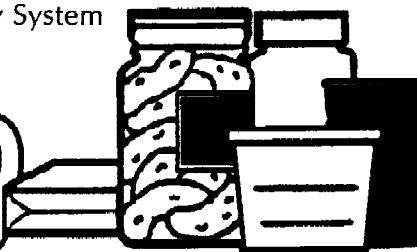




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TEXAS FOOD PROCESSOR

This newsletter is prepared for the Texas food processing industry by Al Wagner, Extension Food Technologist. It is sent to you as a service of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, an educational agency of The Texas A&M University System. Requests for additional information on topics addressed in this newsletter should be directed to:

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FANSA Cautions Public About Dietary Supplements

The Food and Nutrition Science Alliance (FANSA) on June 15 urged the public to beware of false claims when buying dietary supplements. "Because there is no standard for the acceptability of the supporting science [for statements made about health effects of dietary supplements], such claims may be based on single studies having inadequate or flawed science," according to a statement released during IFT's Annual Meeting in Orlando. "By contrast, health claims that are now appearing on food labels are strictly regulated by the FDA, and must meet the high standard of 'significant scientific agreement'."

FANSA's key messages for consumers are:

- 1) When buying dietary supplements, *caveat emptor* (let the buyer beware) applies.
- 2) If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is not true.
- 3) Dietary supplements encompass vitamins and minerals as well as herbals and botanicals.
- 4) Multivitamins may help some people.
- 5) Less is known about herbals and botanicals than vitamins and minerals.
- 6) High doses of some dietary supplements may be harmful.
- 7) "Natural" is not synonymous with "safe."
- 8) For good health, eat a variety of foods.

This working group developed the statement: Mary Ellen Camire, University of Maine; Janet R. Hunt, USDA-Agricultural Research Service, Grand Forks, ND; Sanford A. Miller, University of Texas; and Robert M. Russell, Tufts University. FANSA members are IFT, American Dietetic Association, American Society for Clinical Nutrition, and American Society for Nutritional Sciences. IFT member Christine M. Bruhn, University of California, Davis, is FANSA chair.

This article appeared in IFT's Science Communicator Newsletter

RECALLS DUE TO ALLERGENS

There has been an increased number of recalls due to the presence of undeclared ingredients that are food allergens. Heading the list are eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, and yellow #5. By not declaring these and other allergens in the ingredient statement, a company is subjecting itself to major losses.

"The recall mechanism for food allergens doesn't work," said Steve Taylor, Head of the Department of Food Science and Technology at the University of Nebraska, "because such recalls are not considered newsworthy." He suggested that a different kind of mechanism, such as an allergy alert notice, be considered.

Before recalling, Taylor said firms should first make certain the allergen is actually present in the food. Taylor cautioned that detection using currently available ELISA tests may be inaccurate, reporting that two of three tests were not reliable in his laboratory for all matrices, and that the lab has not yet tried the third test. Detection using RAST is expensive but reliable, Taylor said.

Turning to labeling, Taylor said firms should always declare the presence of any common allergens used as ingredients, label the source of materials, and declare the presence of allergenic source materials in flavoring.

'May contain' labeling should be used judiciously and only where there is documented sporadic and potentially-hazardous contamination with an allergen, Taylor recommended, commenting that in Canada 'may contain' labeling is used "too broadly," limiting the choices of allergenic people, and creating confusion.

The Food Allergy Network president and founder, Anne Munnoz Furlong, reports that FAN has evolved into a communication link between the food industry and consumers. "There is no cure for food allergy; avoidance is key," Furlong said. Loose terms such as 'may contain', 'nondairy', 'either/or', 'spices/flavors', 'filberts', (another term for hazelnuts), and 'modified food starch' confuse consumers. If an ingredient may be present in trace amounts because of possible cross-contamination, "that's what we'd want to see on the label," Furlong said.

Taylor said, however, that he would prefer seeing the use of good manufacturing practices to prevent cross-contamination rather than the use of labeling. If it's not possible to clean equipment sufficiently, then 'may contain' labeling could be used, he added. FAN sends out special alerts when a food is recalled because of an allergen, Furlong said, using a special alert envelope. The group also uses e-mail, fax, and postings on its Web page to publicize alerts, she added.

Information summarized from a report in Food Chemical News, June 23, 1997.

PEPPER BREEDING SUMMARY 1996-1997

By Dr. David Wolff

Activities of the Pepper breeding program have been continuing at a

strong pace. Below is a summary of the activities over the last year.

In the Spring of 1996, a total of 277 breeding lines were planted for evaluation. The peppers were screened for TEV, along with CMV, TMV, PVY, PMMV, and three strains of PeMV. At the same time, a sample of the lines were screened for *Phytophthora* resistance at zoospore concentrations up to 100,000 per plant. 242 plants were selected in the evaluation block for further increase and evaluation, based on horticultural characteristics, yield, and disease-resistance. Those peppers surviving the *Phytophthora* screening were shelved and replanted in the Fall of 1996.

The Fall 1996 crop consisted of 192 breeding lines which were inoculated at the seedling stage three times with *Phytophthora* (5,000 to 16,000 zoospores per plant). The resulting survivors were transplanted into the field and inoculated with TEV. Six plants from each line were also moved to the greenhouse and subjected to TEV and *Phytophthora* concentrations of up to 122,000 zoospores per plant. A total of 296 individual plants survived the greenhouse screenings, representing 115 breeding lines. In the field, selections were made of the top-performing material.

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This Spring (1997), 351 lines are in the evaluation process. These peppers are from the top-performing lines of the last three seasons, along with some new material being evaluated for *Phytophthora* resistance. They have been inoculated four times with TEV, and inoculated three times at the seedling stage for *Phytophthora* (up to 30,000 zoospores/plant). There are two isolation blocks (one for chile and the other for sweet jalapeno) and a one-acre observation block, from which we will select the top-performers. A representative plant from each line is in the greenhouse, along with the survivors of the seedling *Phytophthora* test.

After this Spring, we will decide which of the elite lines will be released as new varieties of breeding lines. Priority will be placed on a new mild jalapeno, a sweet jalapeno, a long green chile, and a bell pepper. All varieties will be multi-virus resistant, and some will have other traits such as *Phytophthora* tolerance, insect resistance (leaf miner), and fruit-setting ability under high temperatures.

E. COLI O157:H7 INFECTIONS INCREASING

Food-borne infections caused by *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 appear to be increasing, concluded experts meeting in May at a World Health Organization Consultation in Geneva, Switzerland. "A wide

range of food is responsible for infections transmitted to humans by both person-to-person contact and by contact with animals or animal manure" WHO stated.

Basic hygiene forms the foundation of measures to prevent infection from the food-borne pathogen, WHO said. Other preventive measures include: using clean water in food production; cleaning animals at slaughter; improving hygiene throughout the slaughter process; pasteurizing milk, and applying other food processing methods to eliminate Enterohaemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* (EHEC); thoroughly cooking foods; and educating food handlers, abattoir workers, and farm workers in food hygiene.

*Taken from Institute of Food Technologist
Science Communicators Newsletter,
July 1997.*

Items of Interest

HORMONE TREATED BEEF SAFE!

The World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled last week that the European Union (EU) must lift the eight-year-old ban against cattle treated with growth-promoting hormones. Reported in the USMEF *Export Newslines*, the final report includes the findings: "The EU hormone ban is not based on science, nor is it based on a risk assessment or on relevant international standards. As such, the ban is inconsistent with the EU's obligations under the sanitary and phytosanitary provisions of the Uruguay Round Agreement, and is tantamount to a disguised trade barrier." The review panel agrees with the conclusions of the US government and the international scientific community that the hormones in use pose no danger to human or animal health. The EU has indicated that it will file an appeal with the WTO in late August. The appeals process could take 150 days to reach resolution.

FDA TARGETS SUPPLEMENTS WITH PLANTAIN

FDA on June 12 warned consumers not to use dietary supplements that contain the weed plantain, because the products may also contain Digitalis, a plant that can cause cardiac arrest and other heart reactions when ingested. FDA detected Digitalis in samples of plantain that had been used by dietary-supplement manufacturers and distributed to retailers in bulk for use in herbal teas. The plantain weed is different from the plantain fruit plant, which is not the subject of this FDA warning.

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Items of Interest

CELLULAR PHONE ETIQUETTE

Cellular phones have become a permanent fixture in today's business, as well as in mainstream culture. They are an easy and convenience portable communication device, and recent technological advances have made them both affordable and reliable. To avoid appearing rude or thoughtless, there are some guidelines you should adhere to when using your cellular phone.

- *Excuse Yourself.* In a public place such as a restaurant or meeting excuse yourself and find a private location before using your cellular phone. Also, use the vibration function, if you have one, rather than allowing for a ring or buzz.
- *Ask permission.* Do not just pick up your phone and start dialing, or answer it and begin speaking in the presence of others. First, ask your host's permission to make a call, or acknowledge the presence of others before accepting a call.
- *Follow Rules.* Be sure to adhere to airline regulations concerning cellular phone use, to avoid interfering with the plane's communication gear.
- *Use a hands-free device.* Using a cellular phone in the car is often cause for worry to other motorists. Consider investing in a hands-free device if it is necessary to speak while driving.

From **Communication Briefings**, January 1997.

MICROBIOLOGY OF FRESH-CUT PRODUCE

The International Fresh-Cut Produce Association (IFPA) has issued a white paper on the "Microbiology of Fresh-cut Produce." The paper includes factors that influence product quality, such as raw material handling during processing, packaging materials and storage conditions.

The FDA has been very supportive in the development of these guidelines. "It should help all firms that farm, process, package, or ship products," according to Edith Garrett, IFPA President.

Pathogenic Bacteria. Whole and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables have been linked to a small number of food-borne illness outbreaks. The causative bacteria were predominantly *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, and *E. coli* O157:H7. The route of contamination was linked to product exposure to animal fecal material during production, to poor sanitation practices by the workers during harvesting, or to food handlers in the kitchen. It should be the practice of responsible fresh-cut processors to avoid using fresh fruits and vegetables that have been, or are likely to have been, exposed to fecal material, and follow proper worker sanitation and hygienic practices.

Spores of *Clostridium botulinum*, the causative organism of botulism, are naturally found in agricultural soils. The spores are common on crops grown below ground, such as carrots, onions, garlic, and potatoes. A low incidence of these spores on fresh-cut produce has been documented.

Coming Events

HACCP Course Offered

The Texas Agricultural Extension Service, in cooperation with the Texas Food Processors Association and Food Processors Institute, will sponsor a HACCP (Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points) workshop September 16-18, 1997. The course will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 7750 Briaridge, in San Antonio, Texas. This will be a generic course that relates to all food products. A registration brochure can be obtained by calling Jennifer Jakubik or Al Wagner at (409) 845-7341.

Symposium Focuses on Solution to Food Industry Problems

"Bridging the Gap—Solving Practical Problems with Technological Solutions" is the theme for the Institute of Food Science and Engineering's second annual Research and Technology Transfer symposium on September 30, 1997. The one-day program will focus on the latest information and technologies that are available in the areas of food safety, processing, marketing, and policy. It will be held in the Rudder Theater Complex on the Texas A&M University campus in College Station, Texas.

This year's symposium will foster the exchange of information between food industry personnel and university faculty on issues faced by the food industry. According to Dr. Jimmy T. Keeton, symposium program chairman and meat scientist in the Department of Animal Science, participants will be able to take home usable information on current and emerging technology that can be applied in the food industry. Information will be presented by industry, government, and academic speakers through presentations and group interactions between speakers and participants.

It is the goal of the symposium program committee to provide participants with current information needed to apply problem-solving technologies at their com-

panies, and give them a glimpse into the future of food processing.

"Our slate of speakers will bring their industry perspective and expertise to problems faced by the food industry, and help outline potential solutions to those problems," says H. Russell Cross, director of Texas A&M University's Institute of Food Science and Engineering. "Our symposium is designed to provide a forum for open discussion on food safety, processing, marketing, and policy issues, and look at ways to apply solutions across various segments of the food industry."

Following the theme of solving practical problems with technological solutions, this year's program will also showcase new food technologies being developed at Texas A&M University, through topical discussions and research poster presentations. Participants will also learn about the exciting activities underway at Texas A&M to strengthen the university's food program, and the impact that this will have on the food industry within the state and the nation.

To receive a registration packet for the symposium, or for more information, contact the Institute of Food Science and Engineering at Texas A&M University at (409) 862-2036; fax (409) 862-3075.

San Antonio, Texas

Technicold Services, Inc. announces the next four Ammonia Refrigeration Systems Operation and Safety Seminars: September 8-12 and November 3-7, 1997. February 2-6 and April 6-10, 1998. For information, call Kay at (830) 659-6744.

Practical Net Content Control

A seminar on Practical Net Content Control will be held September 25-26, 1997 in Washington DC. This is sponsored by the Food Processors Institute. For information, call (202) 639-5954 or 393-0890.