



Central Atlantic States Association of Food and Drug Officials

SUSQI NEWS

Susquehanna Conference

March 2007

President's Message

It was wonderful to see so many of you and some new faces at our last meeting at the Giant over at the Camp Hill Mall. I hope you had an opportunity to look around at this nice and impressive store. Thanks to Greg Lux from Giant Foods for everything and the accommodations were wonderful. I hope everyone had a pleasant day as I did.

Our next meeting will be held at the Hoss's Steak and Sea House where we have met before on North Atherton Street, off of Business Route 322, north of the Penn State Campus. Ken Hohe has prepared a lovely slate of speakers and finished with a tour of the New Food and Science Building at Penn State. Please mark your calendars and I hope to see all of you there.

I also would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Happy Passover and Easter which is coming up.

Remember our CASA Annual Conference is just around the corner. This year CASA's conference will be hosted by the Virginia Conference. It will be held at Virginia Beach at the Ramada Plaza Resort Ocean Front Hotel in Virginia Beach. The conference runs from May 15 through May 18, 2007. Please refer to the CASA website at www.casafdo.org.

This will be my last meeting as President of the Susquehanna Conference. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped me over the last two years. Without all of your efforts and support, Susquehanna Conference would not be thriving and I could not have done my job. It has been an honor to serve this Conference and I would urge you to support Barbara Allerton from the Dept. of Health as she becomes your new President on June 1. CASA is a wonderful organization to be a part of and you can obtain a wealth of information by the networking that is possible throughout our own conference and Big CASA.

I look forward to seeing each of you at our meeting on April 12, 2007 at Hoss's Steak and Sea House. Enjoy the coming of Spring 'til then!

Lynn Roche
Susquehanna Conference President

SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE BALLOT

As Chairman of the Nominations and Elections Committee, it is again time for the members of the Susquehanna Conference of the Central Atlantic States Association (CASA) to hold an election of officers.

Lynn Roche's term of president will be complete following the CASA annual conference in May at Virginia Beach, VA. Barbara Allerton, the current vice-president, will assume the office of president.

We will need to elect a person to serve as vice-president, for a term of two years

The office of Secretary/Treasurer must be filled. Ted Veresink has agreed to have his name on the ballot for re-election.

Suzanne Yeager is completing her term as Representative to the CASA Executive Board. We will need to elect a person to fill this slot. The position requires an election each year for four (4) years. After the fourth year, the person automatically serves for another four years.

Please cast your ballot by marking an X in the appropriate box or you may write in a name on the line provided. All ballots must be returned by the close of business on April 9, 2007. It is absolutely necessary that you write on the envelope **SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE BALLOT**. Please send to:

Kenneth W. Hohe
4731 Count Street
Harrisburg, PA 17109-3039

Vice President

Garry Ritter, Sanitarian
Allentown City Health Department []

Write in _____ []

Secretary/Treasurer

Ted Veresink []
Write in _____ []

Representative to the CASA Executive Board

Lynn Roche []
Susquehanna Township Health Officer

Melissa Vaccaro []
PA Department of Agriculture

Write in _____ []

Fresh-Cut Fruits and Vegetables: Draft Final Guidance

The Food and Drug Administration announces the availability of the draft final fresh-cut guidance, entitled "Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards of Fresh-cut Fruits and Vegetables" (the Guide). The purpose of the Guide is to minimize the potential for microbial contamination during the processing of fresh-cut produce by providing recommendations to fresh-cut processors.

Fresh-cut produce is produce that is minimally processed (no lethal kill step) and altered in form by peeling, slicing, chopping, shredding, coring or trimming with or without washing or other treatment prior to being packaged for use by the consumer or a retail establishment. Examples of fresh-cut products are shredded lettuce, sliced tomatoes, salad mixes (raw vegetable salads), peeled baby carrots, broccoli florets, cut melons and sectioned grapefruit.

The fresh-cut produce sector is the fastest growing sector of the produce industry. As the fresh-cut sector grows, a larger volume and greater variety of fresh-cut products have become available. From 1996 to 2006, twenty-six percent of all outbreaks associated with fresh produce implicated fresh-cut produce.

If pathogens are present, the processing of fresh-cut produce by peeling, slicing, shredding, coring, or trimming may increase the risk of bacterial contamination and growth by breaking the natural exterior barrier of the produce thereby supplying nutrients for pathogens to grow. In addition, the high degree of handling common in fresh-cut operations may increase the risk of cross-contamination if adequate controls (e.g., adequate levels of free chlorine in a dump tank) are not in place.

The Guide is a continuation of existing programs such as the good agricultural practices (GAPs) program and covers the processing of fresh produce into fresh-cut produce, the next link in the supply chain. In FDA's 2004 Produce Safety Action (PSAP), the issuance of the Guide was identified as an action that could help achieve the PSAP's first objective, to prevent contamination from occurring.

The Guide complements FDA's Current Good Manufacturing Practice regulations for food (21 CFR 110) and provides a framework for identifying and implementing appropriate measures to minimize the risk of microbial contamination during the processing of fresh-cut produce. Specifically, it discusses the production and harvesting of fresh produce and provides recommendations for fresh-cut processing in the following areas: (1) personnel health and hygiene, (2) training, (3) building and equipment, (4) sanitation operations, and (5) fresh-cut produce production and processing controls from product specification to packaging, storage and transport. The Guide also provides recommendations on recordkeeping and on recalls and tracebacks.

In the Guide, FDA recommends that processors encourage the adoption of safe practices by their partners throughout the supply chain, including produce growers, packers, distributors, transporters, importers, exporters, retailers, food service operators, and consumers.

The Guide also recommends that fresh-cut processors consider a preventive control program such as the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) system to build safety into their processing operations. HACCP is a system designed to prevent, eliminate, or reduce to acceptable levels the microbial, chemical, and physical hazards associated with food production.

FDA will hold two public hearings concerning the safety of fresh produce including fresh-cut produce on March 20, 2007, in Oakland, CA and April 13, 2007, in College Park, MD (Wiley Building).

Bacteria-Eating Virus Approved as Food Additive

Not all viruses harm people. The Food and Drug Administration has approved a mixture of viruses as a food additive to protect people. The additive can be used in processing plants for spraying onto ready-to-eat meat and poultry products to protect consumers from the potentially life-threatening bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes* (*L. monocytogenes*).

The viruses used in the additive are known as bacteriophages. Bacteriophage means "bacteria eater." A bacteriophage, also called a phage (pronounced fayj), is any virus that infects bacteria.

Consuming food contaminated with the bacterium *L. monocytogenes* can cause an infectious disease, listeriosis, which is rarely serious in healthy adults and children, but can be severe and even deadly in pregnant women, newborns, older people, and people with weakened immune systems. Pregnant women are about 20 times more likely than other healthy adults to get listeriosis, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Listeriosis can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, or death of a newborn baby.

People with listeriosis have fever and muscle aches, and sometimes an upset stomach, nausea, and diarrhea. If the infection spreads to the nervous system, headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, or convulsions can occur.

The CDC estimates that about 2,500 people become seriously ill with listeriosis each year in the United States. Of these, about 500 die.

Cooking can kill *L. monocytogenes*, but many ready-to-eat foods, such as hot dogs, sausages, luncheon meats, cold cuts, and other deli-style meats and poultry, may become contaminated within the processing plant after cooking and before packaging. Unlike fresh meat and poultry, the ready-to-eat products can be consumed without reheating, so the *L. monocytogenes* survive even in refrigerated conditions.

How Bacteriophages Work

Bacteriophages are found in the environment. They are found in soil and water, and they are part of the microbial population in the human gut and oral cavity.

Bacteriophages infect only bacteria. A variety of phages exist, and each one infects only one type or a few types of bacteria. The particular phages approved as a food additive are very specific to *Listeria*.

The type of phage that was approved is lytic, which means that the phage destroys its host during its life cycle without integrating into the host genome. This type of phage works by attaching itself to a bacterium and injecting its genetic material into the cell. The phage takes over the metabolic machinery of the bacterium, forcing it to produce hundreds of new phages and causing the bacterial cell walls to break open. This process kills the bacterium and releases many new phages, which seek out other bacteria to invade and repeat the cycle.

Approval Process for Food Additives

To market a new food additive, a manufacturer must petition the FDA for its approval. The petition must provide convincing evidence that the proposed additive performs as it is intended and will not cause harmful effects when consumed.

If an additive is approved, the FDA issues a regulation that includes information on the types of foods in which the additive can be used and maximum amounts to be used. The regulation also provides the additive's identity and specifications on purity, which will ensure that the additive used in food is the same substance that was evaluated and approved by the FDA.

In response to a petition submitted by industry, the FDA published a regulation in August 2006 permitting the use of a *Listeria*-specific bacteriophage preparation on ready-to-eat meat and poultry products. The preparation combines six different phages that have been shown to be effective against 170 different strains of *L. monocytogenes*. Multiple phages are used so that if the *L. monocytogenes* develop resistance to several phages, the remaining ones can still destroy the bacteria.

The FDA must approve any additive before it can be used in food. When an additive is to be used on meat or poultry products, as with this one, both the FDA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are involved in the approval. The FDA evaluates the safety of the ingredient for its intended use. At the same time, the USDA evaluates the ingredient's suitability.

The FDA's food additive regulations define safety as "a reasonable certainty that the substance is not harmful under the intended conditions of use." The FDA's CFSAN determined that the phage preparation does not pose any safety concerns based, in part, on published reports submitted by the petitioner on the results of the use of phages in animal and human studies.

The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) evaluated the bacteriophage preparation's suitability. Suitability establishes that the use of a substance is effective in performing the intended purpose of use and at the lowest level necessary for particular types of products. Suitability is an assurance that the use of the additive will not result in a product that is unfit for human consumption (adulterated) or one that misleads consumers. The FSIS evaluated data submitted by the petitioner to ensure suitability for a number of ready-to-eat products, such as sausages, turkey, soups, stews, hot dogs, bologna, Vienna sausage, and cooked ham and turkey.

Labeling

Under the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act, both administered by the USDA, the use of the phage preparation must be declared on labeling as an ingredient. Consumers will see "bacteriophage preparation" on the label of meat or poultry products that have been treated with the food additive.

A Phage First

This approval marks the first time that the FDA has regulated the use of a phage preparation as a food additive. Phages are currently approved in the United States for pesticide applications, such as spraying on crops.

Scientists continue to be interested in other uses for phages, such as to prevent food products from contamination with other types of harmful bacteria and to act as possible treatments for bacterial infections in people.

FDA News

Update on Peanut Butter Recall

As a follow-up to the recent Salmonella outbreak linked to peanut butter, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is informing consumers that ConAgra has extended their recall of all Peter Pan peanut butter, and all Great Value peanut butter beginning with product code 2111, including peanut butter toppings, back to October 2004. This information was obtained recently as part of the ongoing investigation being conducted by FDA.

Consumers who have purchased any of the products since October 2004 should discard them. FDA's advice to consumers continues to be not to eat any Peter Pan peanut butter or any Great Value peanut butter beginning with the 2111 product code.

FDA will provide updates on recalled products, including any other products that may have been made with potentially contaminated peanut butter and distributed to consumers.

Symptoms of foodborne illness caused by Salmonella include fever, diarrhea and abdominal cramps. In persons with poor underlying health or weakened immune systems, Salmonella can invade the bloodstream and cause life-threatening infections or death. Individuals who have recently eaten peanut butter-containing products from these companies and who have experienced any of these symptoms should contact their doctor or health care provider immediately and report the illnesses to their state or local health authorities. Similarly, institutional food establishments and other food service providers who have received reports of illness from consumers after they consumed a product containing this peanut butter are encouraged to share that information with their local health department.

FDA is continuing to work closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and with states and local officials to identify how the contamination occurred in order to prevent similar foodborne illness outbreaks.

FROM USPHS – INFO ON COURSE OFFERING:

I am helping to sponsor a course by ATSDR and the American College of Medical Toxicologists that I think members of the CASA group might be interested in attending. The course is FREE and will be in Crystal City, VA at the EPA conference center (close to the Crystal City Metro stop) on May 1st. Please feel free to share the email with anyone you think might be interested in attending!

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The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the

American College of Medical Toxicologists (ACMT) are please to host a one day course titled:

Environmental Public Health Consequences of Clandestine Methamphetamine Laboratories

The topics to be covered include: methamphetamine use and abuse, the hazards of methamphetamine synthesis, health effects of methamphetamines, clean up and remediation of clandestine laboratories, law enforcement, and public policy issues.

Breakout sessions will feature focused discussions on Social Service, Cleanup, Law Enforcement, and Patient Assessment and Treatment. Participants will be able to choose which 2 sessions to attend.

The course is designed for a broad audience including public health professionals, environmental health professionals, social services providers, law enforcement and HAZMAT professionals, and public policy professionals and others who may work on issues related to clandestine methamphetamine laboratories.

DATE: May 1, 2007

TIME: 8:30am - 5:00pm

LOCATION : Potomac Yards One - EPA Conference Center (2777 South Crystal Drive, Arlington, VA 22202)

COST: There is NO registration fee for the course

TO REGISTER: Please visit the website
<http://trainex.org/offeringlist.cfm?courseid=538&all=yes>

Please register soon since space will be limited.

If you have any questions please contact:
Tarah Somers at 703-603-8766

