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## Food institute preps for CEO transition

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Although Stephen Benoit soon will leave Battle Creek's **Global Food Protection Institute** to **serve as the CEO of Metabolic Solutions** in Kalamazoo, he believes the transition will be smooth for the GFPI, which has made much progress over the past year.

The GFPI includes the **International Food Protection Training Institute**, the Emerging Technology Accelerator and Imagined Food Futures. Benoit is the founding president and COO of the GFPI and IFPTI.

"By definition, it's going to need to be an individual who's capable of leading three pretty diverse initiatives," Benoit said of his future replacement.

Benoit will step down Oct. 13, and the national search for his replacement will begin in the coming weeks. He will continue to serve on the boards of both the GFPI and IFPTI.

"We've got a really strong set of boards for both the Global Food Protection Institute as well as the training institute," Benoit said. "We've got a great leadership team in the training institute, and that work is going to go on without skipping a beat, and that's obviously important."

The leadership team at the IFPTI is making progress on objectives it shares with the FDA, Benoit said.

"The biggest accomplishment for the International Food Protection Training Institute is moving from just delivering training to actually now being identified by the FDA as the lead group in building the training infrastructure for the national integrated food-safety systems," Benoit said.

Delivering classes is important, and that focus has not changed, Benoit said. But the institute knows it also has to build a training infrastructure, then it will have the ability to deliver classes on a national basis and train more people, which is a more efficient use of funds.

"The four things we're working on are building the national training network, building the I.T. support infrastructure to kind of serve as the registrar for the national training system, developing new courses and delivering those new courses that don't exist yet, and building a cadre of instructors to be able to deliver this training on a national basis," Benoit said.

As part of those goals, the IFPTI is creating a food- and agriculture-protection training consortium. This first phase of building the training network will include a number of universities around the country.

"We're really focusing on this being the first phase of implementing the FDA's vision of building a national training infrastructure," Benoit said. "So it's a pretty exciting time."

The GFPI also is developing the model for the emerging technology accelerator, Benoit said, and is looking for funds in the range of \$12 million to \$20 million and speaking with potential investors.

"The focus would be on transformative technology innovation in food protection," Benoit said.

Another milestone for the organization is having identified a structure for the conferences and symposia in food protection, which will operate under the third arm in the GFPI, Imagined Food Futures. It will focus on how to hardwire food safety into the development of food systems.

"It's really exciting," Benoit said. "There's clearly a need not only for the dialogue around integrating food safety into the development of new food systems but really starting to think about what the actions need to be. That's definitely going to be something I'm really going to miss not being able to move along a little further ... ."

"The progress and momentum are clearly unchanged. It's a very exciting, forward-looking picture at this point, so I'm excited to be going to the new opportunity and sad to be leaving the existing opportunity because it's really been quite satisfying. It's something that I think will be very exciting to be part of going forward, as well."

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