

**U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Public Meeting  
Standards for the Growing, Harvesting, Packing, and Holding of Produce for Human  
Consumption; Agricultural Water Requirements: Proposed Rule  
Speakers' and Panelists' Biographies**

**Samir Assar, Ph.D., Director, Division of Produce Safety, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, FDA**

Dr. Samir Assar is the Director of the Division of Produce Safety in the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN). Since 2008, Dr. Assar has led the development of FDA's policy, regulation, and guidance on produce safety, including those mandated by the 2011 Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Dr. Assar provides strategic leadership in developing plans for research, training, and compliance activities that target a safe and abundant produce supply. Dr. Assar is committed to enhancing partnerships with produce safety stakeholders and has collaboratively forged initiatives and agreements aimed at protecting public health. Dr. Assar also serves as the FDA project leader for the Western Center for Food Safety at the University of California - Davis, whose focus is on research, education, and outreach on production agriculture and food safety issues. Dr. Assar received his M.S. and Ph.D. in Food Science from the University of Florida.

**Wendy Campbell, Division Director, Partnerships, Investments & Agreements, Office of Partnerships, Office of Regulatory Affairs, FDA**

Wendy Campbell serves as the OP Division of Partnership, Investments, and Agreements Director. She joined the FDA in February 2010 and the Office of Partnerships (formerly Division of Federal-State Relations) in 2011. Prior to joining FDA, she worked for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services as the Food Defense Coordinator and Principal Investigator for the RRT cooperative agreement. Wendy graduated from NC State University with an M.S. and B.S. in Food Science.

**Barbara Cassens, Director, Office of Partnerships, Office of Regulatory Affairs, FDA**

Barbara Cassens is the Director for the Office of Partnerships (OP). In her role as the Director of OP, she is responsible for the oversight, strategic planning, collaboration and integration with our federal, state, and local, partners, for manufactured human and animal food safety standards. Barbara began her career with the FDA in 1990 as a field investigator and the Pacific Region Cooperative Programs Director. Eventually, she became San Francisco's District Director. Prior to joining the FDA, she worked in the private sector for Nestle, Dole Packaged Foods, and John Labatt, LLC. Ms. Cassens holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the Iowa State University. She is active in the Western Association of Food and Drug Officials, the Association of Food and Drug Officials, the Institute of Food Technologists and the International Association for Food Protection.

**Chelsea Davidson, M.S., Policy Analyst, Office of Food Policy and Response, FDA**

Chelsea Davidson joined the FDA in 2016 and has served as a Policy Analyst in the Office of Food Policy and Response since 2020. There, she coordinates policy, regulations, and guidance under the Food Safety Modernization Act, including activities related to development of the Agricultural Water Proposed Rule. Prior to joining OFPR, Ms. Davidson was a Consumer Safety Officer in the Division of Produce Safety, where she served as a subject matter expert on the microbial safety of produce with an emphasis on

agricultural water. Prior to joining the Agency, Ms. Davidson earned her B.S. in Microbiology from Michigan State University and her M.S. in Horticulture & Agronomy with a specialization in postharvest handling from University of California, Davis.

**Eric J. Deeble, Policy Director, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition**

Eric is a large animal veterinarian (University of Pennsylvania, 2013) who prior to joining NSAC worked in the US Senate on farm and food policy with the office of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). His commitment to sustainable, equitable, and just food systems comes from his time with farmers, ranchers, dairy producers and the people who make sure the food they produce is safe, affordable, and available to everyone in their own community. Prior to his veterinary career, he worked in the not-for-profit sector ensuring safe housing conditions for elderly and disabled persons.

**Richard De Los Santos, Director, Produce Safety and Livestock Export, Texas Department of Agriculture**

Mr. Richard De Los Santos grew up on a produce farm in Mission, Texas. He is a 1986 graduate of Texas A&M University in College Station, where he also graduated from the Texas AgriLife Lifetime Leadership (TALL) Program. De Los Santos was a member the Corps of Cadets, graduated Airborne School at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1983 and Commissioned 2nd Lt U.S. Army in 1986. Currently serving a 2nd term on the USDA's National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREE Board), De Los Santos served two terms on the National Watermelon Promotion Board. He has served the great state of Texas for 22 years at the Texas Department of Agriculture where he currently serves as the Director for the Texas Office of Produce Safety and Livestock Export.

**Diane Ducharme, Ph.D., Produce Safety Expert, Division of Produce Safety, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, FDA**

Dr. Diane Ducharme joined the FDA-Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN), Division of Produce (DPS), Fresh Produce Branch (FPB) within the Produce Safety Network (PSN) in early 2017 as a Consumer Safety Officer. In her role, Diane serves as a technical expert supporting fresh produce policy development, regulatory guidelines, advisory options, position papers, and compliance strategies for the FDA's Produce Safety Rule. Dr. Ducharme has provided subject matter expertise to advise internal and external stakeholders on procedures, outreach, training, and enforcement to foster industry compliance with the new federal regulations (FSMA) governing the produce industry. Previous to FDA, Diane focused on providing strategic leadership to the outreach and education that support farmers and other stakeholders in fresh produce safety, horticultural production, post-harvest technology, and alternative agriculture for both the Produce Safety Rule and Preventive Controls for Human Foods rule.

**Steve Fuller, Assistant Director, Food Safety and Consumer Services Division, Washington State Department of Agriculture**

Steve Fuller is one of the Assistant Directors at the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). He leads the Food Safety and Consumer Services Division. Steve is the primary official in the state responsible for regulating and promoting a wide variety of food production and processing operations, providing organic certification services, laboratory services, and administering public support for food banks and pantries. He previously served as a policy advisor to the agency's Director, where he championed legislative initiatives, budget requests, and challenging public policy issues. Before joining the Director's Office, Steve built WSDA's first food emergency response team, where he focused on improving speed and accuracy. He previously worked at the Washington Department of Health, where he trained the

state's retail food safety inspectors and gave technical advice on regulatory issues. He has a master's degree in public health from UCLA.

**Susan T. Mayne, Director, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, FDA**

Susan T. Mayne leads the Center's development and implementation of programs and policies related to the composition, quality, safety, and labeling of foods, food and color additives, and cosmetics. Dr. Mayne is an internationally recognized public health leader and scientist who also oversees diet and health initiatives, which include the policy development and management of food and nutrition labeling, as well as the regulation of dietary supplements, medical foods and infant formulas. She came to the FDA from Yale University, where she was the C-E.A. Winslow Professor of Epidemiology.

**Catherine McDermott, Program Analyst, Strategic Communications and Public Engagement, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, FDA**

Catherine McDermott is a Program Analyst for Strategic Communications and Public Engagement in the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition at FDA. She provides leadership and design of strategic outreach efforts, specializing in federal-state relations and produce safety. Ms. McDermott is a former Special Assistant for Field Liaison and a Press Officer in FDA's Office of Media Affairs, as well as Director of Public Affairs Branch, Division of Federal-State Relations in FDA's Office of Regulatory Affairs. Prior to joining the FDA, Ms. McDermott served as the Director of Marketing at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, and as a Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Coast Guard. She began her career at the U.S. Department of State in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, later continuing to the Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of Public Liaison, where she served as a key liaison and coordinator of public education for the office charged with fostering dialogue between the American public and the State Department on foreign policy issues and initiatives.

**Jennifer McEntire, Ph.D., Chief Food Safety and Regulatory Officer, International Fresh Produce Association**

Dr. Jennifer McEntire is the Chief Food Safety and Regulatory Officer for the International Fresh Produce Association, successor the United Fresh Produce Association. A food microbiologist by background, she has worked in the Washington, DC area for over 20 years, bringing the scientific perspective to food safety regulatory issues. She has held previous food safety leadership positions with the Grocery Manufacturers Association, The Acheson Group and the Institute of Food Technologists. McEntire earned a PhD from Rutgers University as a USDA National Needs Fellow in Food Safety and received a Bachelor of Science with Distinction, magna cum laude, in food science from the University of Delaware. She serves as an advisory board member of the Global Food Traceability Center, is on the technical committee of the Center for Produce Safety, and was the 2020 recipient of the NSF International Food Safety Leadership Award.

**Roger Noonan, President, New England Farmers Union**

Roger Noonan is President of the New England Farmers Union. He operates a diversified organic farm with his family in New Hampshire and is a Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Trainer.

**Kruti Ravaliya, M.S., Consumer Safety Officer, Division of Produce Safety, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, FDA**

Kruti Ravaliya is a Consumer Safety Officer with the Division of Produce Safety, Fresh Produce Branch within CFSAN, at FDA. She serves as the subject matter expert on Agriculture Water and most significantly the development of agricultural water requirements within the Produce Safety Rule. She earned her M.S. in Food Science, with minors in Biotechnology and Food Safety, at North Carolina State University in 2013, and a B.S. in Food Science and Spanish from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 2007

**Brian Ronholm, Director of Food Policy, Consumer Reports**

Brian Ronholm is the Director of Food Policy at Consumer Reports where he leads their advocacy efforts to advance a safe and healthy food system. He previously served as Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), providing leadership, management and oversight of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), the public health agency responsible for ensuring the safety of meat, poultry, catfish, and processed egg products. Prior to that, he served as Agriculture Appropriations Associate in the office of Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut.

**Sonia Salas, M.S., Assistant VP of Science, Western Growers**

Sonia Salas joined Western Growers in October 2007. She is currently Western Growers' Assistant Vice President, Science. In this role, Sonia is responsible for leading and overseeing the development and implementation of diverse food safety efforts, including member resources development, policy development, outreach, education, and training programs for the fresh produce industry. Before joining Western Growers, she worked in different food facilities managing food safety and quality assurance systems and implementing federal, state, and local requirements. Sonia holds a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Engineering from the Zamorano Pan-American Agricultural School, Honduras, and a Master's degree in Agricultural Sciences from the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

**Michelle Smith, Ph.D., Senior Policy Analyst, Division of Produce Safety, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, FDA**

Dr. Michelle Smith serves as the Senior Policy Analyst in the Division of Produce Safety, Office of Food Safety, providing technical assistance and collaborative support to numerous public and private efforts to advance produce safety through guidance, education/outreach, and research. Dr. Smith was the lead author of FDA's 1998 Good Agricultural Practices guide which laid a foundation for many national and international standards. Since 2009, she has been working on FDA's Produce Safety Rule and its subsequent implementation. Michelle joined FDA in 1991. Prior to FDA, she worked at the University of Maryland, Horticulture Department, teaching, conducting research and providing technical assistance to the local food industry. She also worked as a researcher at the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) in Beltsville, MD. Michelle received a Ph.D. in Food Science & Technology from the University of Maryland, an M.S. in Crop Physiology, and a B.S. in Soil Science.

**Sarah Sorscher, J.D., MPH, Deputy Director of Regulatory Affairs, Center for Science in the Public Interest**

Sarah Sorscher is an experienced advocate with a passion for public health who fights for a safer, healthier, more transparent food system by promoting consumer safeguards in Congress, federal agencies, and state and local governments. As Deputy Director of Regulatory Affairs, she manages

CSPI's policy work related to food safety and labeling, allergens, food additives, dietary supplements, and other consumer products. Her work includes serving on federal advisory committees, testifying before Congress and federal agencies, offering technical advice to policymakers, and providing commentary to the media on consumer and food safety issues. Prior to joining CSPI, Sarah worked on health and safety issues at Public Citizen and served as a law clerk for the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. She holds a J.D. from the Harvard Law School, an M.P.H. from Harvard School of Public Health, and a B.A. from Amherst College.

**Don Stoeckel, Senior Environmental Scientist, California Department of Food and Agriculture**

Don Stoeckel is a Senior Environmental Scientist with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, specializing in water microbial quality. He came into this role in 2021 after helping to launch the Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training program and other PSA efforts at Cornell University since 2015. Prior to working with Cornell Extension and the Produce Safety Alliance, Don was a research hydrologist with the US Geological Survey Water Resources Division where he was principal investigator on numerous fecal source tracking studies.

**Bruce Summers, Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), U.S. Department of Agriculture**

Bruce Summers currently serves as the Administrator for the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). In this position he works on policy issues and oversight of a variety of programs including grading of commodities such as meat, produce, dairy and cotton, the USDA Market News Service, and the National Organic Program. Mr. Summers is a long-time employee of the Agricultural Marketing Service with more than 30 years of experience. Prior to being named to the Administrator position he served in the Fruit & Vegetable Program Area of the Agricultural Marketing Service. Mr. Summers has a degree in Agricultural Economics from the University of Maryland.

**Hilary Thesmar, Ph.D., RD, CFS, Chief Food & Product Safety Officer/Senior VP, Food Safety Programs, The Food Industry Association**

With over 20 years of experience in food science, food safety, and food and agriculture policy, Dr. Thesmar provides leadership for FMI's retail, wholesale and product supplier members on technical issues such as food safety training programs, regulatory affairs, recall plans and management, crisis management, research, and overall safety and sanitation programs. She also works with the FMI Foundation on food safety education and research projects. Dr. Thesmar earned a Ph.D. in Food Technology from Clemson University, a Master of Science degree in Human Nutrition from Winthrop University, a bachelor's degree in Food Science from Clemson, and she is a Registered Dietitian. Dr. Thesmar is a Fellow of the Institute of Food Technologists, an active member of the International Food Protection Association and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

**Abby Willard, Development Division Director, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets**

Abbey Willard is the Development Division Director at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. She was the Principal Investigator on Vermont's original Produce Safety Rule Cooperative Agreement with FDA and currently participates in the NASDA/FDA Produce Integration Group and the On Farm Readiness Review Development Team. Abbey and the outstanding Vermont Produce Program staff have been working with their produce industry and education partners to ensure compliance with the Produce Safety Rule, competitiveness in the marketplace, and assurance of safe production practices in partnership with NASDA, FDA, and other states since 2013.

**Frank Yiannas, Deputy Commissioner for Food Policy and Response, FDA**

Frank Yiannas is the principal advisor to the FDA Commissioner on food safety policies, including implementation of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act. His leadership role in the agency's Office of Food Policy and Response covers a broad spectrum, such as outbreak response, traceback investigations, product recall activities, and supply chain innovation. Mr. Yiannas came to the FDA from leadership roles with Walmart and the Walt Disney Company. He has long been recognized for his role in elevating food safety standards and building food safety management systems based on science and risk.