



FDA FOOD WEBSITE AND FOODSAFETY.GOV BOAST NEW FEATURES

BY KENNETH DURHAM AND MARK WALDERHAUG
SERIES EDITOR: CATHERINE "KITTY" BAILEY, M.ED.

Useful updates to on-line information make web site access easier.

In 1994 several U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) managers created a web site for the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN). It was one of the earliest government web sites developed. At that time, a few documents were posted in a text format and a few were posted in html format. Much has changed in the last six years. CFSAN currently has more than 10,000 web documents available for access on its site. Virtually any type of printed document, including images, graphs, tables, and even formulas, are now routinely posted on the web site. In April 2000, 170,000 people visited the CFSAN web site more than 365,000 times. Approximately 13% of these visits were from users outside of the United States.

Since many government agencies work together to provide food safety information to industry and consumers, CFSAN, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) worked closely to establish a new web site in 1999, www.FoodSafety.gov, to bring together in one location links to all government food safety web information. Most professionals involved with food testing and analytical endeavors are probably aware of both the CFSAN and the FoodSafety.gov web sites, and the purpose of this article is to highlight some of these sites' newest features.

UPDATE HIGHLIGHTS

Some of the most notable postings to these sites of which food safety, quality assurance and analytical professionals should be aware include in-depth scien-

tific reports, policy statements and studies. For example, the recently posted *Redbook 2000, Toxicological Principles for the Safety of Food Ingredients* represents the agency's current thinking on the information needed for the safety assessment of food ingredients. In addition, food processors will be interested in the report *Kinetics of Microbial Inactivation for Alternative Food Processing Technologies*, which evaluates the scientific information available on a variety of alternative food processing technologies. Users can also find the preliminary studies on research entitled *Potential for Infiltration, Growth and Survival of Salmonella enterica serovar Hartford and Escherichia coli O157:H7 Within Oranges* in support of decision-making on fruit juice Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points (HACCP).

Some of the agency's highly rated reference manuals for the food industry have also been updated on the site. A selected section of the FDA *Bacteriological Analytical Manual* (BAM), the list of methods and materials used by the agency to detect pathogens in foods, is one such important document, since it assists food producers and consumers to better understand how FDA monitors the food supply. The complete *Bacteriological Analytical Manual* will be available on the web in October 2000.

In addition, the FDA *Pesticide Analytical Manual* (PAM), a repository of the analytical methods used in FDA laboratories to examine food for pesticide residues for regulatory purposes, has been updated and the index to the PAM II has also been posted.

Some of the other web site posting highlights include:

- Draft guidances for both *Fumonisin Levels in Human Food and Animal Feeds*, and *Apple Juice, Apple Juice Concentrates, and Apple Juice Products—Adulteration with Patulin*.
- Inclusion of the 1999 Pesticide Program Residue Monitoring Report (and database information) summarizing re-

sults of the FDA pesticide residue monitoring program. Reports from 1993-1998 are also available.

- Data summaries and reports for FDA's Total Diet Study (TDS) from 1991 to the present. The TDS has provided data on dietary intake of food contaminants for almost 40 years.
- Update of the number of isoelectric focusing gel peak reports in the *Regulatory Fish Encyclopedia*. This data is used in conjunction with other pattern recognition tools being developed to assist in the identification of fish species.

HELPFUL SITE UPDATES FACILITATE INDUSTRY AND PUBLIC ACCESS

In general, one of the agency's goals is to make the web site user-friendly, and in an effort to do this FDA has created specialized search engines and subject indexes to make access to the wealth of posted information easier. In addition to the FDA search engine and the government-wide search engine, CFSAN offers web visitors the use of a foods subject index, a CFSAN search engine, and a special search engine developed jointly by CFSAN and the Government Services Agency (GSA) that concurrently searches FDA, CDC, FSIS and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) web sites.

Selected materials are provided in multiple languages to facilitate access to FDA information by the international community and non-English speaking people living in the United States. Currently, CFSAN posts selected material in 10 languages and FoodSafety.gov provides access to food safety documents in more than 30 languages. Also, FoodSafety.gov provides links to state food safety web sites, and new state, local and extension agent web sites are regularly added. To date, there is material available from 29 different states.

In order to facilitate the use of electronic networks to share information with large numbers of CFSAN constituents,

several interagency efforts to provide web-based forums have proved successful. Currently, CFSAN, FSIS and CDC jointly publish EdNet, an electronic newsletter for food safety educators that is received by more than 1,500 subscribers. CFSAN, National Agricultural Library (NAL) and FSIS also sponsor FoodSafe, an electronic discussion forum for professionals interested in retail food safety that goes to almost 2,000 subscribers. These forums are accessible from www.foodsafety.gov/~dms/infonet.html. CFSAN also works with the NAL to main-




tain web-accessible databases of foodborne illness information and HACCP training and education materials, and works with the Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (JIFSAN)

and the University of Maryland to develop the Food Risk Analysis Clearinghouse (www.foodriskclearinghouse.umd.edu) to provide a centralized access page for food risk information.

Other notable developments on these web sites include:

- A video/audio library is posted that provides food safety video and audio selections that can be viewed on the web, including video news releases, public service ads, briefings, training sessions and satellite teleconferences.
- A Food Safety Grants and Requests for Proposals page on FoodSafety.gov, which provides links to selected government food safety grant programs.
- Public access to presentations given by CFSAN managers by posting on the web the audio portion of the presentations along with their accompanying MicroSoft PowerPoint slides. For example, there is one audio presentation on the topic of HACCP which is accessed by more than 400 people each month.
- Expanded availability of questions-and-answers pages to reduce the number of people and businesses who have to call, write or e-mail inquiries to the Center. Currently CFSAN has posted approxi-

mately 200 questions and answers, and FoodSafety.gov links to more than 500 questions and answers.

If you want to stay abreast of the new features being added every week to the CFSAN web site, periodically visit the What's New page. All announcements and new features are posted on this page for approximately three to four weeks. For FoodSafety.gov new features, you can periodically visit the Recent Additions page, which is listed on the bottom of the site home page. 

***Kenneth Durham** is a special assistant in the Office of Constituent Operations in the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, FDA. He is the coordinator of the agency's Foods web pages and the FoodSafety.gov web pages. He has been with FDA for 28 years with responsibilities in planning, policy coordination and outreach.*

***Mark Walderhaug** is a microbiologist in the Office of Special Research Skills in the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, FDA. He is the coordinator of FDA/CFSAN's Foodborne illness and "Bad Bug Book" web pages. He has been with FDA for nine years with responsibilities in microbial research, risk assessment and content development.*