

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **IIT Institute for Food Safety and Health Launches FDA Funded Sprout Safety Alliance**

*Aim is to help food companies access sprout safety information and  
education to enhance best practices*

**(Bedford Park, IL) February 28, 2012** – Illinois Institute of Technology's **Institute for Food Safety and Health** (IIT IFSH) will coordinate the **Sprout Safety Alliance (SSA)** designed to assist sprout growers and producers in identifying and implementing best practices in the safe production of sprouts.

The Sprout Safety Alliance is a one-year, \$100,000 partnership grant funded by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Office of Foods through the IIT IFSH-FDA collaborative agreement. The alliance will be housed at IIT IFSH, which introduced in 2011 a ground-breaking audit checklist to improve sprout safety along with on-site beta test results validating its effectiveness in a real-world setting via the institute's Sprout Safety Task Force.

The new public-private organization will develop core curriculum, training and outreach programs for stakeholders in the sprout production community to enhance the industry's understanding and implementation of pending sprout safety regulatory requirements.

"Sprouts present a unique food safety challenge due to the warm, moist and nutrient-rich conditions required for their production," said IIT Vice President and IFSH Director **Robert E. Brackett, Ph.D.** "For example, certain food safety practices used by sprout growers and sprout seed and bean producers, such as testing spent irrigation water and pre-sprouting seed disinfection procedures, are unique to this commodity. The Sprout Safety Alliance coordinated by IIT IFSH will foster scientific collaboration in an effort to enhance food safety action items, training and regulatory compliance for this industry sector."

The education and outreach efforts of the Sprout Safety Alliance, Brackett continues, will be

directed toward assisting producers in this specific category within the produce sector to enhance safety now and comply with upcoming regulations, when final. The SSA's objectives are to:

- Develop training materials that assist sprouters in adopting best practices for the safe production of sprouts based on available FDA guidance documents and other information
- Provide tools to assist growers in conducting self-audits of their sprouting facilities and production practices to minimize microbial hazards associated with sprouts
- Develop training materials that facilitate industry understanding of risks associated with sprouts, current mitigation practices, and implementation of the sprout-related requirements in the upcoming produce safety regulation, when final
- Serve as a network hub and resource for the sprout industry, buyers, retailers, 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.

The alliance coordinators are **Stephen Grove, Ph.D.**, IIT IFSH Manager, Industry Projects, and **Joy Johanson, MPH**, Consumer Safety Officer, FDA's Center for Food Safety and Nutrition (CFSAN). The SSA Steering Committee consists of representatives from IIT IFSH, federal and state government agencies, academia, and trade associations. Development of subcommittees, governance and structure of the SSA are in progress.

IIT IFSH will host web pages for the alliance's progress updates. Materials are expected to become available in mid-March 2012.

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**Illinois Institute of Technology's (IIT) Institute for Food Safety and Health (IFSH)** is a one-of-a-kind applied food science research institute that provides stakeholders in government, industry and academia the opportunity to develop and exchange knowledge and expertise to address key issues in food safety, food defense and nutrition. Powered by a singular combination of in-depth food science expertise and state-of-the-art research capabilities, IIT IFSH's collaborative research model helps stakeholders define and design innovative and practical approaches to solving real-world challenges in food industry operations. Located at IIT's Moffett Campus in Bedford Park, IL, IFSH is also home to the FDA CFSAN Division of Food Processing Science and Technology. **For more, visit [www.iit.edu/ifsh](http://www.iit.edu/ifsh)**

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