Coordinating Committee was to oversee the development of PFP Workgroups tasked with projects which were recommended at the 2008 50-State Workshop. The PFP Coordinating Committee was overseen by the PFP Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). In January 2013, the PFP Steering Committee became renamed the PFP Governance Council and many of the CC responsibilities had transferred to the GC as a result of the establishment of GC. We all feel that this update in governance structure will position us to best meet the challenges of achieving an IFSS.

Many of the Coordinating Committee members are currently involved in PFP workgroups and disseminating of knowledge workgroup resource documents among their colleagues. They continue to strengthen our effort towards an IFSS through discussion at conferences and meetings. The GC cannot express enough gratitude for all that the CC has accomplished in order to position the PFP as it stands today. The Coordinating Committee helped to develop the foundational framework of the PFP as an entity. The partnership is looking forward to contributing components to an Integrated Food Safety System.

Sincerely (on behalf of the entire PFP Governing Council),
Barbara Cassens and Pat Kennelly, PFP Governing Council Co-chairs

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