

## **Food safety institute garners leadership award**

Written by

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In the U.S., 48 million people get sick and 3,000 die each year from food poisoning. One out of every six Americans will develop a foodborne illness this year. The cost is a whopping \$152 billion a year .

I have had the pleasure of having three career opportunities associated with the larger food safety issue. First as a former program vice president at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (15 years) with a focus on community food systems, in my current role as W.K. Kellogg Professor in Food, Society and Sustainability at Michigan State University and as the incumbent chairman of the board of directors of the International Food Protection Training Institute (IFPTI). I am proud that our collective efforts to address this global issue ultimately benefit Battle Creek, the state of Michigan and the U.S. This organization is providing a solution to one of the most significant gaps in our food protection system - the absence of standardized, regular, and career-spanning training of state and local food protection professionals. Inspectors that are trained to a universal standard are necessary to augment the inspection and

surveillance capabilities of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Last week in Washington, D.C., I joined with 1,500 food safety professionals from all over the world gathered at the 2011 Food Safety Summit to discuss the issues affecting the global food supply. We live in a time when threats, whether accidental or intentional, frequently emerge and pose new risks to the safety of our food. This year at the summit, IFPTI received the 2011 Food Safety Leadership Trendsetter Award. This prestigious award was presented to IFPTI for leading the charge in food safety leadership, initiative, and accomplishments.

I am honored to be a part of IFPTI. The organization has trained over 1,300 food protection professionals from 47 states and provided emergency training for regulators and industries responding to the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Through a multidisciplinary curriculum team, we are now developing the first-ever

national curriculum for the integrated food safety system.

Better training is the most cost-effective use of limited resources in these tight budgetary times. Training the people who regulate and participate in the U.S. food system offers the best solution for protection against contamination of the food supply and for maintaining consumer confidence. The integrated training and certification system being built by the FDA, IFPTI and the entire food protection community will lead to a safer food supply for American consumers.

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