

Reaching Consumers and Food Industry with Effective Food Safety Messages

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The Food Safety Consortium (FSC) Web-site project continues to receive higher numbers of site visits and be recognized for its work. More than 400,000 visitors have accessed the Food Safety Web site home page or one of its links over the past year. Visitors from 120 countries accessed our site and used our information, averaging 8_ minutes per visit. Our online training lessons continue to be used. Thirty-five thousand scores were recorded last year to bring the total number of scores to more than 85,000 consumers have accessed and completed one of the four interactive food safety lessons.

Introduction

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

Materials and Methods

We provided people with information in various formats. The World Wide Web and print media enable 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 the Critical Control Point Kitchen; food safety news; descriptions of common foodborne pathogens; probable sources of foodborne illness; and seasonal food safety tips.

Results and Discussion

The research team has continued work on developing new HACCP training materials. Complete training resources for foodservice operators, including sample hazard analysis guidelines, critical control point diagrams, and standard operating procedures. These materials can be downloaded and are available at the HACCP demonstration Web site (<http://www.iowahaccp.iastate.edu>). Online lessons for training foodservice operators are

under development. These materials complement the existing HACCP resources for small meat processors.

The food irradiation section (<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety/rad/irradhome.html>) has been updated with the latest information for consumers. 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. With these resources, the research team was able to assist several students this past year from South Carolina, Texas, and North Carolina with science projects related to food irradiation. One of these students won the grand prize at a science fair competition for her project on comparing microbial counts of irradiated and nonirradiated meats from a local grocery store.

Food safety training sessions were conducted in Iowa for nutrition and health field specialists. All specialists successfully passed the certification exam and qualified as instructors to teach the course. Materials for conducting food safety training including PowerPoint® presentations, sample promotions, and teaching resources were developed. These resources were distributed on CD-ROM and posted on the World Wide Web.

To help enhance face-to-face training, survey research was completed investigating the feasibility of Web-based food safety training for foodservice employees. Foodservice operators throughout the state of Iowa were randomly surveyed. Sixty-six of the 300 surveys were returned for a response rate of 22%. Results indicated that less than 50% of the respondents had access to a computer and 28% had an Internet connection in the workplace. Although access to the Internet was limited, a majority of the foodservice operators (71%) were open to the possibility of using the World Wide Web to educate their employees. Based on these results, we will continue to enhance our online training lessons

The Consumer Control Point Kitchen education program, based on HACCP principles, continues to be successful. More than 50,000 bookmarks have been distributed to consumers this past year. Additionally, reprinting privileges have been requested from several organizations in the past year.

Current Web site resources have been maintained for common foodborne pathogens, symptoms of foodborne illness, and other food safety information. Our partnership with the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, continues to provide daily international food safety news from newswires and scientific journals. Visitors have viewed this content more than 400,000 times during the past year and come from 120 countries.

The Food Safety Project Web site has received several awards during the past year:

- Voted “Best of the Food Internet” by Foodnavigator.com
- Recognized as the “Best of the Web” for nutrition and health Web sites by *U.S. News and World Report*
- Selected for a Golden Web award for excellent Web design by the International Association of Web Masters and Designers
- Recognized as a “Bigchalk Best” site for being “in the top 2% of educational Web sites based on rich content and academic relevance”
- Selected by Lightspan.com as “one of the best educational resources on the Web.”