

Regional Food Protection Conferences

OUTCOMES & IMPLICATIONS



THREE CONFERENCES

The Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) offered three regional food protection conferences during 2009 with support from USDA-NIFA:

- St. Paul, MN – June 30 – *host*: Univ. of Minnesota
- Harrisburg, PA – Oct. 27-28 – *host*: Penn State Univ.
- Lexington, KY – Nov. 18-19 – *host*: Univ. of Kentucky

Conference attendees primarily represented federal (7.7%), state (11.5%), local (9.6%) agencies/organizations, Cooperative Extension (25%), and industry (26.3%).

PURPOSE & GOALS

To explain and explore the educational needs of consumers and industry before, during and after a food-related emergency; and strengthen interagency coordination and communication efforts.

Participants were to leave with a working knowledge of and be able to identify: the roles of federal, state and local agencies/organizations; appropriate consumer actions; food protection communication issues; and the roles of Cooperative Extension and other university experts.

OUTCOMES

Each of the conferences captured evaluative data from participants. A total of 274 individuals attended the three conferences; 156 completed the evaluation, indicating a 56% response rate.

A positive trend in learning took place among all participants in seven topic areas (food protection; outbreaks and tracebacks; food recalls, Cooperative Extension’s role; federal, state and local roles, national food defense planning; and risk communication). Overall:

- Over 70% increased their understanding of food protection issues/tools/activities
- Over 60% enhanced their ability to perform their role as it relates to food protection
- 80% said they would recommend this conference to others

Highlighted successes include significant increased knowledge in:

Topic Area	Audience
Food outbreaks, tracebacks, and recalls	Extension professionals
Role of Extension in a food-related emergency	Federal agencies/organizations and Industry
National food protection goals	Federal and Local agencies/organizations, Extension, and Industry
Use of risk communication tools	Federal and Local agencies/organizations

Concerning a food-related emergency:

- Participants indicated a better understanding of: Agency roles at all levels (72.9%); Cooperative Extension roles (70.4%); appropriate consumer actions (54.9%); and communication issues (82.3%).
- 66% stated that they will use Extension as a contact or resource

Outcomes continued on back...



OUTCOMES (cont.)

How information from the conferences will be used (*as indicated by attendees*):

- Develop educational programs and/or integrate into existing programs (*Extension, Industry*)
 - Improve recall and crisis management plans (*State Agencies/Organizations, Industry*)
 - Improve customer relations and communication with public (*Extension, State Agencies/Organizations, Industry*)
 - Take advantage of networking and partnership opportunities (*Extension, Industry*)
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IMPLICATIONS

Challenges

- Empower consumers with appropriate knowledge to make sound food purchasing and disposal decisions.
- Disseminate coordinated and consistent messages to the public.
- Understand the interrelated roles of all responding agencies, organizations, and businesses.

Opportunities for Extension

- Facilitate food protection planning and coordination efforts among agencies, organizations and industry.
- Educate consumer and micro-business audiences about appropriate actions, effective food recall plans, and awareness of educational resources.
- Incorporate risk communication issues and message development with specific recommendations into educational trainings for local agencies/organizations and the food industry.
- Educate the public to improve consumer confidence in the food system.
- Promote the use of food defense guidance materials developed by FSIS and FDA to industry stakeholders.

Opportunities for EDEN

- Develop food protection learning modules, geared toward Extension professionals, to increase understanding of their potential role in the national food defense framework.
- Identify existing resources and educational needs from all food sector partners.
- Develop a page on the EDEN Web site for food protection educational resources to serve as a portal for all stakeholders to share resources and learning opportunities.
- Expand Food Protection Conferences to other regions.

EDEN Regional Food Protection Conferences Coordinating Committee:

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For more information about the EDEN Regional Food Protection Conferences, visit:

<http://eden.lsu.edu/Conferences/RegionalFoodProtection>

www.EDEN.lsu.edu