



Technical Advisory Group

United Fresh Technical Advisory Group members have attended several conferences as reported below.

The following themes repeated themselves throughout the various presentations;

Major trends in Food Safety, Quality and Risk are:

- Social and consumer perceptions
- Trust in regulators and thought influencers
- Transparency of supply chains
- Resistance to anti-microbial treatments
- Allergens
- Genomics and Big Data technology
- Social media
- Regulation and need for global harmonised regulations (fast)
- Communication – the consumer doesn't understand risk

New Zealand Food Science & Research Centre (NZFSSRC) Inaugural Meeting 3rd July

NZFSSRC was launched by the NZ government in 2016, clustering the food safety science competencies of the University of Auckland, Massey University, University of Otago, Plant and Food Research, the Institute of Environmental and Science Research, and the Cawthron Institute into a Virtual Centre headed up by Professor Nigel French

from Massey University.

The focus is on projects that address common issues such as anti-microbial resistance, waste disposal, Shiga toxins (STEC E.coli infections). Another research theme focus is social science, relating to Risk Landscape, Risk Mitigation and Market Perception (social science).

University of Technology Sydney's Food Agility Centre (Dr Anne Astin, Australia)

The University of Technology of Sydney, The Queensland University of Technology and Curtin University have collaborated to launch the Food Agility Cooperative Research Centre (FACRC) which is a Virtual Centre combining different science research disciplines.

The four main objectives of this collaboration are:

- Producing the right thing
- Leveraging "Brand Australia"
- Improving access to Finance for the food industry
- Building the future workforce

The 21st century challenge for the food industry is the consumer who does not differentiate between Food Safety, Food Security, Food Provenance, Food Nutrition and Food Freshness.

Markets and Perception – Qualitative Food Safety Research in NZ

This presentation discussed how perceptions can enhance or inhibit consumer demand and the social and cultural aspects of perception. Cultures may perceive risks and quality differently, requiring regulations to take account of the expected reactions surrounding

foods. The social aspects of risk are becoming increasingly pertinent in the age of social media. Risk needs to be understood within social and cultural contexts. Jo Finer stated that “consumers want to know who the company is behind the products they purchase and what they stand for”, and presented the following statistics – NZ has the lowest consumer Food Safety awareness at just 50% behind Australia at 67% and China at 90%.

Advanced Diagnostics and Technologies

The role of laboratories performing microbial tests will change rapidly because of new technologies. In house laboratories will almost become a “Lab on a microchip”. A Queensland Fruit Fly trial to check imported fresh produce is an MPI research project currently underway.

The Global Burden of Food Borne Disease (WHO)

The highlights of the session were:

- 10% of the world population is affected annually by food borne disease (estimated to be 600 million per annum, the vast majority will have diarrhoea)
- Children constitute about 9% of population but account for 38% of food borne deaths
- Poor countries are the most affected by food borne illness
- Developing countries face the challenge of healthcare availability
- Internationally major food borne illnesses are Noro-virus and Campylobacter
- Salmonella, Typhoid and Taenia (worms) are major causes of death

from food borne illness

- Non Typhoid Salmonella is a major issue due to the longer term health effects on the individuals affected

New Zealand perspective of this project:

- STEC E.coli infection is increasing as well as increased reporting in NZ
- Toxoplasmosis is a food borne disease, not currently so in NZ.
However, there is concern it could become a major issue internationally
- Yersinia and Campylobacter are a NZ issue with high rates of infection

Fresh Produce Research

Food Safety issues for fresh produce are much more complex than dairy due to the diversity of crops and treatments. Produce related outbreaks are increasing internationally in both numbers and profile. The incidence in NZ produce is relatively high by international standards. NZ food borne illness issues in particular include Norovirus, Staph. Aureus, Salmonella, B. Cereus, and STEC. Using hurdle principles well is crucial to fresh produce, with a combination of heat, sanitisers and UV treatment.

Food Fraud, Food Protection and Food Defense

Food Security ensuring People have at all times access to sufficient safe nutritious food

Food Safety is about system reliability and reducing exposure to natural hazards, errors or failures

Food Defense is about system resiliency and reducing the impact of system attacks

Whole Fresh produce is generally of lower concern in Food fraud. Seafood, Dairy, meat, alcohol and oils are the top 5 products impacted by food fraud.

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 **Forward**

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