

Reaching Consumers

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Summary and Implications

Food Safety and Quality (FS&Q) project continues its partnership with the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, to provide daily international food safety news from newswires and scientific journals. Iowa State University (ISU) is one of few sites in the world that maintains a searchable archive of these articles. More than 23,000 consumers have accessed and completed one of the four interactive food safety lessons. Additionally, more than 350,000 consumers have accessed the Food Safety Web site home page or one of its links. Site visitors (18,339) used our information about the source, symptoms, and methods of preventing *Staphylococcus*, *Salmonella*, and *Listeriosis*. In a 3-week period in May, users from 64 countries accessed our site. Companies or net providers accounted for 71% of the hits. User sessions per day were 459 for an average of 12 min. Page views numbered 16,926 for 3 weeks (293,384 annually).

Introduction/Goals and Objectives

- Improve understanding of risks and responsible practices in relation to food and health through increased knowledge.
- Maintain and enhance presence of Food Safety consortium Web at www.foodsafety.iastate.edu/.
- Post research findings on the Consortium Web site as they become available.
www.foodsafety.iastate.edu/ and links to www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety

Materials and Methods

We provided people with information in various formats. News releases addressing current food safety concerns were posted to the World Wide Web (WWW) for immediate access by media. The WWW and print media enabled us to disseminate food safety information by providing access to links to Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), food law information and government agencies, on-going research from the Food Safety Consortium, educational tools, such as "Ten Steps to a Safe Kitchen," food safety news, descriptions of common foodborne pathogens, and probable sources of foodborne illness and seasonal food safety tips.

Results

The Consortium Web site includes a separate, identifiable component on food irradiation (www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety/rad/irradhome.html). This section includes a consumer-friendly description of how it works, visual depiction of the Iowa State University linear accelerator, a history of irradiation, commonly-asked consumer questions, a glossary of terms, irradiation resources, and research findings. Consumers and professionals can request copies of Dr. Dennis Olson's IFT publication "Irradiation of Food: Scientific Status."

The FS&Q team has developed a Web-based HACCP education model. This model was used to train school food service managers as part of a 2-day training program in July 1999. The model will be a resource for the managers as they implement an HACCP system in their school food service.

The FS&Q and Food Safety Consortium Web site also was used as a resource for a 2-day ServSafe™ sanitation certification program offered in July 1999. The program, which was attended by 165 school food service managers, was offered by closed-circuit television (the Iowa Communications Network), received high marks for content and accessibility. More than 150 managers passed the nation-wide sanitation certification exam.

The sites were demonstrated as a resource for the education of management and employees during an educational television program explaining the application of *Food Code '97*, the newly-adopted Iowa sanitation regulation. The program was planned by the ISU Food Safety and Quality project team and Food Safety consortium team, in cooperation with the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, the Iowa Hospitality Association (restaurants), and the Iowa Grocers Association (grocery store delis). Sixty-seven managers and division managers of foodservice operations attended the program.

The Consumer Control Points, based on HACCP principles, were highlighted on a colorful bookmark for distribution to consumers. More than 45,000 bookmarks have been distributed. Additionally, reprinting privileges have been given to numerous organizations. ISU Extension Nutrition and Health Field Specialists regularly access the food safety Web pages and links to the Food Safety Consortium site and use the material to develop programs, media releases, and portable displays for fairs, exhibitions, schools, and retail establishments.

CSNBC called for permission to use the site information for a news broadcast. According to NBC, we are the only site in the world that has an electron microscopic picture of the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*, which they used in a NBC news broadcast.

We have received accolades from consumers, educational institutions, organizations, and mass media in many states, including Arkansas, California, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi, North

Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Nevada, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, and West Virginia. Some examples of transferability of our site information to other users follow.

The county health department in Michigan is using the “Ten Steps to a Safe Kitchen” in their WIC classes. That module (“Ten Steps...”) was highlighted as an excellent food safety training resource in *Food Service Director* magazine. *Food Service Director* is read by more than 40,000 foodservice managers in the United States and abroad. In Mississippi, home economists are using the site as a component of ServSafe™ food safety training. The lessons are offered in three languages: English, Norwegian, and Japanese.