**Georgia Food Safety & Defense   
Task Force Meeting**

**August 2020 Virtual Meeting Agenda**

**Date:** August 5, 2020

**Time:** 10:00 am – 11:30 am ET

**Location**: Virtual Zoom Meeting

**Welcome and Intro:** *Jessica Badour*

**Stakeholder Updates**

Georgia Department of Public Health: *Galen Baxter, Hope Dishman*

* Restaurant inspections stopped in March; routine inspections are resuming in some parts of the state.
* Environmental Health updates:
  + The division has created guidance and training videos for restaurant industry and long-term care facilities.
  + They conducted a virtual district conference.
  + FDA grant has been extended through July 2021.
* Epidemiology update:
  + Foodborne disease incidence and outbreaks have decreased.
  + One Georgia resident affected by the Cyclospora bagged salad outbreak.
  + Georgia has not yet been affected by the recent Thompson onion outbreak.

Georgia Department of Agriculture: *Natalie Adan, Krissa Jones, Chris Peasley, Maggie Brown, Colby Brown, Tamsin Smith*

* Legislative updates:
  + Senate Bill 345 (Save our Sandwiches) passed House and Senate.
  + Senate Bill 381 (information sharing with the FDA) passed House and Senate.
  + Senate Bill 420 (bathrooms in food sales) did not pass.
  + Senate Bill 434 (plastic bags) did not pass.
* Manufactured Food updates:
  + Resumed FDA contract inspections, with FDA permission.
  + Georgia shellfish recertification date will now expire December 31, 2020.
* Retail Food updates:
  + There are 9 openings in the retail food program; please share the [openings](https://ga.taleo.net/careersection/ga_external/jobsearch.ftl?lang=en&alt=1) with anyone interested.
  + The standardization process has been postponed indefinitely.
  + Field work has been phasing back in front full-time telework, focusing on complaints and backlog inspections in small stores.
  + Since the pandemic, there has been an increase in cottage food licenses and mobile vehicle food licenses.
  + Risk-based sampling program is resuming and at 35% of pre-COVID capacity.
* Produce Safety Program:
  + On Farm Readiness Reviews and inspections have resumed.
  + Program is slowly trying to open Produce Safety Growing training again.
* ![Chart

  Description automatically generated]()RRT updates:
  + From December 1, there have been 32 complaints regarding COVID response.
  + GDA has ensured the distribution of over 250,000 face masks.
  + From January to March 2020 the GDA removed 206 units of product during a recall audit check. The largest problems were in store codes 304 and 305 (convenience stores and delis).
* Emergency Management updates:
  + PowerPoint Slides: [Sims Updates .pdf](Sims%20Updates%20.pdf)
  + COVID communication plan is focusing on building resilience.
  + Crisis Counseling Program will serve food, agriculture, and hospitality workers, as well as the general public.
    - If you are interested in helping with a Crisis Counseling app, please contact Venessa Sims at [Venessa.sims@agr.georgia.gov](mailto:Venessa.sims@agr.georgia.gov).
  + Georgia Grown To-Go pop-up markets have been a success and will continue into the fall.
  + GDA is now preparing for hurricane season, with COVID precautions.

FDA: *Cameron Wiggins*

* Office of State Cooperative Programs Retail Food update:
  + National retail food team will not be conducting new and re-standardizations of field officers.
  + Expiration dates are extended; maintenance dates are extended through 2020.
  + OSCP is partnering with NEHA to host the 2020 Food Retail Safety Seminar.
    - Register [here](https://cts.vresp.com/c/?NationalEnvironmenta/a992eddd39/6fd6ee0b45/b79790b395).
  + OSCP is working on Democratic and Republican National Conventions.
  + For FDA COVID information:
    - FDA’s food and cosmetic information center [Inquiry Page](https://cfsan.secure.force.com/Inquirypage)
    - FDA’s latest COVID information: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)](https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/counterterrorism-and-emerging-threats/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19?utm_campaign=20200805%20MCMi&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua)
* Half East 3 updates:
  + The office lifted the state stop work order and actively working on FY 21 adjustments.
  + FDA has resumed prioritized domestic surveillance inspections based on local COVID rates.

USDA: *Kenneth Cash*

* Most in the USDA are teleworking but the offices are open.
* Investigators had to move online and work regulatory positions.
  + This has impacted production of proteins.
* Complaints have gone up and the USDA is working to address them.
* Offices of public health and science are still working, and will assist when needed.

CDC: *Dr. Art Liang*

* CDC scaled up food-related guidance through the pandemic.
* Food systems work group in the EOC response is working actively with National Restaurant Association.
* The CDC is looking for any feedback. You can reach out to the FSTF and we will bring this to the CDC.

Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association: *Beth Oleson*

* Food safety consulting and education arm is now nationwide.
  + The program includes farm visits, packing facilities, consulting, and trainings.
* Reach out the Beth if you know someone who can benefit from a cost-share program for food-safety consulting and audit fee.
* Southeast Regional Fruit and Vegetable Conference is considering virtual or in-person conference this year.
* Planning is underway for the Food Safety Educational Conference for farmers, packing, owners, and managers.

Georgia Food Bank Association: *Callie Roan*

* Since COVID, the food banks have seen 30-40% increase, up to 60% in some areas.
* The food banks have served 4.2 million meals per week since pandemic.
* In the near future, they expect to distribute 400,000+ boxes of produce, meat, with milk.
* There is a problem of loss of volunteers, but the food banks have received National Guard Assistance.
* The food banks expect to see sustained demand for food assistance and an increased burden to feed people directly.
* There was an appeal to Congress for 15% increase in SNAP benefits.
* The banks are looking to increase cold storage.

Georgia Restaurants Association: *Karen Bremer*

* The GRA has been working with the CDC and DPH to update guidance.
* Restaurants have lost more jobs and revenue than any other industry and will be the slowest to recover.
  + Restaurant unemployment jumped to 39.3% in April; it is currently to 28.9%.
  + Restaurants have lost $145 billion in revenue so far.
* A new initiative is the Georgia safety promise: trade associations came together to regain trust and make a pledge with safety measures.
* [THRIVE Georgia](https://www.garestaurants.org/covid-19-thrive-georgia) is training employees on COVID safety measures.
* Atlanta Family Meal is providing meals for restaurant workers and their families.
* Right now, the GRA is working on a temporary order for curbside mixed drinks and asking to prioritize restaurant workers in COVID antibody testing.

Georgia Tech: *Wendy White*

* The GT MEP is continuing to offer professional development, classes, third party consultations, gap assessments, and compliance.
* The MEP is developing employee protection guidance and business continuity guidelines.
* The Georgia Regulatory Breakfast Event is rescheduled for Nov. 5, 2020.
  + Register [here](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ga-regulatory-breakfast-tickets-91847234551).

University of Georgia: *Tori Stivers*

* Seafood HASSAP is conducting operations virtually.
* NOA is funding seafood response, which will involve asking 7-10 processors on their adaptations.
* You can sign up for free classes at [GeorgiaSBDC.org](https://www.georgiasbdc.org/).
  + Webinars will be starting in Aug, June 2021, so check the site for updates soon.

University of Georgia Extension: *Elizabeth Andress*

* ServSafe and trainings can be given virtually, but are waiting due to regulations.
* Extension is now allowed to proctor certified exams; tests can be proctor print or online tests in person with social distancing.
* Educators are doing zoom programs; home food preservation has been very popular.
  + There is no means of tracking, but keep this in mind for rise in botulism and food waste.

**Action Items**

* If you are interested in helping with a Crisis Counseling app, please contact Venessa Sims at [Venessa.sims@agr.georgia.gov](mailto:Venessa.sims@agr.georgia.gov).
  + OSCP is partnering with NEHA to host the 2020 Food Retail Safety Seminar.
* Register [here](https://cts.vresp.com/c/?NationalEnvironmenta/a992eddd39/6fd6ee0b45/b79790b395) for the FDA and NEHA’s Digital Defense Conference.
  + The conference is free and will be held on August 18 and 19.
* Reach out to the FSTF at [Jessica.badour@agr.georgia.gov](mailto:Jessica.badour@agr.georgia.gov) with any feedback on food-related response for the CDC.
* Beth Oleson is taking ideas/speakers for Food Safety educational conference with the audience focusing on produce growers, packers, and shippers: [boleson@asginfo.net](mailto:boleson@asginfo.net)
* You can sign up for free classes at [GeorgiaSBDC.org](https://www.georgiasbdc.org/), starting August 21.
* Reach out to Tori Stivers, Seafood Specialist at <tstivers@uga.edu> ; 770-460-2506 for trainings.