

# Summary of ideas from *Good Neighbor* breakout sessions

Livestock ranches and fresh produce farms in California are among the most highly regulated commodities in the country, but confusion often exists about what each community does to assure food safety. To better understand and leverage those efforts, in 2019 the University of California-Davis and the California Department of Food & Agriculture brought together diverse stakeholders to discuss the safety of fresh produce grown in proximity to wildlife and livestock. The workshops, intended for produce growers and livestock facility operators, were held in the Imperial Valley (Holtville) on June 11 and the Central Valley (Stockton) on June 13.

Following the morning presentations, participants were broken into breakout sessions to explore what tools would be useful in advancing food safety of fresh produce.

The breakout groups were asked to address three questions:

1. *What tools, information or research do you need to manage your operation and minimize food safety risk?*
2. *What may be some creative local methods to manage food safety risks?*
3. *How can we build a more effective ongoing dialogue between fresh produce and livestock operation around food safety.*

The following is a summary of the ideas discussed during the breakout sessions.

## RESEARCH

- **Additional Research is needed including but not limited to:**
  - Buffer zones, bio-aerosols, fugitive dust (for specific local conditions)
  - Water sanitation (including but not limited to novel technologies like UV, Infrared, microwave, etc.)
  - E. coli persistence in environment.
  - Post-harvest sanitation of product with 2 to 5 log reduction of pathogens.
  - Use of pre-harvest treatments to reduce pathogens on produce?
  - Real-time assays to detect pathogens at the field level.
  - Novel technology approaches to predict or confirm pathogen entry into a plant environment.
  - Increasing livestock E. coli vaccine efficiency to decrease shedding & cost.
  - Use of feed additives to decrease E. coli shedding & cost.
  - E. coli vaccines for humans? Efficacy of probiotics on E. coli prevention?
  - Better, clearer information about where growers should and should not grow fresh produce.
  - Does composting time-temperature requirements change with feed stock?
  - Use of bio-solids on produce?
- **Research on buffers from high-risk locations specifically designed to assist shippers & buyers in decision-making. Widely communicate findings.**
- **There is a lack of data sharing (such as water quality etc.) between industry firms.**

- Creation of “*Safe Harbor*” foundation for bi-directional information & data sharing (i.e. company data that is protected, non-FOIA-able that can be used to characterize risk, pathogen transport, etc.
- Collaboration between regulatory agencies and industry to share data & even isolates:
  - Protected database? Held by independent organization, probably industry since even UC can be FOIAed.
  - Mimic the data collections used by the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) process?
- Base data on risk would be useful, although data would sometimes/often conflict.
- Better characterize *Risk Tolerance & Risk Models* related to livestock – fresh produce interface. Will control of environments actually mitigate risk?
- Are there ways to improve wildlife habitat and sanctuary management to reduce intrusion?
- Bottom-up communication of priorities for research.

## COMMUNICATION

- Define and educate why it is in everyone’s’ best interests.
- How can we productively communicate to each other at the local level and assist one another to improve food safety?
- Communications (written, on-line, phone, meetings) can occur at the local (or hyper-local), regional and state levels. Communication should include wide variety of state holders. Just a few examples
  - Growers
  - Ranchers, Sheep herders, dairy other CAFO
  - County Ag commissioners
  - Buyers
  - Regulatory
- Create local food safety groups to promote communication? Local meetings at the start of the growing season?
- Perhaps Industry-to-Industry calls:
  - Local conference calls?
  - State-to-state conference calls?
- Meetings at a level that boots-on-the-ground can attend, not just the bosses.
- Have proactive regional (or hyper-regional) regular group meetings to work locally.
- Create forum / process / method for smaller adjacent ag operations to share events, changes, etc.
- Neighborhood App (like *Next-Door “Salinas”* App) for ag neighbors to trade information.
- Use of social media to engage both sides?
- Intermediary between a farm and regulatory agency. Define what is University of California Cooperative Extension’s (UCCE) role?

- Engage social media, trade shows, cooperative extension, farm bureau etc. in an open way.
- Ongoing forum with purpose of information exchange to cement relations before a crisis. Biennial industry-wide meetings? What are the best times to share information
- Improved Leafy Greens (LGMA) communications strategy (during incident?):
  - Routine information distribution.
  - Social media (ready response plan in case of outbreak)
  - Other ag partners will identified and who to communicate with.
- Clearer communication of what local buyers want from growers.
- Ensure diversity (livestock and produce members) on various advisory or regulatory committees. Creation of “Interested Parties” lists for use by such groups.

### TRAINING / OUTREACH

- Central Question: what is food safety, surely it’s about more than just setbacks?
- Growers want to know how to grow safer, do better, but they need help:
  - Central clearinghouse for food safety information, one-stop shopping for growers. BMP’s, alerts, templates, research abstracts etc.
  - Provide guidance for growers, but not necessarily all regulatory requirements.
  - Are there ideas worth borrowing from the Yuma Safe Producer Council?
- Communicate “*lessons learned*” from previous outbreaks and research projects. In particular, use lessons learned from Cal-FERT investigations.
- Some industry sectors (customers, employees, etc.) may not see the whole, big picture.
- Increased training in risk awareness made available at different level of production. In particular adequate training for food safety managers at farms.
- Outreach on nutrient management since pathogens follow manure.
- Demonstration Projects: using selected animal & produce operation to demonstrate BMPs for co-management. What does co-management actually look like in the field? Producers/growers can’t be expected to develop this on their own.
- Joint sessions at major conferences like PMA/IAFP and US Cattleman’s Association

### OTHER – MISCELLANEOUS

- What are California’s neighboring states doing to decrease outbreaks? How do their systems compare to our systems? How about other practices in other countries?
- Mitigating litigation, which is counterproductive to collaboration; engage wider stakeholders both before and after outbreaks, not just lawyers. The breakout group struggled with the idea of how to mitigate litigation, they thought it was important but was unsure of what that looked like.
- Liaisons created to cross industry barriers.