



## Food Allergen Thresholds and Their Potential Applications Virtual Public Meeting Speakers' and Panelists' Biographies

### **Michael Abbott, Section Head of the Food Biomolecules Section, Food and Nutrition Directorate, Health Canada**

Michael Abbott is the Section Head of the Food Biomolecules Section (FBS) in the Bureau of Chemical Safety in Health Canada's Food and Nutrition Directorate. In this capacity, he works on regulations, policies and guidelines related to labelling of food allergens and gluten sources on prepackaged foods in Canada. He was part of a team that developed Canada's enhanced labelling regulations for food allergens, gluten sources and added sulphites, which came into force in 2012.

### **Douglas A. Balentine, PhD, Senior Science Advisor for Global Affairs, Nutrition Center of Excellence (NCE) Human Foods Program (HFP), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**

Dr. Balentine serves as Senior Science Advisor for Global Affairs at the FDA's Human Foods Program (HFP). In this capacity, he supports Codex Alimentarius activities as the U.S. Delegate to the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU) and the Codex Committee on Food Labeling (CCFL). Dr. Balentine leads international activities and multilateral initiatives related to FDA's nutrition and food labeling programs, providing authoritative scientific and policy guidance while considering U.S. stakeholder input and advancing FDA's science-based public health mission. Previously, Dr. Balentine served as Director of the Office of Nutrition and Food Labeling at FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN), where he provided leadership and scientific direction to multidisciplinary staff managing regulatory programs for food labeling, nutrition, infant formula, and medical foods. Before joining FDA, he was Director of Nutrition and Health for Unilever North America and served on Unilever's Global Nutrition Leadership Team. Dr. Balentine has collaborated with numerous organizations and committees focused on improving public health. He holds 10 U.S. patents and has authored over 40 scientific publications. Dr. Balentine earned his PhD in food science and nutrition from Rutgers University.

### **Joseph Baumert, PhD, Professor of Food Science and Director of the Food Allergy Research & Resource Program (FARRP), University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

Dr. Baumert currently serves as a Professor in the Department of Food Science & Technology and Director of the Food Allergy Research & Resource Program (FARRP) at the University of Nebraska. Dr. Baumert has maintained active national and international research and outreach programs during his 17+ years as a faculty member. His research has focused on the development and improvement of analytical methods for detection of allergen residues and the development of quantitative risk assessment models. He has co-authored over 110 peer reviewed publications on the topics of allergen detection, risk assessment and allergen management, and he has been an active member of several international working groups including the VITAL Scientific Expert Panel, several ILSI-Europe expert groups and the ad hoc FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on Risk Assessment of Food Allergens. Dr. Baumert holds BS and MS degrees in animal science (meat science and muscle biology focus) and a PhD degree in food science (food allergies focus) from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

**Dianne Benjamin, MS, RD, LDN, Senior Policy Analyst, Office of Nutrition and Food Labeling, NCE, HFP, FDA**

Dianne Benjamin is a Senior Policy Analyst in FDA's Office of Nutrition and Food Labeling, leading policy development and strategic planning for key human foods initiatives. She serves as project manager for the Food Allergen Committee and has guided transformative projects including FDA's infant formula transition plan, food standards modernization, and stakeholder outreach on food labeling and allergen topics. Dianne has extensive leadership experience across multiple FDA offices, including acting director roles and leading cross-functional teams, during which she contributed to major regulatory and policy initiatives including FDA's gluten-free labeling rule, GRAS final rule, and the advisory committee on susceptible populations. She has helped develop key regulatory frameworks as an FDA Food Code writer. Prior to FDA, she worked in clinical nutrition and food industry roles. She holds a BS in Nutrition and Dietetics Management from Pratt Institute and an MS in Nutrition Science from New York University, is a licensed Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist, and served on national committees.

**Kevin Boyd, PhD, DABT, Senior Manager, Regulatory, The Hershey Company**

Dr. Kevin Boyd is a board-certified toxicologist who currently leads a talented regulatory team responsible for managing global food safety and regulatory programs and compliance initiatives, including allergen management. He is an active member in a variety of working groups and associations addressing important topics in toxicology, allergens, and food safety.

**Neil Buck, PhD, Food Operators: Challenges & Opportunities, General Mills, Inc.**

Dr. Neil Buck is Corporate Toxicologist at General Mills, Inc. He is active in stakeholder fora in both the US and EU on topics relevant to continuously improving consumer protection, including ingredient safety, contaminants and allergen management. For almost 25 years Dr. Buck has worked within industry on regulatory toxicology topics. He holds post-graduate degrees in toxicology and food additive safety evaluation.

**Kyle Diamantas, JD, Deputy Commissioner for Human Foods, FDA**

As the Deputy Commissioner for Human Foods, Mr. Diamantas leads the agency's Human Foods Program, overseeing all FDA nutrition and food safety activities. In this role, Mr. Diamantas exercises authority over all Human Food Program entities and operations, including resource allocation, risk-prioritization strategy and decision making, policy initiatives, and major response activities involving human foods. Mr. Diamantas also oversees food resources in the agency's Office of Inspections and Investigations. As the FDA's top food executive, Mr. Diamantas sets the strategic direction and operations for food policy in the U.S., while serving as a critical liaison between the agency, Department of Health and Human Services, and The White House.

**Melanie Downs, PhD, Associate Professor, Food Allergy Research & Resource Program (FARRP), Department of Food Science, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.**

Dr. Melanie Downs is an Associate Professor affiliated with the Food Allergy Research & Resource Program in the Department of Food Science and Technology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research primarily focuses on the proteomics of allergenic foods, including the identification, characterization, and detection of food allergens using mass spectrometry. Dr. Downs is also extensively involved in collaborative efforts to establish guidance on the validation and implementation of food allergen analysis methods. In addition, Dr. Downs works with the food industry on numerous aspects of food allergen management, including development of allergen control programs, validation of allergen preventive controls, and application of food allergen detection methods.

**Robert Earl, MPH, RDN, FAND, Vice President of Regulatory Affairs, Food Allergy Research & Education, (FARE)**

Mr. Earl provides leadership on food allergen labeling and food policy issues at FARE, the leading non-governmental organization engaged in advocacy and research toward a cure, working with regulatory agencies and relevant industries, domestically and internationally. Mr. Earl has held leadership positions with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Food & Nutrition Board at the National Academy of Medicine, co-directed its 1990 study toward the current Nutrition Facts label.

He has worked in food industry associations, food companies, and has devoted over 35 years to the food allergy community. He worked closely with one of FARE's predecessor organizations, the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN), and has served on the Board of Directors of the Food Allergy Research & Resource Program (FARRP) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. A registered dietitian, Mr. Earl served on the Academy and its foundation's boards and as Speaker, House of Delegates. He is a two-time chair of the Academy's Food and Culinary Professionals Dietetic Practice Group, recipient of the Academy's Medallion Award, an Academy Fellow, and the Academy's second highest honor in 2025, the Distinguished Lecture Award. Mr. Earl holds a BS in human nutrition from University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and MPH from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Steven M. Gendel, PhD, Principal, Gendel Food Safety LLC**

Dr. Steven Gendel has over three decades of experience in food safety science and policy, including work at the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN). He was the first FDA Food Allergen Coordinator and contributed to the development of the Preventive Controls for Human Food rule, the Gluten-Free Labeling Rule, and other agency documents. He also supported the FDA inspection and enforcement programs. Steve holds a BS in Chemical Engineering and a PhD in Cell and Developmental Biology. He has advanced training in risk assessment, food law, HACCP, and Preventive Controls. He has been an instructor for programs organized by the FDA, the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), the International Association for Food Protection (IAFP), state agencies, and the National Center for Food Safety and Technology (now IFSH).

**Ruchi Gupta, MD, MPH, Professor of Pediatrics and Medicine, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine; Clinical Attending, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago Director, Center for Food Allergy & Asthma Research (CFAAR)**

Dr. Ruchi Gupta is a Professor of Pediatrics and Medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago. She is the founding director of the Center for Food Allergy & Asthma Research (CFAAR) and has over 20 years of experience as a board-certified pediatrician and health researcher. Dr. Gupta leads research on the epidemiology, prevention, and management of food allergy, with a focus on public health and economic impact, and interventions to improve daily care. Her work has informed national guidelines and legislation, and she collaborates with federal agencies and advocacy groups to shape policies that enhance quality of life for those with allergic conditions. She has authored over 300 peer-reviewed publications and two books. Dr. Gupta earned her MD from the University of Louisville and her MPH from Harvard University. She completed her pediatric residency at the University of Washington and her fellowship in pediatric health services research at Harvard.

**Scott Hegenbart, Manager of Regulatory Affairs, Conagra Brands, Inc.**

Mr. Scott Hegenbart works in Conagra Brands's Food Safety, Quality and Regulatory Affairs group where he leads corporate food safety programs for food allergens, sensitive food ingredients and other chemical hazards. With degrees in both Chemistry and Speech Communication from Iowa State University, Scott has held several quality assurance, food safety and product development positions over more than 40 years in the food industry. He also has extensive experience in the food industry media where he has authored more than 200 articles about product development, ingredient technology and food safety. Scott is a lead instructor both for Preventive Controls Qualified Individual training and HACCP training.

**Lauren Jackson, PhD, Chief, Chemistry & Process Engineering Branch, Division of Food Processing Science & Technology, Office of Applied Microbiology and Technology, Office of Laboratory Operations and Applied Science, HFP, FDA**

Dr. Lauren Jackson began her career as regulatory scientist at the U.S. FDA in 1991. She currently serves as Chief of the Chemistry and Process Engineering Branch in the Division of Food Processing Science and Technology, located in Bedford Park, IL. In her current position, Dr. Jackson provides managerial leadership, program direction and general oversight to 12 research scientists. She is also responsible for developing and conducting research on the impact of

processing on food safety and serves as an FDA subject matter expert on food allergens and chemical contaminants. Dr. Jackson authored over 200 published papers, book chapters, and abstracts, and co-edited five books. She is an active member of IFT, IAFP and ACS and is a Scientific Editor for the Journal of Food Protection and an Associate Editor for Comprehensive Reviews in Food Science and Food Safety. Lauren holds a BS in Food Science from Cornell University, and a MS and PhD, both in Food Science, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Stefano Luccioli, MD, Senior Physician/Allergen Coordinator, Division of Chemical Contaminants, Office of Post-Market Assessment, Office of Food Chemical Safety, Dietary Supplements, and Innovation, HFP, FDA**

Dr. Stefano Luccioli is a Senior physician in the Division of Chemical Contaminants within the Office of Post Market Assessment in the Human Foods Program (HFP) of FDA. His responsibilities include providing subject matter expertise on food allergen and gluten-related issues and leading HFP scientific policies to assess and manage allergen hazards in regulated food products. His research interests are aimed at identifying various factors contributing to consumer adverse events to food allergens and understanding the public health impact of allergen thresholds. Dr. Luccioli is also on the clinical and teaching faculty at Medstar Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, DC.

**Yinqing Ma, PhD, Acting Deputy Director, Office of Compliance Operations and Implementation, Office of Compliance and Enforcement, HFP, FDA**

Yinqing Ma is the Acting Deputy Director of the Office of Compliance Operations and Implementation in the Office of Compliance and Enforcement within FDA's Human Foods Program. In this capacity, she provides strategic leadership across critical initiatives including risk-based resource allocation, compliance program development, and compliance policy advancement. Yinqing also collaborates across the organization to advance FDA's food allergen initiatives. During her 16-year career at the FDA, she has held leadership roles in key regulatory areas such as food labeling, juice HACCP regulation, and FDA Food Safety Modernization Act implementation. She received her BS, MS, and PhD in Food Science from Cornell University.

**Nathan Mirdamadi, Global Director of Sanitation, Kerry**

Mr. Mirdamadi serves as the Global Director of Sanitation at Kerry. He leads the strategic direction and execution of the sanitation programs across nearly 140 manufacturing sites, encompassing a diverse portfolio of products and technologies. With nearly 30 years of food industry leadership experience, Nathan's career spans various functions, including sanitation, operations management, and corporate finance. He is a frequent contributor at industry events and supports several associations through membership and presentations including International Association for Food Protection (IAFP), Food Allergy Research and Resource Program (FARRP), European Hygienic Engineering and Design Group (EHEDG), and American Bakers Association (ABA). He is a founding member of the Cornell Dry Sanitation Council and the recipient of the 2025 IAFP Sanitarian Award. Nathan holds a MS in Food Safety from Michigan State University, MBA from California State University, and BS in Economics & Finance from Missouri Southern State University. He is also bilingual in Spanish.

**Caroline Moassessi, Vice President of Community Relations, Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Connection Team (FAACT)**

Caroline Moassessi is the Vice President of Community Relations for FAACT, a national patient advocacy organization dedicated to education, advocacy, and awareness for people living with food allergies and life-threatening anaphylaxis. FAACT provides a wide array of resources for patients, caregivers, schools, colleges, workplaces, restaurants, and communities to help them manage food allergies at every stage of life. These free and downloadable resources include training programs, safety tools, podcasts, blogs, and extensive online resource centers. FAACT is the voice of the food allergy patient. Caroline is also the host of FAACT's Roundtable Podcast and works with community engagement, college resources, and patient-centered initiatives. Caroline speaks nationally to the food industry, as well as to state and local groups, to raise awareness and encourage change related to food allergies through policy and education. Caroline holds a Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management and is the parent of two adult children living with food allergies and asthma.

**Benjamin C. Remington, PhD, Senior Scientist, Contractor, FDA**

Dr. Remington is an expert in food allergen thresholds and food allergen risk assessment, for both the clinical and food business operator settings. He is an FDA contractor and the managing director of the Remington Consulting Group B.V. (the Netherlands). He completed his PhD with the Food Allergy Research & Resource Program at the University of Nebraska (United States), where he has also been an Adjunct Assistant Professor, and he has experience leading international expert groups and participated as an invited expert in numerous stakeholder groups and risk assessment initiatives focused on food allergy.

**Wayne G. Shreffler, MD, PhD, Associate Professor at Harvard Medical School, Massachusetts General Hospital Food Allergy Center**

Dr. Shreffler is Chief of Pediatric Allergy & Immunology and Co-Director of the Food Allergy Center at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). He is also an Investigator at the Center for Immunology and Inflammatory Disease and the Food Allergy Science Initiative. Dr. Shreffler received his MD and PhD degrees from New York University and his Pediatrics training at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He completed his fellowship in Allergy & Immunology at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in 2003. He is board certified in Pediatrics and Allergy/ Immunology and is a fellow of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. Since coming to MGH in 2010, he has developed a highly integrated research and clinical program to better understand how adaptive immunity to dietary antigens is both naturally regulated and modulated by therapy in the context of food allergy.

**Laura Shumow, Executive Director, American Spice Trade Association**

Laura Shumow has served as Executive Director of the American Spice Trade Association (ASTA) since 2018. In this role, she partners with the ASTA Board of Directors to guide the association's strategic direction and leads staff in executing its goals. Laura brings deep expertise in domestic and international regulatory affairs, with a strong track record of addressing complex challenges in global food ingredient supply chains. Before joining ASTA, she was Vice President of Scientific and Regulatory Affairs at the National Confectioners Association, where she also led the Chocolate Council, overseeing industry-wide initiatives in the cocoa and chocolate sectors. She holds a Master of Health Sciences from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a bachelor's degree in food science from the University of Wisconsin. Laura is actively involved in several professional organizations, including the Institute of Food Technologists, where she is a Past President of the DC Division and former Chair of the Food Laws and Regulations Section. She also serves as Treasurer of the Food and Beverage Issue Alliance.

**Scott H. Sicherer, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, Director, Elliot and Roslyn Jaffe Food Allergy Institute, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York**

Dr. Sicherer is Chief of the Serena and John Liew Division of Pediatric Allergy and Immunology and leads a team focused on clinical care and research in food allergy. His research interests, funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and Food Allergy Research and Education, encompass numerous aspects of food allergy including natural course, gastrointestinal manifestations, epidemiology, quality of life, diagnostics, prevention, education, genetics and treatments. He has published over 275 articles in scientific journals and has authored over 75 book chapters. He is Editor-in-Chief of the Encyclopedia of Food Allergy (Elsevier). He has authored six food allergy books for the lay public, the most recent being *The Complete Guide to Food Allergies in Adults and Children* (Johns Hopkins University Press). Dr. Sicherer has been consistently recognized as a "Top Doctor" by Castle-Connolly/New York Magazine, and among the top 1% of researchers in his field for the citation impact of his publications.

**Ms. Sarah Sorscher, Director of Regulatory Affairs, Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)**

Sarah Sorscher is an experienced advocate with a passion for public health who works for a safer, healthier, more transparent food system by promoting consumer safeguards with Congress, federal agencies, and state and local governments. As Director of Regulatory Affairs at Center for Science in the Public Interest, she manages the

organization's policy work related to food safety and labeling, allergens, food additives, dietary supplements, and other consumer products.

**Lynn Szybist, MS, Director, Division of Food Labeling and Standards, Office of Nutrition and Food Labeling, NCE, HFP, FDA**

Lynn Szybist is the Director of the Division of Food Labeling and Standards within the Office of Nutrition and Food Labeling at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In this capacity, she oversees the planning, policy development, and management of food and nutrition labeling initiatives, including food allergen labeling. Lynn holds a BS in Food and Nutrition Science from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and an MS in Food Science from the University of Minnesota. Ms. Szybist has 23 years of food labeling implementation and compliance experience at FDA. Prior to joining the government, she worked as the Corporate Labeling Specialist at McKee Foods Corporation in Collegedale, Tennessee.

**Steve Taylor, PhD, Professor Emeritus and Founding Director Food Allergy Research and Resource Program**

Steve L. Taylor, PhD is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Food Science & Technology. He was a founding director of the Food Allergy Research & Resource Program (FARRP) at the University of Nebraska in 1995. FARRP is a food industry-funded consortium with more than 100 member companies headquartered in 11 different countries. Dr. Taylor received his BS and MS degrees in food science and technology from Oregon State University and his PhD in biochemistry from the University of California - Davis. Dr. Taylor maintained an active research program in the area of food allergies for 40 years until his retirement.

**Linda Verrill, PhD, Branch Chief, Behavioral and Social Sciences Branch, Division of Evaluation & Population Health Sciences, Office of Surveillance Strategy and Risk Prioritization, HFP, FDA**

Dr. Linda Verrill is a senior social scientist and branch chief for the Behavioral and Social Sciences Branch in the Office of Strategic Surveillance and Risk Prioritization at the FDA Human Foods Program. She conducts social science research and provides expert consultation on consumer knowledge, attitudes, and behavior related to food safety and nutrition topics, including food allergen labeling and food-allergen-related consumer behaviors. Her findings have been used to inform FDA regulations, guidance, and public education. She has published her work in peer-reviewed scientific journals and presented her research at numerous meetings. Dr. Verrill received her PhD in Sociology from Georgia State University in 2002. During her more than 20 years at FDA, Dr. Verrill has directed research on topics including allergen advisory labeling, front of pack nutrition labeling, food defense, nutrient content and health claims, claims on fortified foods, and consumer behaviors and messaging on food pathogens and other food contaminants. She is part of the project team that developed and conducted the national 2019 FDA Food and Nutrition Survey and is currently the Co-PI on a new focus group study on consumers' reactions to allergen advisories on the food label.

**Brian Vickery, Professor of Pediatrics, Marcus Professor of Pediatric Immunology and Chief of the Division of Allergy/Immunology at Emory University and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta**

Dr. Brian Vickery is Professor of Pediatrics, Marcus Professor of Pediatric Immunology and Chief of the Division of Allergy/Immunology at Emory University and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. He is a nationally prominent clinician-scientist focused on improving outcomes for children with allergic disease through the development and implementation of interventions that effectively address unmet medical needs. Dr. Vickery has a 15+ year track record of sustained extramural funding, national service, mentorship, and scholarship in food allergy, leading to over 125 publications in leading journals, yielding a Web of Science h-index of 43. He received his undergraduate degree at the University of Georgia followed by his MD at the Medical College of Georgia. He then completed pediatric residency and chief residency at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Cornell and fellowship at Yale University School of Medicine.

**Benjamin Warren, PhD, Senior Science Advisor for Food Safety, Office of Microbiological Food Safety, HFP, FDA**  
Dr. Benjamin Warren is Senior Science Advisor for Food Safety at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Human Foods Program, Office of Microbiological Food Safety. In this role, Dr. Warren advises on agency policies and programs related to food safety, supports development and implementation of the Preventive Controls for Human Foods rule and guidance, and supports FDA activities to investigate and prevent foodborne outbreaks.

**Rasma Zvaners, Vice President of Government Relations, American Bakers Association**

Rasma Zvaners serves as Vice President of Government Relations (GR) for the American Bakers Association (ABA). Ms. Zvaners' expertise in food safety regulations, nutrition, and sustainability helps ABA Members navigate the federal and state regulatory landscape. In addition to leading the GR team, Ms. Zvaners is the primary liaison for both ABA's Food Technical & Regulatory Affairs Professionals Group and the ABA Energy and Environment Professionals Group. Ms. Zvaners is responsible for managing ABA's Energy Star initiative. Prior to joining ABA, she was with the American Chemistry Council (ACC). She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the Michigan State University, and she attended The George Washington University where she earned an American Bar Association Legal Assistant's certification.