

FOOD SAFETY INSTITUTE OF THE AMERICAS

**PROPOSED
STRATEGIC PLAN
FOR**

**FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION AND INFORMATION
FOR THE HEMISPHERE**

2005-2008

September 29-30, 2005

FOOD SAFETY INSTITUTE OF THE AMERICAS

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STRATEGIC PLAN
For the
FOOD SAFETY INSTITUTE OF THE AMERICAS

1. Introduction

The Food Safety Institute of the Americas (FSIA), formed in October 2004 under the leadership of the Food Safety Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is an innovative body that seeks to harmonize, develop and distribute food safety information and education throughout the Americas through cooperation and collaboration of effort. The Food Safety Institute of the Americas has commissioned its two partner schools, the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) and the Miami Dade College (MDC), to assist it in the development of a strategic plan for the years 2005-2008. This Strategic Plan has been developed from the responses and findings of a Food Safety Needs Survey undertaken by the countries and territories of the Western Hemisphere.

Responsibilities of the FSIA include activities to advance food safety education and information throughout the hemisphere, establishment of cooperative efforts with the various governmental agencies throughout the hemisphere, and the formulation of affiliations with academic and research institutions throughout the hemisphere to foster expansion of food safety education and practices.

The explosive growth of the international food marketplace has brought a variety of foods never before available to the ordinary consumer's table. People can consume new products from different countries and enjoy traditional seasonal favorites year round. But this expanding marketplace also brings the possibility for unsafe food to reach much larger populations. Countries are now more dependent on each other's safeguards to guarantee their citizens a wholesome food supply.

The nations of the Americas make up a regional community deeply concerned about the many challenges of ensuring food safety and defense. One approach to these complex problems is for our countries to exchange information and education on food safety risks and how to manage them.

The Food Safety Institute of the Americas (FSIA) is an innovative body with the objective to harmonize, develop, and distribute food safety information and education throughout the Americas. The agency will coordinate programs to concentrate on areas with the greatest needs identified by nations in the hemisphere; share resources on programs that already exist within our hemispheric community; and promote the development of international food safety standards. To do this, the FSIA will enlist the support of existing networks among researchers, public health officials, regulatory officials, and food and animal producers and distributors. The many academic, governmental, and nongovernmental

organizations with wide-ranging expertise are all potential partners in the development and implementation of the FSIA.

2. Scope of the Food Safety Institute of the Americas

The Food Safety Institute of the Americas shall include all food commodities and shall encompass all nations, countries, states and territories in the Western Hemisphere. The FSIA will actively seek participation and cooperation among all sectors within these countries including regulatory and governmental agencies and secretariats, academic institutions, public health institutes, and the private sector. The success of the FSIA is dependent upon strong regional and international collaboration throughout the hemisphere.

3. Partnerships, Affiliation and Coordination

The Food Safety Institute of the Americas (FSIA) will seek to work in partnership with Ministries of Health and Ministries of Agriculture in countries throughout the hemisphere as well as with affiliated research and academic institutions to strive to build a seamless and science based system to foster food safety advancement by an increase in educational and informational efforts. The FSIA will establish a mechanism to allow for academic, institutional, agency and organizational affiliation through agreement or memoranda of understanding. The collaborative science based efforts of FSIA with affiliated hemispheric institutions seeks to increase public health status and improve food safety and food defense of each nation.

4. Historical Development of the Food Safety Institute of the Americas

An organizational meeting for the Food Safety Institute of the Americas was held in Miami in October 2004 with twelve nations and ten organizations attending and participating. From this initial beginning, excellent collaborations and efforts have continued to determine the strengths and needs in food safety for the region. In January 2005 the Partner Schools assembled a smaller working meeting of technical representatives from the hemisphere to provide input to develop a questionnaire to assess the food safety education and training needs of the hemisphere.

In March 2005, the Food Safety Needs Assessment questionnaire was sent to the Ministries of Health and Agriculture in 34 countries and territories of the hemisphere. The needs expressed in the survey responses were developed into specific strategies, goals and tasks for FSIA.

UF/IFAS and MDC (partner schools) representatives met in Miami on June 8-9, 2005 to further develop the planning process. Prior to starting the strategic planning process, the results of the needs survey were reviewed and discussed. Therefore, the results of the survey either drove or directed the strategic planning process.

After reviewing the survey results, the partner schools recommend that the survey be used as a self-realization document for each country, which will then seek specific, appropriate, and practical training using FSIA as the catalyst and as a partner to other nations.

5. Major Food Safety Needs Identified

Major food safety needs were identified in the responses to a Food Safety Needs Assessment survey sent to all Ministries of Agriculture and Ministries of Health in the Hemisphere. These food safety areas include:

- the need for development or up-dating of existing food safety legislation,
- the need for better awareness of the importance of food safety principles and issues throughout the food chain, and
- the need for better monitoring and surveillance systems for food safety risks.

Specific areas of strength and specific areas of need were clearly identified. The survey responses exhibited consistency in identified issues and needs across many areas. The goal of the FSIA is to respond constructively and cooperatively to the expressed issues. A detailed presentation of the survey findings will be presented to all nations in the hemisphere with additional requests for input on strategies to achieve the needs expressed.

6. Key External Factors

The Food Safety Institute of the Americas recognizes the key external factors beyond control that exist in each nation that may impact the ability of the FSIA to achieve hemispheric goals. Key external factors include:

- Resource and budget constraints
- Technical training
- Existence or lack of adequate laboratory or government programs
- Political and trade barriers
- Divided statutory authorities
- Emerging regional issues
- Major foodborne outbreaks
- Inadequate risk assessment
- Public Opinion
- National Public Health Issues

7. The Mission

The Mission of the Food Safety Institute of the Americas (FSIA) is to facilitate and expand the dissemination of science-based food safety knowledge and education throughout the Western Hemisphere.

8. The Vision

The Food Safety Institute of the Americas (FSIA) is committed to be an innovative mechanism to drive the effective coordination, planning and delivery of food safety, including food defense, information, at all levels of the food chain, within the Western Hemisphere. The FSIA will develop a collaborative multi-organizational effort involving international organizations, government, academic, research, industry and consumer communities, to harmonize and better distribute relevant information. The FSIA will act as a Clearing House of relevant scientific food safety and food safety training information.

9. Strategic Themes for FSIA Focus for 2005 – 2008

From the needs expressed to FSIA through the Food Safety Needs Assessment Survey in combination with the expressed mission and vision of FSIA, the FSIA partner schools have identified and developed eleven different themes:

1. Evaluate the Country Food Safety questionnaire results and identify strengths and weaknesses of existing national programs;
2. Develop the Institute Infrastructure including potential Regional FSIA Affiliated Institutions and sites for location of FSIA Colleges;
3. Identify, and assist in the procurement and management of the necessary funding for such activities;
4. Identify and make available relevant educational material;
5. Develop a recommended or model Food Safety Curriculum that incorporates elements of risk analysis;
6. Liaise with stakeholders (national and international government and non government agencies, research and academic institutions, industry and industry organizations, consumers and consumer organizations);
7. Develop within FSIA a capacity to act as a Clearing House of Food Safety training material;
8. Develop an awareness strategy to promote and inform the community of the Western Hemisphere countries about the FSIA and its mission;
9. Develop a benchmarking and evaluation program to monitor and report on achievement of objectives and to assist with implementation of continuous improvement policies;
10. Develop a mechanism to create awareness and motivation in the food industries to implement training and education at all stages of the food chain with specific needs prioritized by risk assessment; and

11. Increase awareness of importance of Food Safety within the Western Hemisphere community.

10. Proposed FSIA Activities/Task Areas for 2005 – 2006 to Achieve Identified Goals

To address the overarching themes and to accomplish the desired outcomes, the partner schools developed specific activities/tasks for each major strategic area. The task number does not necessarily indicate the relative importance of the task or its start or completion date. The tasks are presented as follows:

Task I –Present the Values of FSIA and Promote Affiliation and Activity

1. To achieve full participation and food safety activity in all nations a clear vision and mission for the FSIA needs to be clearly communicated and accomplished. The message of the FSIA goals, structure and advantages to all member countries should be effectively presented to all governments and public health and industry sectors. FSIA must clearly iterate how the FSIA framework can achieve benefits to food safety in each country.
2. The private food industries in each country should be involved with public health, academic and government agencies in planning for and providing food safety education and training.
3. FSIA should be presented to international and regional multilateral governmental organizations e.g. Organization of American States (OAS), CARICOM, FAO, WHO, PAHO, IICA, OIE, Codex Alimentarius, OIRSA and to the governing bodies of the hemisphere's trade agreements such as MERCOSUR, NAFTA, CAFTA-DR and the Andean group of countries. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as consumer organizations and food processing, food service and food retail groups in each country should be included in planning and educational activities. Examples of such NGOs in the U.S. are: Food Marketing Institute, National Council of Chain Restaurants, US Food Importers Assn., Meat Importers Council of America, Institute of Food Technologists, National Restaurant Association, National Meat Association, and American Meat Institute.
4. The public needs to understand and support the implementation of measures to prevent food borne disease within a country.
5. A comprehensive website should be developed as soon as possible to enable access to the valuable educational materials already available through various institutions and to provide a readily accessible site on which to post future developed materials.
6. Promotion of participation and affiliation with FSIA may involve site visits to individual countries and institutions to fully provide information and address questions of the benefits and advantages of participation.
7. The FSIA will stress the three critical issues of health, ensuring the trade of safe food, and centralization in all planning and educational efforts:

- A. In Health, to accomplish:
 - a. reduction in childhood disease, malnutrition, morbidity
 - b. reduction in overall morbidity and mortality
 - c. better reallocation and utilization of freed up health resources after reduction in disease
- B. In Ensuring the Trade of Safe Food, to accomplish: –
 - a. recognition of “equivalency of systems”
 - b. recognition of a country’s excellence
 - c. increased confidence in the production of consistently safe food
 - d. fueling growth in the economies of the country and in facilitating safe food export:
- C. For Centralization, to achieve:
 - a. one central body (FSIA) which will be able to meet specific relevant regional needs
 - b. leadership and guidance in food safety
 - c. facilitation of access to relevant information and training material
 - d. sharing ‘Best Practice’ principles with Regional FSIA Affiliated Institutions (RFAI) and individual countries
 - e. development of realistic Goals and Benchmarks
 - f. assistance with development and sharing of curricula, and
 - g. monitoring of results and report to participating countries.

Task II – Recommend That All Food Commodities Be Addressed

The survey results from the countries of the hemisphere strongly suggest that FSIA be expanded to all foods and suggest that the FSIA will limit its value significantly if all food commodities are not covered. Countries consistently referred to commodities other than meat, poultry and eggs covered in the original FSIA organization under USDA/FSIS. Clearly, for the majority of countries to have effective ownership, involvement and benefit, the FSIA should cover the entire range of food commodities. Discussions have begun with other governmental agencies regulating other foods to expand the scope of the FSIA. USDA/FSIS should work to develop a formal agreement with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to achieve this goal.

Task III – Conduct Future Meetings to Expand FSIA Awareness

The partner schools noted that additional meetings to expand FSIA awareness is an issue that, to date, has not been fully addressed. The goals and scope of FSIA should be clearly communicated effectively and promoted in the hemisphere. Ways to accomplish this include:

- One meeting or multiple meetings (one per region).
- Multi-topic symposium (or single scientific topic with education component) on food safety and education and outreach topics of relevance to the particular region.

- Attract trainers, e.g. universities and other potential training resources, other institutions, laboratories, research organizations and private sector consultants by offering free exhibition space and opportunities for participation.
- At each meeting in each country or region, invite potential participants, users or beneficiaries of FSIA, e.g. supermarket chains restaurant associations, consumer organizations, government agencies, e.g. agriculture, health, consumer affairs, etc.

Task IV – Establish Regional FSIA Affiliated Institutions

To achieve broad advances in food safety education and information in the hemisphere, FSIA needs to first initiate partnerships with academic institutions throughout the hemisphere on specific projects identified through the needs assessment by various countries. These targeted projects will then evolve into Regional FSIA Affiliated Institutions (RFAI) where each center will cover all of the food safety educational topics identified as a regional need.. Host institutions for RFAI's who possess the necessary resources to provide educational and training outreach can focus on neighboring countries that may have fewer resources.

Initially FSIA will examine phasing in possible Regional FSIA Affiliated Institutions in the areas of:

- Chile or Argentina
- Brazil
- Mexico
- Honduras
- Caribbean
- Canada or US

The Director or responsible party in each RFAI will be asked to link and liaise closely with other RFAIs and with FSIA. The Partner Schools will assist FSIA with the choice of location and assessment of the effectiveness and location of the RFAIs and determine needed changes. The mission of each RFAI needs to be driven by the expressed survey results from countries or territories in that region.

Each nation should seek to ensure that technical personnel are trained in food safety and have the experience to undertake effective actions to prevent, mitigate or control food borne illness. Resources (both human and physical) can be transferred from a country with experience in an area to other countries experiencing a problem. Personnel in all countries should be provided ready access to updated information, knowledge and education in food safety.

Task V – Develop Needed Colleges/Courses and Curricula

Many areas for critical curricula development as well as training imperatives have been identified both in collaborative discussions as well as the needs assessment survey of the hemisphere. In the initial documents regarding FSIA organization, a proposal had been made to develop nine different colleges or subject areas. The different key areas or colleges proposed for development and offering included:

- Codex Alimentarius Commission
FSIA will work to foster countries in the hemisphere participating through Codex to develop international food safety standards. All nations identified the basic need for fundamental food law revision or implementation and more knowledge relative to Codex function can be a key foundation for the development of food legislation. The use of risk assessment is promoted by Codex, and should likewise be promoted by FSIA.
- Regulatory Foundation Studies
A key area for needed training and development is the key components of basic food law and the authorities necessary for an adequate food safety regulatory program. This would include planning for regulatory analytical laboratories and enforcement mechanisms. Development of risk management curricula for countries' regulatory structures should be a goal.
- Public Health Studies
Each nation may have specific areas of food related public health issues that they may wish to focus efforts on improvement. FSIA will seek to develop these needed materials. This may include activities such as providing training aimed at enhancing disease surveillance programs. It is recognized that disease surveillance and clinical laboratory testing are cornerstones of a sound risk assessment program.
- Food Defense
Basic food defense issues and the safety of the food production and supply are critical to all nations. Providing mechanisms for food defense facilitates exports of foods and adds protection to the domestic food supply of a country.
- Manufactured Foods
With increased international commerce in foods, many nations expressed need for appropriate food safety education and training related to processed foods. Food processing technologies are evolving rapidly, and some technologies may be advantageous to individual countries, and enhance the safety of foods they produce.
- Animal and Food Production Studies
Emerging food pathogens associated with animal agriculture present challenges to incorporate new technology and information into educational efforts. In order to utilize resources wisely, decisions must be risk based, and that will require risk attribution studies in each country, and that will in turn require extensive training.
- Retail Programs
Although each nation may have slightly differing domestic marketing practices, the basic components of food retailing relating to food safety remain the same and should be formulated into a basic course of education and training. Farm to fork training and education must be made available to include growing/harvesting, transportation, storage, processing, and marketing with food safety as the main goal.
- Laboratory Studies
Public health improvements and prevention of food contamination are critically dependent upon adequate laboratory analyses and support. Laboratory resources and adequate technical education and training are very

important food safety issues to most countries, as is identifying sources of necessary equipment and reagents for basic analyses. Laboratory studies also form a basis for determining the flow of pathogens and other hazards throughout the food chain, and thus are a cornerstone for risk analysis.

- **Consumer Education Information Programs**
Food safety education and training is not adequate unless effective consumer components are developed and presented so that actual public behaviors are changed and food associated illnesses diminished. This will necessitate educational programs targeted at all facets of the population, as well as determining the effectiveness of such programs. This “college” recognizes that an educated consumer is the cornerstone of good risk communication.

Although the partner schools as well as the results of the surveys did not propose moving forward with the total nine colleges at this time, the FSIA will focus on the development of the specific curricula and training proposed in these colleges. The first curricula and training systems developed will be prioritized from the survey responses. Curricula development will be accomplished with affiliated institutions in countries throughout the hemisphere in partnership with an U.S. FSIA affiliated academic institution.

Task VI– Identification of Appropriate Funding

It is the desire of the FSIA that USDA/FSIS be able to fund the FSIA for a specific period e.g. three years, after which time FSIA, with the exception of the continuation of the USDA/FSIS staff in Miami, should have identified and obtained its own ongoing independent funding. The structure of FSIA should enable the institute to accept funding and will include the following key components:

- Ensure that FSIA can accept public or private funds from government, organization, or foundation money (e.g. Gates, Kellogg, etc.) for hemispheric activities on food safety and public health issues.
- Determine how private corporations and academic institutions can use an FSIA logo or identification as affiliates of FSIA.
- FSIA Office and the FSIA Partner Schools will actively address issues of continued funding and explore the identification of potential funding supporters along with determination of the most appropriate method to approach private foundations and companies for support.

Governments in all countries are encouraged to make available long term funding to address the pressing issues of food safety education and training. Food safety education and training needs to be supported in each country and throughout the local communities as well from national, regional and international agencies and institutions.

Task VII– Establish a Projected Timetable for 2005-2008

The projected projects and timetable for 2005-2006 will include presentation and discussion of survey results with countries in the hemisphere along with an additional

presentation of a proposed strategic plan based on this detailed input. The partner schools will communicate this information to all countries both verbally and in writing.

The partner schools will formulate a presentation encompassing the structure, benefits and goals of the FSIA for use by all countries. The partner schools along with USDA/FSIS will discuss inclusion of all foods into the institute with other U.S. and hemispheric food agencies.

In the fall of 2005, FSIA will begin efforts to present the FSIA structure and goals throughout the hemisphere beginning in South America. FSIA will contact the Organization of the American States (OAS) and the Ministries of Agriculture and Ministries of Health in each country for nominations for Regional FSIA Affiliated Institutions.

FSIA will establish a Coordinated Timetable for FSIA activities and planned affiliations for 2006-2007 which will:

- Identify and establish Regional FSIA Affiliated Institutions by Jan. 31, 2006
- Determine the planned activities and projects with the affiliated institution
- Establish procedures to provide for the coordination of activities with affiliated institutions
- * Establish measures for measuring effectiveness of training and educational efforts in the region.

11. Linkage of the FSIA Goals to the Strategic Plan Goals of Agencies in the Hemisphere

FSIA will, wherever possible, seek to link the FSIA goals of harmonizing, developing and distributing food safety information and education throughout the Americas with the Strategic Plans and Goals of all agencies in the countries of the hemisphere. FSIA will seek to conduct activities through affiliated, collaborative and cooperative means.

12. Evaluation of FSIA Programs

At the end of fiscal 2008, FSIA through the partner schools, will conduct an evaluation of effectiveness and outcomes of food safety education and information programs with the countries in the hemisphere along with specific FSIA affiliated institutions, agencies and organizations.

13. FSIA Information and Partner School Contacts

The FSIA strongly encourages cooperation and collaborative partnerships in food safety throughout the hemisphere.

The FSIA may be contacted in Miami at the following address:

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