

Sprout Safety Alliance

Background

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, in cooperation with the Illinois Institute of Technology's Institute for Food Safety and Health (IIT IFSH), has created the Sprouts Safety Alliance (SSA) to help sprout producers in identifying and implementing best practices in the safe production of sprouts. The Alliance will develop a core curriculum and training and outreach programs for stakeholders in the sprout production community. Sprouts present a unique food safety risk because the warm, moist and nutrient-rich conditions required to produce sprouts are the same conditions that are also ideal for the growth of pathogens.

The FDA is expected to issue a proposed rule during early 2012 that would establish science-based standards for the production and harvesting of certain produce, including sprouts. FDA is required to issue a proposed rule under section 105 of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act.

The Alliance is composed of members from the FDA, local and state food protection agencies, the food industry, and academia. It is funded by a one-year, \$100,000 grant to the Illinois Institute of Technology's Institute for Food Safety and Health (IIT IFSH), a nationally-recognized leader in food safety.

Alliance support to industry

The Alliance will:

- Develop training materials to assist sprouters in adopting best practices for the safe production of sprouts based on available FDA guidance documents
- Provide tools to assist growers in conducting self-audits of their sprouting operations and production practices to minimize microbial hazards associated with sprouts
- Develop training materials that facilitate industry understanding and implementation of relevant requirements in the upcoming produce safety regulation
- Serve as a network hub and resource for the sprout industry, and federal and state regulatory agencies
- Develop a technical assistance network for the sprout industry
- Collaborate with USDA, states, trade associations, and land-grant university extension services to provide classroom and distance training and workshops for stakeholders across the U.S.

Other Alliances

The Sprout Safety Alliance is modeled on other alliances for seafood, juice, produce and preventive controls developed by the FDA and groups representing academia, industry, and government. The Seafood HACCP Alliance was created in 1994, the Juice HACCP Alliance in 2001, the Produce Safety Alliance in 2010 and the Preventive Controls Alliance in 2011.

Alliance Membership

The Alliance Organizing Committee consists of representatives from FDA, the California Department of Health, and IIT IFSH. The Organizing committee has selected the Alliance's steering committee, which includes representatives from academia, state government, industry trade and scientific associations, FDA and IIT IFSH. The Steering Committee's role will be to decide on the overall strategies of the Alliance, to determine the scope of work, and to nominate the members of the Technical and Education/Outreach committees. The Steering Committee held its first meeting on February 15, 2012.