



Food Safety Research Consortium FSII Project: Phase 1

Exploring Opportunities to Improve the Nation's Food Safety Information Infrastructure

Workshop on Public Sector Food Safety Data Collection, Access and Sharing

November 2-3, 2006 | Holiday Inn Conference Center | Decatur, GA

A Note to Participants

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Workshop on Public Sector Food Safety Data Collection, Access and Sharing. This workshop is a critical component of the Food Safety Information Infrastructure (FSII) project that the Food Safety Research Consortium (FSRC) is undertaking with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. A copy of the project description is attached.

For purposes of the FSII project and this Public Sector Workshop, the “food safety information infrastructure” is defined to include “all the many public and private institutions and processes through which data and information are collected, made accessible, and actively shared to protect and improve food safety.”

The FSII is an enormously complex system. It is complex organizationally because of the number and diversity of institutions – public and private – that comprise it, including:

- Over 20 federal agencies involved in surveillance, research, regulation, and education;
- Hundreds of state-level health agencies, including health and agriculture departments, laboratories, and inspection agencies;
- Thousands of local health departments and sanitarians;
- Many thousands of food producers, processors, and retailers;
- Scores of academic research and extension centers and many more individual researchers; and
- A host of consumer and consumer education organizations.

The system is also complex functionally. These organizations depend, to varying degrees, on information gathered by others; and they interact with each other – through their approaches to data collection, access, and sharing – in diverse ways. The FSII is, in effect, a highly dispersed network of independent entities that operate in close coordination with each other in some respects – such as in the public sector investigation and response to large outbreaks of foodborne illness – and without active coordination or sharing of data in many other cases.

The starting assumptions of the FSII project are that, across all sectors, realistic opportunities exist for significant improvement in how data are collected, made accessible and shared to improve food

safety, but that such opportunities can only be identified through active dialogue among participants in the system. The central method of the project is thus to foster that dialogue, primarily through sector-focused workshops, such as this one on the public sector. Other workshops will examine FSII issues from the perspectives of the food industry and academia.

These invitation-only workshops will provide a broad cross-section of experts an opportunity to share their expertise and ideas concerning opportunities to improve the functioning of the FSII. The Public Sector Workshop will focus on a set of topics and issues – set forth in the workshop agenda – that were developed by a broadly representative planning committee and are intended to elicit as many ideas and perspectives as possible from the workshop participants.

To stimulate thinking prior to the workshop, we provide the background materials listed below. Additional materials will be provided at the workshop. We look forward to seeing you there.

Background Materials

Following as attachments to this note are:

1. FSII project description, providing background on the goals and scope of the FSII project.
2. Agenda for the Public Sector Workshop, with key topics and issues outlined.
3. Participants list for the Public Sector Workshop.
4. Three simplified schematics of the institutional landscape for the FSII.
5. A proposed typology of food safety data types.
6. A brief description of the purposes for which various data types are collected.
7. The flow of food safety data: Two functional flow charts depicting the input and output of food safety information, by data type and sector, for (a) an illustrative foodborne outbreak investigation, (b) an illustrative microbial risk assessment.
8. A draft survey instrument for discussion at the workshop.

Contacts

For further information about the workshop or the background materials, please contact a member of the project team, including:

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