



Public Meeting on *Listeria monocytogenes* Prevention

August 18 - 19, 2026

Speaker Information

Tressa Bennett, J.D. **STOP Foodborne Illness**

Tressa Bennett is an attorney, with an undergraduate degree in business/marketing. While pregnant in 1999, her twins contracted listeriosis from her, and the three of them battled and survived the illness. She, her husband and their children have been passionate food safety advocates for over twenty-five years, primarily through the non-profit organization STOP Foodborne Illness, including speaking engagements and special projects with the USDA, FDA, CNN, Wegmans and Maple Leaf Foods, in the United States and Canada. Tressa has most recently worked in a corporate general counsel's office, and continued her education at Georgetown University Law Center by taking courses focused on food and drug law. She lives in Virginia, near Washington, D.C.

Tajah Blackburn, Ph.D. **Environmental Protection Agency**

Dr. Tajah Blackburn is a Senior Scientist in the Antimicrobials Division's Efficacy Branch at the EPA. Serving in the rank of Commander in the U.S. Public Health Service, she brings a background in microbiology and infectious diseases, having earned her Ph.D. from Morehouse School of Medicine. Her extensive training includes post-doctoral work in vaccine development at Wyeth Pharmaceuticals and additional degrees/certifications from Johns Hopkins, Temple University, and NC State. Before returning to the EPA in 2018, Dr. Blackburn served as an international pharmaceutical investigator—with assignments spanning Asia, Europe, and Australia—and as a Section Chief within the Department of Homeland Security's National Biosurveillance Integration Center. Today, she applies this global expertise to the complex challenges of antimicrobial pesticide management and innovations.

Yuhuan Chen, Ph.D. **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** **Human Foods Program, Office of Surveillance Strategy and Risk Prioritization**

Dr. Yuhuan Chen is an Interdisciplinary Scientist in the Human Foods Program at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, where she leads and coordinates multidisciplinary risk assessments to inform policy decisions. Yuhuan brings food microbiology and risk modeling expertise, as well as industry experience, to help bridge risk assessment application to food safety management. Particularly, she has led the development of a Risk-Ranking Model for Food Tracing in support of the Food Traceability Rule and the FDA-iRISK® tool making rapid risk assessment

more feasible for the food protection community. Her work has also encompassed the integration of molecular subtyping and enumeration baseline data to quantify risk from *Listeria monocytogenes* to inform risk-based preventive controls. Before joining FDA, Yuhuan was Director of Science Policy at the Grocery Manufacturers Association, where she coordinated industry task forces, resulting in guidance such as “Control of *Salmonella* in Low-Moisture Foods.” Yuhuan is a past chair of the Technical Committee of the Interagency Risk Assessment Consortium and a Fellow of the International Association for Food Protection.

Conrad Choiniere, Ph.D.
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Human Foods Program, Office of Microbiological Food Safety

Conrad Choiniere, PhD, is the Director of the Office of Microbiological Food Safety at FDA’s Human Foods Program. He oversees regulatory policy for managing microbial risks in foods and developing strategies for the prevention of foodborne illness. He has been with the Agency for over twenty years working in a variety of roles, in both food safety and tobacco control, primarily focused on risk management and analysis, social and behavioral sciences, and executive leadership. Conrad has a doctorate in agricultural economics from the University of Maryland and a bachelor’s in chemical engineering from the Johns Hopkins University.

Polly Courtney, Ph.D.
General Mills

Polly Courtney is a Food Safety & Quality Manager at General Mills, based in Minneapolis, MN. Her work focuses on food safety governance, as well as expert guidance on microbiological hazards and regulatory compliance. She collaborates with cross-functional teams and external partners to strengthen food safety systems and support safe, high-quality products. Before joining General Mills, Polly worked in a food safety role at H-E-B Grocery Company and as an associate professor of Food Science & Technology at Ohio State University. Dr. Courtney earned her Ph.D. in Food Science from North Carolina State University and her B.S. in Biology from Texas A&M University.

Catherine Cutter, Ph.D.
Penn State University

Dr. Catherine Nettles Cutter is a Professor and Food Safety Extension Specialist in the Department of Food Science and has been a member of the Penn State faculty since 1999. Prior to joining Penn State, she was a Research Microbiologist at the USDA-ARS US Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, Nebraska. Dr. Cutter is a graduate of the University of Connecticut (BS and MS) in Pathobiology and earned her Doctorate at Clemson University in Food Technology. At Penn State, Dr. Cutter conducts research to determine the overall prevalence/incidence of pathogens in muscle foods, validates methodologies/assays for sampling and detection of foodborne pathogens in meat and poultry, as well as developing control measures or interventions for microbial contaminants, including antimicrobial films, gels, and coatings. She also conducts research on the food safety practices of food handlers and consumers and has extensive international teaching and research experience in Armenia, Ukraine, and

Africa. As part of her Extension/teaching appointment at Penn State, Dr. Cutter has co-directed or instructed in numerous food safety-related workshops and short courses designed for food industry professionals, including the Sanitation Short course, The Food Microbiology Shortcourse, The Food Mycology Shortcourse, Venison 101, Control of *Listeria monocytogenes*, Control of Pathogenic *E. coli*, as well as developing and disseminating food safety-related content for the Extension website, factsheets, brochures, pamphlets, manuals, posters, videos, and displays. She also developed the first online graduate level course in Food Science (FDSC/AGBIO 521) entitled “Fooddefense.” For over 8 years, Dr. Cutter served as Assistant Director of Food Safety & Quality Programs for Penn State Extension where she supervised over 25 Extension educators across Pennsylvania who developed and delivered online, hybrid, in-person food safety trainings and products for farmers and food handlers employed in the retail food industry, as well as consumers. Dr. Cutter is a Fellow of the International Association for Food Protection (2023), is an FT Fellow (2016), recipient of the W. LaMarr Kopp International Achievement Award, Penn State University (2021), the Gamma Sigma Delta International Foundation Distinguished Achievement Award (2019), and the Distinguished Extension-Industry Service Award, American Meat Science Association (2011).

Sanjay Gummalla, Ph.D.
American Frozen Food Institute

Sanjay Gummalla is senior vice president of food safety and scientific affairs, at the American Frozen Food Institute (AFFI). His broad industry experience in food science and nutrition is key to guiding science and policy advocacy and developing effective scientific tools and resources for the food and beverage industry. He is in the forefront of coordinating *Listeria monocytogenes* and enteric virus prevention and control programs on behalf of the frozen food industry. He also leads the industry’s initiatives in food waste reduction, decarbonizing the frozen supply chain and packaging recyclability. As executive director of the Frozen Food Foundation, the research arm of the industry, he steers a portfolio of industry initiatives and technical projects in food safety, nutrition, and sustainability.

Prior to joining AFFI, he served as vice president of product development at Zentis NA, a global fruit preparation manufacturer. His technical expertise extends to flavor development and product development resulting from managing food applications teams at Givaudan Flavors and leading the global dairy flavor research and development portfolio at Cargill Flavor Systems.

He previously served in the following roles: industry advisor, U.S. Agricultural Trade Advisory Committee for Processed Foods (ATAC); committee member, Journal of Food Protection – International Association of Food Protection (IAFP); president, Capital Area Food Protection Association (IAFP affiliate); and chair, International Food Science Certification Commission, which administers the Certified Food Scientist program at the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT).

On the food safety front, he is a Preventive Controls Qualified Individual (PCQI) instructor; taught food microbiology as adjunct assistant professor of food

microbiology, University of Cincinnati; and worked as a post-doctoral researcher at the Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), representing FDA's foray into nanotechnology applications. He holds a Ph.D. in Nutrition and Food Sciences from Utah State University.

Patrick Guzzle
National Restaurant Association

Patrick Guzzle is the Vice President of Food Science for the National Restaurant Association – the organization that writes and publishes ServSafe® products. In his role, Patrick advises the Association and its members on food safety issues, including pathogen control, allergen control, and others. Patrick also leads the Compliance Team – a group of Association team members who track legislative changes that impact food safety, food allergens, alcohol service, and other important factors for restaurants. Patrick frequently says that the efforts of the Food Safety and Compliance team are all focused on the guests walking through the front doors of a restaurant. He has been involved in retail food safety for over 25 years since his wife, Dianne, contracted E. coli O157:H7. His career in food safety began as an Environmental Health Specialist in Southeastern Idaho Public Health District (Pocatello, Idaho). He later became the Environmental Health Supervisor and was involved in all aspects of environmental health. In 2004, Patrick was hired as the Idaho Food Protection Program Manager with the State's Division of Public Health. During that time, he served as President of the Idaho Environmental Health Association. In 2018, Patrick started Mountain West Food Safety, LLC and was the Principal Consultant. In addition to helping several clients strengthen their own food safety efforts, Patrick regularly taught ServSafe® courses throughout Idaho and Eastern Oregon. Patrick has been an active participant in the Conference for Food Protection (CFP) and has served on several Committees, as well as Chairing Council II within the CFP. He served as Chair of the CFP from 2016 – 2018. He has received several commendations for his collaborative efforts with other organizations over the years. Patrick is an active member of the Association of Food and Drug Officials, the National Environmental Health Association, and the Western Association of Food and Drug Officials. He is an adjunct professor of Public Health at Boise State University. Patrick holds a Master of Public Health and a Master of Arts in Anthropology – both from Idaho State University as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish – also from Idaho State University. Patrick and his wife, Dianne both grew up in Colorado – she in Littleton and he in Steamboat Springs. They have 4 children and reside in Boise, Idaho.

Jovana Kovacevic, Ph.D.
Oregon State University

Dr. Jovana Kovacevic is an Associate Professor of Food Microbiology and Extension Specialist at Oregon State University (OSU), based at the Food Innovation Center in Portland. She directs the Western Regional Center to Enhance Food Safety, a USDA-funded center supporting Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) training and implementation across 13 western states and two U.S. territories. Her research addresses the ecology, genomics, and control of foodborne pathogens, particularly *Listeria monocytogenes*, in food production and processing environments. This includes national and international studies focused on persistence, sanitizer and antimicrobial tolerance, and molecular subtyping. She works closely with food industry to

translate that science into practical controls, and recently contributed to the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA) on *L. monocytogenes*. Before joining OSU she held positions at the University of British Columbia and the BC Centre for Disease Control, and consulted for the BC Ministry of Health. Dr. Kovacevic is a lead trainer for Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training and a lead instructor for Seafood HACCP and Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance courses in Preventive Controls for Human Food and Food Traceability Rule. She is also a trainer of assessors for On-Farm Readiness Reviews.

Haley Oliver-Jischke, Ph.D.
Purdue University

Haley Oliver-Jischke is the senior vice provost for academic and student success and the 150th Anniversary Professor of food science at Purdue University. She is the first to serve in this newly envisioned vice provost role, which was approved by the Board of Trustees in April 2024. Her brief time in this role has been marked by notable achievements, such as increasing the flexibility of fellowship funding for PhD student recruitment and launching the Future Faculty Boot Camp to help Purdue students and postdocs navigate academic career paths at leading institutions. Oliver-Jischke leads the ongoing efforts in West Lafayette and Indianapolis to amplify and accelerate the success of Purdue's many graduate students, professional students and postdoctoral scholars. She has held several leadership positions at Purdue, including assistant dean of ag online programs for the College of Agriculture and director of the USAID Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Safety. She has led initiatives to enhance the online portfolio of the College of Agriculture. She is recognized as a global leader in food safety in developing economies (e.g., Kenya, Cambodia, and Nepal) and was instrumental in developing food safety capacity in Afghanistan from 2012-17. Oliver-Jischke's research focuses on the prevalence, persistence and transmission of foodborne pathogens, particularly *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Salmonella*, in food systems. Her work aims to develop practical control strategies to reduce cross contamination and improve food safety. Oliver-Jischke is an internationally recognized expert in sanitizer and disinfectant efficacy, bridging both food and health care systems. Her excellence in research, teaching and service has been recognized through numerous awards, including the USDA and Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities John Morrill Award, the USDA Food and Agriculture Science Excellence in Teaching Award, Purdue University's Corinne Alexander Spirit of the Land-Grant Mission Award, the Charles B. Murphy Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award and the College of Agriculture Research Award.

Jessica Otto, CAPT
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Human Foods Program, Office of Retail Food Protection

Captain Jessica Otto has proudly served the US Public Health Service for 22 years. In her role in the Office of Retail Food Protection, Division of Policy she develops, revises, and interprets regulations and model codes. She provides technical support to the Implementation Division and Federal, state, and local agencies, tribal governments, and industry organizations. She co-leads the FDA National Retail Risk Factor Study and represents the Agency on the Conference for Food Protection standing committee for Food Safety Management Systems.

Régis Pouillot, D.V.M., MPH

French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety

Régis Pouillot, DVM, MPH, PhD, is a biostatistician with over 25 years of experience building quantitative risk assessment models and epidemiological studies in food safety and public health. He spent a decade at the FDA and now consults for the FDA Human Foods Program and the World Health Organization. His work spans chemical and microbiological hazards, with a particular focus on *Listeria monocytogenes*, for which he developed widely used dose-response models.

Donald Prater, D.V.M.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Human Foods Program

Dr. Donald A. Prater is the Acting Deputy Commissioner for Food. As the Acting Deputy Commissioner for Food, Dr. Prater leads the agency's Human Foods Program, overseeing all FDA nutrition and food safety activities. In this role, Dr. Prater 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. Dr. Prater also oversees food resources in the agency's Office of Inspections and Investigations.

Prior to this role, he served as the agency's Principal Deputy Associate Commissioner for Food since 2024 and was previously Acting Director of the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, a role he took on in 2023. He adeptly helped lead the Center during a time of transition, prioritizing nutrition and the safety of the food supply, dietary supplements, and cosmetics while helping to re-envision the organization.

Previously he had been the Associate Commissioner for Imported Food Safety in Office of Food Policy and Response, providing direction to and management of imported food safety programs. In addition, he served as a senior scientific advisor and technical expert on matters related to human and animal food safety and the implementation of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act. Earlier in his FDA tenure, Dr. Prater was Director of the FDA's Europe Office in Brussels, Belgium and the Department of Health and Human Services Country Representative to the European Union.

Dr. Prater received a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine (government and corporate track) in 1996. Following a three-year residency in anatomic pathology, he joined the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) in 1999 as a Veterinary Medical Officer. There he served in several roles including leader of the Aquaculture Drugs Team, CVM Pathologist, and Director of the Division of Scientific Support.

Staci Richardson
Schreiber Foods

Staci Richardson is Senior Vice President of Enterprise Quality & Food Safety at Schreiber Foods, a global producer of dairy products and aseptic beverages. With 25 years of industry experience at Schreiber and The J.M. Smucker Company, Staci now leads global food safety, quality, sanitation, and international regulatory compliance across Schreiber's 30+ facilities around the world. Based in Green Bay, Wisconsin, she previously spent three and a half years in Madrid, Spain, where she built Schreiber's European food safety, quality, and regulatory compliance team. She is also active with the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy and the IDFA Food Safety Committee. Staci earned her microbiology degree from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where she spent two years conducting pathogen research under Dr. Kathy Glass.

Moez Sanaa, Ph.D.
International Food Risk Analysis Communications (IFoRAC)

Dr. Moez Sanaa is a senior food safety and public health leader with over 30 years of experience spanning EU, UN, and US regulatory risk assessment systems. He is the founder and CEO of IFoRAC (International Food Risk Analysis Consortium), and previously served as WHO's Unit Head for Standards and Scientific Advice on Food and Nutrition (2021–2025), where he led the scientific work underpinning Codex Alimentarius standard-setting. Earlier, he headed the Food Safety Risk Assessment Unit at ANSES, France's national food safety agency, and spent over a decade as a member of EFSA's BIOHAZ and AHAW Scientific Panels and its Advisory Forum. He also taught biostatistics and risk analysis at the National Veterinary School of Alfort. Throughout his career, Moez has conducted and directed the conduct of numerous food safety risk assessments in France, across Europe, and globally, with a particular interest in dose-response modeling and stochastic modeling. Dr. Sanaa holds a PhD in Public Health/Epidemiology and a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree, and has authored over 150 peer-reviewed publications and scientific opinions (h-index 46).

Donald Schaffner, Ph.D.
Rutgers University

Dr. Donald W. Schaffner is Extension Specialist in Food Science and Distinguished Professor at Rutgers University. He is the current Chair of Department of Food Science. His research interests include handwashing, cross-contamination and quantitative microbial risk assessment.

He has authored over 225 peer-reviewed publications and educated thousands of food industry professionals around the world.

He is a Fellow of the Institute of Food Technologists, the American Academy of Microbiology, the Society for Risk Analysis and International Association for Food Protection (IAFP).

He began serving as a Contributing Editor for the journal Food Microbiology in 2020 and as the Editor in Chief for Microbial Risk Analysis in 2022. He was an Associate Editor for

Comprehensive Reviews in Food Science and Food Safety in 2020 and became a Scientific Editor for this journal in 2023.

Dr. Schaffner was the president of IAFP in 2013-2014. In his spare time, he co-hosts the Food Safety Talk and Risky or Not podcasts.

Eric Stevens, Ph.D.
International Fresh Produce Association

Eric Stevens, Ph.D., is the Vice President of Food Safety & Regulatory Affairs with the International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA), where he works at the intersection of science, policy, and industry to advance food safety, public health, and global trade. Drawing on a multidisciplinary background spanning microbiology, regulatory science, and One Health, he collaborates with government agencies, international organizations, academia, and industry stakeholders to develop practical, science-based approaches to food safety, traceability, and regulatory harmonization across the fresh produce supply chain. Prior to joining IFPA, Dr. Stevens built a career focused on foodborne pathogen surveillance, international food standards and risk assessment, and international partnerships at the United States Food and Drug Administration, bringing scientific expertise to complex regulatory and public health challenges. He is recognized for fostering collaboration across sectors to develop evidence-based solutions that improve food safety while supporting innovation and international commerce.

Joe Stout
Commercial Food Sanitation

Joe Stout is known in the industry for his 30-year career in sanitation and hygienic design as the Director of Global Product Protection, Sanitation and Hygienic Design for Kraft Foods. Joe held a variety of positions in quality and sanitation. While at Kraft in his Product Protection role, he was responsible for global plant cleaning controls and processes, including allergen/pathogen control programs and pest control. Also in his scope was the responsibility for hygienic design for facilities and equipment used in Kraft plants to ensure the equipment and facilities were cleanable and effectively cleaned. In 2020 he served as Vice Chair for the GFSI Hygienic Design Technical Working Group.

Following retirement from Kraft in 2010 Joe founded Commercial Food Sanitation (CFS) with a focus on “continuous improvement in sanitation” offering consulting and training for the food industry globally – essentially doing for the industry what he did for Kraft. CFS grew to 40 members with offices in New Orleans, Shanghai, Amsterdam, Australia, and Brazil. He retired from CFS in June of 2025.

Hilary Thesmar, Ph.D.
Food Marketing Institute

With over 20 years of experience in food science, food safety, and food and agriculture policy, Dr. Hilary Thesmar provides leadership for FMI’s retail, wholesale and product supplier members on scientific and technical issues related to food safety, food science and human

nutrition.

Dr. Thesmar earned a Ph.D. in Food Technology from Clemson University, a Master of Science degree in Human Nutrition from Winthrop University, a bachelor's degree in Food Science from Clemson, and she is a Registered Dietitian. Dr. Thesmar is a Fellow of the Institute of Food Technologists, an active member of the International Food Protection Association and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Jane Van Doren, Ph.D.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Human Foods Program, Office of Surveillance Strategy and Risk Prioritization

Dr. Jane Van Doren is Branch Chief of the Risk Assessment and Ranking Branch within the Division of Risk Assessment and Prioritization. She leads an interdisciplinary team of FDA scientists who develop innovative risk assessments, decision analysis frameworks and models, and provide data analytics research and tools to inform regulatory decision making by the FDA Human Foods Program. Research focuses on microbiological and chemical hazards in foods, developing quantitative risk assessments to characterize risk, identify vulnerable points in the risk continuum and effective mitigation and control strategies to reduce risk to the consumer, evaluation of sampling strategies designed to detect contaminated food, and characterization of dose-response relationships. The team is known for developing novel risk assessment and decision analysis methodology and frameworks provide new insights into these complex problems. Reducing the burden of illness from *Listeria monocytogenes* has been a major focus of the team's efforts throughout Dr. Van Doren's tenure at FDA. Dr. Van Doren holds a doctorate in Chemical Physics, is author of more than one hundred refereed publications in the scientific literature and has served in a wide range of leadership positions throughout her career.

Edwina Wambogo, Ph.D.

National Institutes of Health

Edwina Wambogo, Ph.D., M.Sc., M.P.H., R.D., is a Health Scientist Administrator/Program Officer in the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS), in the Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives (DPCPSI) of the Office of the NIH Director. Her work focuses on dietary assessment, using data from health surveys and epidemiologic studies. Before joining ODS, Dr. Wambogo worked as a Nutritional Epidemiologist in the Division of National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Dr. Wambogo earned her PhD in Nutrition and MPH in Community Health Education from the University of Maryland, College Park, and holds an MS in Nutrition and Dietetics from Kenyatta University. She is a Registered Dietitian.

Benjamin Warren, Ph.D.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Human Foods Program, Office of Microbiological Food Safety

Dr. Benjamin Warren is Senior Science Advisor for Food Safety at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Office of Microbiological Food Safety, Human Foods Program. 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. Before joining FDA, Dr. Warren held various food safety leadership positions with Land O'Lakes, Inc, ConAgra Foods, and Blood's Hammock Groves (a grower/processor of Florida citrus). Dr. Warren received his Ph.D. in Food Science, M.S. in Food Science, and B.S. in Food Science all from the University of Florida. Dr. Warren has served on the National Advisory Committee for the Microbiological Criteria for Food (NACMCF) and currently is the U.S. Delegate to the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH).

Martin Weidmann, Ph.D.
Cornell University

Martin Wiedmann, Dr. med. vet, Ph.D. is the Gellert Family Professor of Food Safety at Cornell University. Martin received a veterinary degree and a doctorate in Veterinary Medicine from the Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich, and a Ph.D. in Food Science from Cornell. His research interests focus on farm-to-table microbial food quality and food safety and the application of molecular tools and quantitative and modelling approaches to study the transmission of foodborne pathogens and spoilage organisms and to facilitate implementation of sustainable strategies to reduce food quality and safety associated risks. He and his team are regularly asked to help industry across the world with a range of microbial food safety and quality challenges. He is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), the American Academy of Microbiology (AAM), and the International Academy of Food Science and Technology.

Hilary Whitham, Ph.D., MPH
Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Dr. Hilary Whitham is the Associate Director of Prevention in the Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases at CDC. She leverages data to identify viable public health interventions, prioritize resources, and engage partners to prevention illness. Dr. Whitham earned her BS in Criminal Sociology, and her MPH and PhD in Epidemiology from the University of Minnesota. Her interests include health economics, policy analysis, decision analytics, evaluation, and data modernization.