

Building an Integrated Laboratory System to Advance the Safety of Food and Animal Feed

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF YEAR ONE PROGRESS REPORT

September 10, 2012 – August 31, 2013

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), signed into law by President Barack Obama on January 4, 2011, provides the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) with a framework to better protect public health by strengthening the food safety system. Its primary purpose is to ensure the safety of the US food supply by shifting focus to prevention of food and animal feed contamination through enhanced partnerships and integration among Federal, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial partners.

Since 2008, the Partnership for Food Protection (PFP) has been working across jurisdictions and across disciplines to develop an Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS). One way of achieving integration is the development of national standards. Accrediting food and animal feed laboratories to a recognized standard will ensure the rapid acceptance of laboratory data for compliance and regulatory actions.

The Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO), the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO), and the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) continue to work towards meeting the goals of a five-year Cooperative Agreement with FDA to support food and feed testing laboratories seeking to achieve, maintain and enhance their accreditation to the ISO/IEC 17025:2005 standard. For the first year, 12 Association-led member groups worked on nine specific aims of this Cooperative Agreement. Workgroup involvement is voluntary yet very robust, with over 70 individuals actively contributing. Members are committed to the work and share a common goal of creating a unified food/feed laboratory system in the United States.

The following are some of the successes that these groups have helped APHL, AFDO and AAFCO achieve:

- Hosting of a Food and Feed Laboratory Accreditation [Discussion Board](#), an on-line forum for the exchange of information related to becoming accredited to the ISO/IEC 17025:2005 standard.
- Creation of [web pages](#) to support Food and Animal Feed Testing Laboratories seeking Accreditation, including a repository of ISO/IEC 17025:2005 resources such as best practices, standard procedures, and work plans. As of October 8, 2013, 172 documents under 14 ISO categories have been posted.
- Development of a Training Needs Assessment, a prioritized list of training topics, and a spreadsheet of [currently available ISO/IEC 17025:2005 training](#). FDA and the Associations ensure effective coordination of training efforts to avoid duplication of effort. A [pre-recorded webinar](#) “ISO/IEC 17025 Road to Accreditation: Where to Start and What to Consider” was released in August 2013.
- Delivery of three live webinars (two on Document Control Software, and one on Compliance Management Software) that demonstrated commercially available tools that may be of value to laboratories seeking accreditation to the ISO/IEC 17025:2005 standard.
- Offering free registration for a [webinar series](#) on ISO/IEC 17025:2005 management requirements to all food and feed testing laboratories. Of 39 evaluations received, almost 100% of respondents agreed the 13 stated objectives were met; 95% agreed the material presented will help them perform their job better; 79% agreed they will recommend changes based on the information

- presented; and 95% agreed the course was worth the time spent to take it.
- Development of a discovery report on data exchange among food and feed testing laboratories and FDA's eLEXNET. The discovery report is intended to identify gaps in the current landscape and suggest next steps to improve food and feed data exchange. Once FDA completes a final review, the discovery report will be posted on APHL's [Food and Animal Feed Laboratory Accreditation](#) website.
 - Expansion of a [Subject Matter Expert \(SME\) Registry](#) hosted on the AFDO website to include food and feed laboratory professionals. As of Sept 12, 2013, the registry includes 46 Food Laboratory SME's (100% increase since cooperative agreement was put in place). New categories of expertise include Pet Food Testing, Animal Feed Testing, Laboratory Accreditation, and Sampling.
 - Development of a curriculum framework (similar to the International Food Protection Training Institute Curriculum Framework for Regulatory Food Protection Professionals) to identify career-spanning training for food and feed laboratory professionals. Progress is being made on a curriculum framework diagram which depicts the professional development content areas that food and feed laboratory professionals should participate in over their careers.
 - Hosting the first Face-to-Face meeting of the ISO Awardees in Raleigh, NC. All 31 grantee laboratories attended and shared their experiences pertaining to ISO/IEC 17025:2005 accreditation.
 - Establishment of national standards for the collection and handling of food and feed materials as a critical component of ensuring equivalency of data from federal, state and local laboratories. A nationwide survey of state sampling personnel was conducted to determine issues with sampling processes. Additionally, state-based conference calls captured sampling needs and "spend a day with an inspector/sampler" visits captured day-to-day challenges. Work was initiated on a guidance document, GOODSamples (Guidance on Obtaining Defensible Samples).
 - Revision of the existing [AAFCO Quality Assurance Quality Control Guidelines](#) for State Feed Laboratories as a supplement to the ISO/IEC 17025:2005 Standard for feed laboratories. The guidelines will be released in February 2014 as three volumes and will include a copy of the ISO/IEC 17025:2005 standard.
 - Progress towards accreditation to the ISO/IEC 17043:2010 proficiency testing standard for the AAFCO Collaborative Check Sample Program (CCSP) and extension of the scope of the CCSP to include pet food, heavy metal contaminants, mycotoxin contaminants, and veterinary drug residues.
 - Establishment of a Laboratory Directors Steering Committee to actively work with the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Alliance (MFRPA) to address issues related to the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standard No. 10 (Laboratory Support). The Steering Committee will provide leadership on enhancing the program standards, implementing accreditation, improving integration, and promoting the standards and accreditation in jurisdictions where they have yet to be employed.
 - Development of a Clinical Isolate Submission report, outlining successful partnerships that improve clinical foodborne isolate submission to the public health system. The report describes ongoing challenges and proposes a pilot project to assist states in implementing successful programs. Once FDA completes a final review, the report will be posted on APHL's [Food Safety Initiatives](#) website.

APHL, AFDO and AAFCO are committed to meeting the goals of this Cooperative Agreement. Our collaborative efforts with FDA will ensure that the number of accredited governmental food and feed testing laboratories will increase within five years and that successful data sharing among laboratories will improve. Better communication among all of the involved entities is another direct benefit. The three associations are uniquely qualified to perform this work because our mission is to support the multi-disciplinary laboratories that perform food and animal feed testing in support of regulatory programs, surveillance efforts and outbreak investigations. By facilitating long-term, permanent improvements to the national food and animal feed safety system, the work completed through this Cooperative Agreement will advance public health initiatives beyond the five-year funding cycle and improve US food supply safety.