

Food Innovation Team Recommendation to Governor Tim Walz

Approved by Food Innovation Team members on January 12, 2021

For consideration by the Food Safety and Defense Task Force

Attn: Courtney Bidney and Chris Gindorff, co-chairs, Food Safety and Defense Task Force

Dear Governor Walz:

The Food Innovation Team (FIT) is a subcommittee of the Food Safety and Defense Task Force (FSDTF), which is established by Minnesota Statute 28A.21. Members of the FSDTF are appointed by the governor, and members of FIT are appointed by the chair(s) of the FSDTF.

The FIT has just completed its first two-year cycle with a change in some of the members. As part of the discussion around turnover of members, there was discussion of seeking a more diverse membership of both FIT and FSDTF. It was noted that the majority of current participants in FIT and FSDTF are people with salaried positions who are able to devote some of their work hours to participating in these committees. Participants in Minnesota's food and agriculture system who are self-employed, farmers, wage workers, or employees with small organizations are less likely to have the financial flexibility to attend FIT or FSDTF meetings.

Currently with the COVID-19 situation and all meetings conducted via Zoom there isn't the travel cost associated with in-person meetings, but there is still the time that may be difficult for non-salaried individuals to cover.

It was proposed that community organizations could sponsor a FIT or FSDTF participant by providing a stipend, child care support, and mileage support when travel again becomes possible. Minnesota Department of Agriculture legal counsel determined that current language in M.S. 28A.21 forbids any such compensation to enable non-salaried individuals to participate in FIT. The FIT was advised that the only remedy available is to change the statutory language.

Therefore we, the members of FIT, propose that M.S. 28A.21 be amended thus:

28A.21 FOOD SAFETY AND DEFENSE TASK FORCE.

Subdivision 1. Establishment.

The Food Safety and Defense Task Force is established to advise the commissioner and the legislature on food issues and food safety.

Subd. 2. Membership.

(b) ~~Members shall serve without compensation.~~ Members appointed by the governor shall serve four-year terms.

We respectfully request that this statutory change request be advanced to the Minnesota Legislature by your administration.

Very truly yours,

Jane Grimsbo Jewett, chair of Food Innovation Team

On behalf of the Food Innovation Team