



Auburn University Food Safety Initiative (AUFSI)

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I. Mission Statement

The “Missions” of the Auburn University Food Safety Initiative (AUFSI) is to facilitate and make tangible contributions to national, regional and state food safety efforts through interdisciplinary research collaborations and external partnerships with academia, industry, government and consumers. By developing advanced tools, practices and interventions, AUFSI intends to be a leader in the reduction of the risks of foodborne hazards in all elements of the food chain from food origin to consumer.

Auburn University Food Safety Initiative:

II. Vision Statement

The Auburn University Food Safety Initiative (AUFSI) will be a comprehensive, campus-wide enterprise that will serve as a leader in defining and achieving state, regional and national food safety objectives. Through basic and translational research, education and outreach, AUFSI will have a core focus on food safety concerns that intersect with the university's strengths within the umbrella of the Health Science Initiative. It will engage in research, testing and training activities that enable the execution of food safety regulations and requirements and be distinguished by its ability to translate food safety innovations and concepts to the stakeholder communities: local, state and federal governments; suppliers; farmers; producers; distributors and consumers.

III. Implementation Plan

Initiative Overview and Intended Purpose:

The Auburn University Food Safety Initiative (AUFSI) is an interdisciplinary, cross-departmental venture established with the intent of making leading national, regional and local contributions to the safety of the U.S. food supply. This initiative strives to maximize Auburn's internal strengths and external collaborations through tangible contributions to food safety.

The primary goal of the AUFSI is to ensure the protection of public health by contributing to food safety best practices and technology advancement. The AUFSI will maintain a dedicated infrastructure that fosters interdisciplinary partnerships and pursues collaborative funding opportunities. Core science and technology focus areas will include foodborne hazard prevention, detection, and traceability. AUFSI will address concerns regarding food safety health, economic and implementation implications (including testing, validation and training). All focus areas will be supported by academic programs dedicated to providing high quality education and research programs for students in food safety related disciplines.

Food safety interests vary for the stakeholders involved in taking food products from "farm to fork" and "pond to plate". In order to ensure participation on the continuum from producer to consumer, the AUFSI will consciously engage in community focused outreach, leading collaboration with academia, industry, federal and state government, and local communities.

Contributions to state and national food safety efforts are vital elements of Auburn University's broad Health Initiative. To this end, the AUFSI will strive to facilitate the translation of its collaborative innovations and discoveries through academic and Extension programs; technology transfer efforts; public/community meetings; and research, federal, state and industry collaborations.

Implementation Plan to Achieve the AUFSI Intended Purpose:

1. Interdisciplinary, Cross-Departmental Venture

AUFSI membership will be open to all departments and organizations throughout the Auburn University network.

Current members include:

- Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station
- Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- College of Agriculture
- College of Engineering
- College of Human Sciences
- College of Liberal Arts
- College of Science and Mathematics
- College of Veterinary Medicine
- School of Nursing

AUFSI has developed a Core Team with representatives from the founding member groups. This team will be responsible for assessing Auburn's internal capabilities. The Core Team will utilize areas of alignment between Auburn's strengths and current food safety needs, requirements, regulations, etc., to recommend a path forward for AUFSI.

2. Dedicated Infrastructure

AUFSI will work to identify and obtain seed funding to establish dedicated staff and related required resources to facilitate the achievement of the Initiative's intended purpose. The infrastructure will build upon existing research facilities, physical assets and capabilities. Funding will be obtained for (but not limited to):

- a. Dedicated personnel (e.g. director, administrative staff)
- b. Communication
 - i. External (e.g. website, meetings, media relations, public relations)
 - ii. Internal (e.g. marketing, meetings)
- c. Dedicated facilities
 - i. Office space
 - ii. Laboratory and testing facilities
 - iii. Pilot plants(s)
 - iv. Training facilities

Among other things, this infrastructure will be responsible for establishing operational procedures, a charter, leadership structure, a calendar of events, fiscal operations and working with the Auburn University administration in accordance with the Auburn University Board of Trustees' policy on institutes and centers.

3. Interdisciplinary Partnerships

AUFSI will sponsor internal and external meetings and networking events to foster communication and collaboration on food safety topics across disciplines. AUFSI will develop formal methodologies to encourage interdisciplinary partnerships including incentive programs and agreements with departmental administrators. AUFSI will identify relationships that present opportunities for it to support interdisciplinary partnerships (e.g. the state laboratory, departmental core facilities) and work to communicate their existence and utilization.

4. Pursuit of Collaborative Funding Opportunities

Auburn University will establish mechanisms to:

- a. Notify AUFSI members of funding opportunities
- b. Facilitate collaborations for funding opportunities
- c. Apply for funding as a collaborative
- d. Communicate interdisciplinary topics of interest
- e. Develop recommended guidelines for the distribution of direct and indirect costs among participating units

5. Core Science and Technology Focus Areas

AUFSI will establish core science and technology areas that shall be the primary focus for the initiative. These areas will help AUFSI to establish an identity of expertise in the food safety community. Areas include:

- a. Aquaculture and Seafood Safety
- b. Community Outreach through the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES)
- c. Economics
- d. Egg, Poultry and Beef Safety
- e. Foodborne-Hazard Detection Technology
- f. Nutrition
- g. Pathobiology

6. Health, Economic and Implementation Implications

Consumer interface: Resources will be dedicated to creating and refining public awareness surrounding food safety-related health, economic and implementation implications. These efforts will enlist participation from Auburn’s social scientists, scientists working in the area of food safety, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, School of Nursing, and other departments in the College of Human Sciences and College of Liberal Arts.

7. Testing & Validation

AUFSI will actively pursue opportunities to function as a local, state and national resource for the testing and validation of food safety related technologies and the analysis of food hazard samples.

8. Training

There is an acknowledged worldwide shortage of inspectors and other food safety professionals. AUFSI will actively pursue opportunities to provide specialized training for individuals responsible for ensuring the implementation of food safety regulations and best practices. Note: These “opportunities” are specifically in reference to emerging training requirements derived from state or federal regulations or mandates. AUFSI, however, may also pursue opportunities to train members of the industry and consumer sectors.

9. Quality Education for Students in Food Safety Related Disciplines

AUFSI will establish procedures to interact with Auburn University administration and colleges to participate in the maintenance and creation of appropriate educational standards in food safety related disciplines. These efforts will include (but are not limited to):

- a. Faculty recruitment and retention
- b. Undergraduate student recruitment and retention
- c. Graduate student recruitment and retention
- d. Tailored curriculum
- e. Student training opportunities
- f. Food safety distance education

10. Community Focused Outreach

A prime focus of the AUFSI will be to actively participate in outreach to the local, state, national and international food safety communities. This will be achieved by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and other faculty. Outreach activities will include (but are not limited to) community education on best practices for food handling, processing and growing.

The AUFSI will also contribute to the planning and support of community meetings of various scales on the local, state and national levels. These efforts will aid in the establishment of AUFSI as a recognizable and reliable resource for food safety concerns and challenges.

11. Federal and State Government

AUFSI will engage members of local, state and federal government. Through these efforts, AUFSI will aim to:

- a. Raise the Initiative’s profile
- b. Build relationships with key entities that impact the food safety community
- c. Participate in opportunities to help Alabama and the federal Executive Branch fulfill

food safety requirements

- d. Influence and inform legislation and regulation
- e. Influence and inform the creation of food safety related standards

12. Translation of Collaborative Innovations and Discoveries

AUFSI will establish a strong relationship with the Auburn University Technology Transfer Office and address several key issues surrounding the success of research translation including:

- a. Proactive technology recruitment
- b. Development of investment worthy technologies
- c. Technology development incentives for faculty
- d. Active marketing for external licensing and investment