Better Process Control School to promote safe food processing

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Oklahoma State University’s Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center will hold a Better Process Control School June 14-17.

“The Better Process Control School is designed to promote safe food processing,” said William McGlynn, FAPC horticultural products processing specialist.

Federal regulations (21 CFR 108, 113 and 114 for FDA-regulated foods, and 9 CFR 318.300 and 381.300 for USDA-regulated meat and poultry products) were created to help prevent public health problems in low-acid canned foods and in acidified canned foods, including pet foods. Low-acid canned foods include products such as canned vegetables and canned meats. Acidified foods include products such as vinegar-packed pickled vegetables and some salsa-type products.

These food safety regulations are designed to prevent public health problems from occurring in low-acid and acidified low-acid canned foods. Regulations require each processor of low-acid or acidified canned foods to operate at all times with a certified supervisor on hand during processing.

“Attending the Better Process Control School and successfully passing the required examinations given as a part of the school is the only legally-recognized way to be certified as a supervisor of canned food thermal processing systems, canned food acidification and container closure evaluation programs,” McGlynn said.

The Better Process Control School is designed to provide basic information about the federal canned food processing regulations, and how they are applied as a practical matter.

This includes information on principles of processing, equipment design and operation requirements, and recordkeeping. Specific topics covered in the school include microbiology of canned foods, principles of thermal processing, principles of food acidification, proper food container handling and closure operations, canned food facility sanitation, and specific canned food processing equipment setup and operation.

The four-day school is divided into two segments. The first two days will provide an acidified canned food processor with the basic courses necessary to be certified for the production of acidified canned foods. The second two days will focus on the information required for certification in low-acid canned food processing.

“Neither the FDA nor the USDA sponsors or co-sponsors the Better Process Control School,” McGlynn said. “However, in order to be officially designated as a Better Process Control School, the curriculum must meet FDA standards for content, and the instructors must meet FDA standards for training and experience, and the FDA must approve the sponsors of the school.”

An FDA representative will be present during the school to help answer questions and observe the proceedings. Attendees can be confident that successfully completing the school will meet the requirements described in the federal regulations noted above, and grant them legally-recognized status as certified canned food processing supervisors.

Registration cost for the four-day conference is $425, or the cost to complete the acidified foods section (first two days) is $350. Registration fee includes workshop materials and lunch costs. For more information or to register for the conference, visit www.fapc.biz/processcontrol.html, call Karen Smith at 405-744-6277 or e-mail karenl.smith@okstate.edu.