



Current Issues and Outreach Committee Report/Minutes

January 22, 2013

10:15 AM

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Committee/Board Recommendations and Association Actions: There are no Committee recommendations for Board and Association Actions.

Committee Participants: Members present: Miriam Johnson, Richard Ten Eyck, Meagan Davis, Chad, Linton, Nate Bartz, Steve Gramlich, Sam Davis, Kent Kitade, Eric Nelson and Ali Kashani.

Committee Advisors Present: Members Absent: Jennifer Godwin, Tim Lyons, Donna Dicesare, Caleb Michaud, April Wilcox, Tim Darden, and Isabel Pocurull.

Committee Report: There were two general topics discussed at the above Current Issues and Outreach committee meeting: 1 Emergency Planning and Biosecurity, 2. New Mexico Bill on Genetically Modified Food & Feed Labeling. At the end of the last presentation, Ms. Susan Thixton of Truth About Pet Food made the following statement “This statement is not directed to this panel, but is more of a question to the AAFCO Board of Directors and members of AAFCO. How can AAFCO provide industry a 40 minute opportunity to speak against GM labeling and not allow equal time for opposing opinions?” She further stated: “[I]f AAFCO gave 3 industry representatives 40 minutes, will AAFCO provide 3 opposing opinion organizations equal time? How about giving us equal time at the August meeting?” “You think about it and get back to me.” At the recommendation of the board, the co-chair of the committee contacted Ms. Thixton to let her know the circumstances the topic was scheduled and agenda was announced on the AAFCO website. He further let her know that more advance notice would be issued and balanced presentations would be sought when the issue comes-up again.

- **Committee Activities:** Following distribution of agenda for the annual meeting by e-mail, a suggestion was made by a member of the committee to include the topic of GE or GMO as a discussion item for the next annual or midyear meeting. This is under consideration for the annual meeting.

Committee Minutes: Emergency Planning and Biosecurity

The first portion of the meeting included presentations on emergency planning and biosecurity. Dr. Tim Hanosh, Director of New Mexico Veterinary Diagnostic Services, spoke on agriculture preparedness in response to various types of accidental and intentional emergencies. Various federal and state agencies were mentioned and roles of diagnostic laboratories and services were noted. Displaying a list of foreign animal diseases, Dr. Hanosh mentioned that rinderpest was the first animal disease that was recently classified as eradicated disease worldwide. Accurate

and efficient diagnosis, providing guidance and advice and accurate dissemination of information and education were among the major services his laboratories provide. He emphasized that comprehensive history; specimen collection and submission to the appropriately selected lab are among basic elements of an investigation regarding any case of animal disease or death. Clinical signs, new additions of animals, morbidity and mortality, vaccination history, duration, age, diet, response and treatment and response to treatments, weather and environmental conditions including the time of year were among factors to make accurate notation as important aspects of case of investigation. With the group participation, he then introduced three real life cases of animal death investigations involving nitrate toxicity, lightning, and aborted fetuses.

Mr. Kelly Hamilton, the Director of Agriculture Bio Security at New Mexico Department of Agriculture and Co-Director of the Southwest Border Food Safety and Defense Center, spoke on multi-layered issues on biosecurity planning and the roles AAFCO plays. He mentioned the importance of spending efforts and resources on prevention versus detection and how preventive controls to be adopted under the Food Safety Modernization Act are related to it. There is only enough food supply for 3-5 days on shelves in the United States, he noted. The foods we consume travel from approximately 1500 to 2500 miles distances from about 15 different countries every day. Conversion of animal feed to human food, complexity of processing, transportation and distribution at various levels, including retail markets were noted. Detection of contaminants like pathogens not only must be quick, but also accurate. He noted that only less than 3% of our population produces food and fiber for the whole population to consume in the US. The United States being the largest producer of food and fiber accounts for \$365 billion dollars worth of products (13% of GDP) with \$115 billion dollars of it being exported. Mr. Hamilton noted livestock population and crop production statistics listing 10 states producing 50% of the agricultural products. He mentioned that approximately 50% of food produced in the US is wasted. He gave credit to federal agencies to attempt to use the same terminology, specifically for food protection; food safety referenced to prevention of unintentional contamination, food defense referenced to prevention of intentional contamination, food security referenced to making reliable availability of sufficient quantity of food for the population. He listed critical infrastructure and key resources possibly vulnerable to terrorism in the United States. Importance of feed again in food safety was emphasized and various types of vulnerability and risks like, intentional or accidental adulteration, terrorism (domestic or international) and all hazards were noted. AAFCO plays important roles in biosecurity planning, communication and classifying vulnerability and risk as the members of the association regulate products that are part of the food continuum and food protection umbrella. Preparedness cycle to include planning, organizing and equipping the responders, training all involved,

exercising the plan, evaluating and improving plans was promoted to include pet food with emphasis. Mr. Hamilton noted that everyone who consumes food is involved in agriculture and ended his presentation with the phrase of our responsibility to “if you see something, say something”.

NM Bill on Genetically Modified Food & Feed Labeling

David Fairfield, vice president of feed services for National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA), stated the NGFA opposes mandatory labeling requirements for genetically modified foods and feeds for the following reasons:

1. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and many other scientific bodies have evaluated and confirmed the safety of genetically modified foods, and further determined there is no material difference between genetically modified and non-genetically modified foods. For decades, scientists have used a variety of methods to genetically alter the composition of plants to enhance desirable traits. The relatively new use of recombinant DNA technology simply allows this activity to take place in a more precise and predictable manner.
2. Based on the legal framework in the United States, when there is no material difference between foods it is false and misleading to require statements that imply a difference when none exists, even if consumers perceive there is some difference. U.S. court decisions have found that requiring mandatory statements on products derived through biotechnology that are not materially different from other products infringes on free speech rights and constitutes misbranding of the product.
3. Requiring mandatory labeling of genetically modified foods and feeds would significantly raise the cost for all types of products, and place industry at risk for capricious regulatory violations and product liability suits. A mandatory label requirement would impose significant costs on industry participants that distribute genetically modified products by requiring on-going label statements. In addition, the requirement would impose costs on other industry participants who try to avoid genetically modified products, by requiring them to trace the source of ingredients and verifying that they in fact have not been co-mingled with genetically modified material. Given that the bulk agriculture commodity system in the U.S. is not designed to functionally isolate and identity preserve the grain and oilseed commodity streams, avoidance of co-mingling would be a significant challenge. In addition, about 90 percent of the corn and soybeans grown in the United States are genetically modified varieties. In total, verifying that a food or feed product does not contain a genetically modified ingredient would be a complex and expensive task.

In summary, the NGFA believes that mandatory labeling of genetically modified food and feed would not enhance public health and result in the misbranding products. Further, we believe this requirement would unjustly stigmatize genetically modified products, increase the cost of products and discourage the use of biotechnology at a critical time when there is an unprecedented demand for food and feed.

Leah Wilkinson, American Feed Industry Association (AFIA), then discussed where AFIA anticipates state legislation to be considered this year. In 2011, fifteen bills were introduced, 2012 had twenty and in 2013 it is anticipated that at least twenty six states will debate this issue. The most activity will be in the Northeast states (particularly Vermont and Connecticut) and the Pacific Northwest states (Washington and Oregon). Most of these bills will only require labeling on food, but some might involve feed and pet food. New Mexico also has a bill (SB 18) that has been introduced and will be heard in committee this week. SB 18 would require food and feeds that contain one percent or more of genetically modified ingredients to be labeled as containing such ingredients. AFIA opposes these labeling efforts and will continue to work with the broader agriculture, food and biotechnology industries to defeat them.

Kurt Gallagher, Director, Communications and Export Development, Pet Food Institute stated that questions in the public policy sphere about genetically modified foods are not new. During the 1990s, special interest organizations stirred up fears among consumers in Europe, particularly the European Union (EU), parts of Asia and several countries in Africa. The EU put in place restrictions on GM crop approval and usage, and a number of nations outside the EU followed suit. In some regions hysteria was whipped up to the degree that food aid was rejected by African nations out of fear that it might contain GM crops.

In the United States, the response to GM technology has been more reasoned. In 2002 a state ballot initiative to require labeling of GM crops was rejected in Oregon. Last year a similar proposal was put before voters in California (Proposition 37). Had Proposition 37 been adopted, it would have resulted in higher food costs for Californians, an average of \$400 per family annually. After a hard fought and expensive campaign, Proposition 37 was rejected by voters.

Since the Prop 37 vote, the anti-GM movement suffered a major defection. Mark Lynas, who is his own words “helped to start the anti-GM movement back in the mid 1990s” apologized for “demonizing an important technological option which can be used to benefit the environment.” In a speech before the Oxford Farming Conference in the U.K. on January 3, Lynas explained the reason for his change in position on GM crops because “I discovered science, and in the process I hope I became a better environmentalist.”

The meeting was adjourned at about 12:00 pm.