

National Tree Crop Food Safety Research Symposium
May 7, 2008
Las Vegas, NV

In Attendance: Bassam Annous, Amber Bailey, Ted Batkin, Lori Berger, Larry Beuchat, Tim Birmingham, Dan Botts, Deborah Carter, Peter Chaires, Jim Cranney, Michelle Danyluk, Bob Elliott, Wally Ewart, Bonnie Fernandez, Mary Jo Gash, David Gombas, Jim Gorny, Ines Hanrahan, Linda Harris, Guangwei Huang, Alan Lefcourt, Bob Klein, Keith Matthews, Sheri Mierau, Don Roark, Martha Roberts, Chris Schlect, Tim Spann, Trevor Suslow, Robert Whitaker, Randy Worobo, Chris Zanobini.

Welcome and brief introductions given by Linda Harris and Bob Eliot.

Martha Roberts gave an extensive overview of what is being done with respect to regulation and research needs for the Tomato Industry, specifically along the east coast. This rule will mandate a regulatory inspection of tomatoes for good agricultural practices in farms and greenhouses (T-GAP) and best management practices in packinghouses and postharvest(T-BMP) and will be the first mandatory produce safety regulation in the nation. As they move forward, the consolidation of the 3rd party audits will be the biggest push. Martha indicated that she was working closely with Dave Gombas to consolidate tomato research objectives with lettuce and leafy greens objectives in a table that would demonstrate the overlap between the two groups. She is very interested in working with the tree crop industry to further expand the table as she believes it will be a more impactful document with the backing of a broad industry base.

Bonnie Fernandez introduced the four priorities of the new Center for Produce Safety at UC Davis, which is set to be a global center for produce safety. They include:

1. Global Clearing House - Creating a website to bring pieces of information together. Include current/ongoing research, as well as, research that has been completed and published.
2. Research and research funding – Fund research in priority research areas. The first call for research proposals will be June 15, 2008, announcement of funded proposals November 1, 2008. The Center will look for research funding opportunities throughout the year.
3. Communications and outreach – Sponsorship of priority setting research meetings, training programs with food safety components, media resource.
4. Fundraising – There will be an on-going process to find research funding and encourage private donations. The Center will not apply overhead charges to research fund donations.

The goal of the center is to be the go-to center to find appropriate information, and to develop a list of go-to scientists.

Dave Gombas gave an overview of the lettuce and leafy greens industry, with a focus on the Taco John's outbreak. The California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement has been successful and a similar program is being adopted in Arizona. The USDA CSREES review panels, and their focus on seafood and poultry/meats was also discussed.

Amber Bailey of the Canadian Horticultural Council introduced the eight-crop HACCP based program used in Canada.

The four breakout groups were then charged to identify ten to twelve specific research gaps, and then choose the top three research priorities.

Groups then presented their top three priorities to the larger group.

Action Items included:

1. Linda Harris will collapse the research priorities into a combined set of priorities and send out to attendees for comment (by May 12th, back by May 19th). This finalized list will then be shared with the larger Tree Crop listserve.
2. Research priorities will be tabulated with Leafy Greens and Tomato priorities (contact person Martha Roberts).
3. Identify key people to move forward with list of priorities
 - a. Bob Elliot, Sunkist
 - b. Jim Cranney, U.S. Apple Association
 - c. Chris Schlect, North West Horticultural Association
 - d. Bonnie Fernandez, Center for Produce Safety
 - e. It was agreed that the appropriate group to carry forward the list of priorities by commodity and as a group to draft RFPs for research is the Specialty Crops Research Team which represents most of the commodities present at the symposium. Bob Elliott and Ted Batkin will follow up.
4. Michelle Danyluk to finish organizing the bibliography prepared by Larry Beuchat by commodity. This will be posted at WIFSS website and link will be given to the Tree Crop listserve.
5. A meeting next year in conjunction with the United Fresh Conference was proposed.