

**Food Innovation Team
Meeting Minutes
May 3, 2022**

Today's meeting was held via Microsoft Teams.

Members present included: Jane Jewett, Lolly Occhino, Blake Nordin, Shelley Erickson, Joe Jurusik, Jodie Burke, Jane Knott, and Noelle Harden

Visitors present included: Connie Carlson, Alida Sorenson, and Natasha Hedin

The meeting started at 10:15 a.m.

1. Upcoming Dates

The next Food Innovation Team (FIT) Meeting will be Tuesday, July 19th via Microsoft Teams.

2. Welcome and Introductions

- The March meeting minutes will be shared prior to the next FIT meeting for approval. Still working on follow-up from MN and ND prior to circulation.
- Some outstanding case reports also need to be finalized before posting to the FSDTF website.

3. Member Vacancies

- Lolly and Jane's memberships will be reaching the end of their terms this September.
- Looking to communicate vacancies on the team through the FSDTF and other channels.
- Morrine Omolo from U of M Extension may be interested in filling Lolly's role when it is vacated.

4. FIT Facilitated Discussion of FIT SOPs

Discussion and decision on FIT SOP updates were facilitated by Connie Carlson from Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships.

What are examples of cases that have been helpful in the past?

- The Aronia berry case was a good example of a FIT case that was helpful because it dealt with a new product and the discussion provided lessons learned that could be extrapolated beyond just that product.
- A lot of these cases focus on MDA-regulated businesses.
- MDH often requires conditional use permits and if a business doesn't have one, it will reach a dead end, whether the case comes to FIT or not.

As a contributor, where have you seen value in having the FIT?

- As a regulator, good to see issues from a non-regulatory point of view.
- The team learns something from every case.
- Helpful to use case write-ups to answer "Ask MISA" questions that come into the U of M Extension.

What are some challenges of the FIT?

- A lot of layers of government can make decisions complex and there are certain situations where the regulators' "hands are tied". However, sometimes these could be resolved through re-writing of the law.
- Warewashing company example was a challenge for regulatory member of the call because a decision had already been made where they wanted to operate, but they still came to FIT.
- Case brought forward is more "general" and the person has not gone to the regulatory authority

first. The food business owner will then ask many different types of questions for several scenarios that were not included in the initial case submission.

What are the team's thoughts on the intake process?

- The intake process can be improved. The form often requires assistance from a FIT member to complete prior to submission.
- There are concerns about having too narrow of requirements to be a FIT case.

Discussion of SOP – section 7.2.1.1

- There is concern about the term “regular channels” and which cases may not be considered.
- There have been times when the intake forms weren't filled out enough (Red River Harvest Coop) and had they been, maybe they wouldn't have made the agenda.
- Expressed concern for instances when FBO has been working with the licensing agency and encountered barriers. An example was the Featherstone Farms case that came up at the same time as the Wright Farms case. The Featherstone farmer had been working with the MDA licensing liaison prior to Jodie Burke taking the position and had gotten mixed up/confused. The issues got resolved but there were complexities that Jane thought could use more discussion. Originally this case got rejected and took a lot of work to get on the agenda. It appeared to be a good case for FIT but then there was an objection.
- If the team hears a case and doesn't come to a resolution because the individual simply can't do it - that's okay. Some individuals just want the information and learning.
- The question of whether to discuss after action reviews appears to be different than the concerns around case criteria.

Does the team see value in bringing in post work/AAR?

- There is value in keeping track of data for the future. However, is developing and maintaining that data worth it? Seems like a big change and departure from the original intent of the group.
- It is not a change from the original intent, it was one of the reasons why FIT was created.
- Sees both sides - would be value in discussing for review.

What about long term FIT operations? Will an archive of information that gets carried forward for future members assist with the longevity?

- In response to the individuals that appear to “answer shop” – there needs to be improvements made to the intake form. The most recent case was valuable/educational but that could have happened on the front end. What was the barrier with the last case? Screening on the front end needs to happen first.
- Agreement that FIT's purpose is resolving complicated cases where several different departments need to get involved – that is what the FIT team role should be.
- Regarding the intake process - up till now, all cases submitted have come through a FIT member. Suggest a more formalized pre-screening. Regulatory agencies could look at it to say “this is easily resolved” but then have an opportunity to have a conversation about it with other FIT members – an opportunity for discussion so there is agreement on whether it should be heard or not. It would be good to have more than one voice in that process so there is a better understanding.
- Connie recommended that the group thinks through the structure of the intake process. Perhaps a working group to look at that and beta test it? What are others' thoughts on that? Any volunteers?
- Agreement that it would be good to think through the structure of the intake process.
- Going back to the comment regarding FBOs needing to work with their local inspector first. Red River Harvest Coop should have gone to their inspector first. In that situation, had it gone to the local inspector it would have required input from the regulators on the ND side which gets back

to the concern regarding regular channels. At what point would an inspector say, “I’m okay with this going to FIT”? What is going to make inspectors feel okay to recommend FIT? The intent is not to make them look like they failed to resolve it – strictly for educational value.

- The relationship workflow between FIT and inspectors would be especially hard to capture even though relationship work has been happening since FIT was created. Innovative work is not typically black and white.
- Back to the idea of looking at the screening process and editing the intake form. Are there any volunteers?
 - Shelley
 - Jodie
 - Blake

5. Action Items

- ☐ Shelley, Jodie, and Blake will meet prior to the July meeting to review the intake form and propose any needed edits.
- ☐ Natasha will circulate draft meeting minutes from March and May

6. Potential agenda items for May

- None currently
- The next FIT meeting is July 19, 2022, at 9:00 a.m.