Center hosts Food Safety Symposium

Food safety is a major concern for the food industry.

As a result, the Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center recently hosted a symposium that focused on the biosecurity of food from the farm to the table.

Stanley Gilliland, Center food microbiologist and Food Safety Symposium committee chair, set the stage with his introductory comments during the symposium.

“Recent global events have increased the need for biosecurity awareness in the food industry,” Gilliland said.

“Because of this, the theme of this year’s symposium is “Biosecurity of Food: Farm to Table.”

During his presentation Gilliland gave examples of microorganisms that might be used as terrorism agents. Some of the microorganisms most often considered are Bacillus anthracis, Small pox virus and Clostridium botulinum. However, common foodborne pathogens such as Salmonella species, E. coli 0157:H7, Listeria monocytogenes and Campylobacter jejuni could be used.

Majkowski, FSIS/USDA; David Edger, 3CI Consulting; D.C. Coston, Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station; Elizabeth Nutt, Tulsa City/County Health Department; Lauri Smithee, Oklahoma State Department of Health; and Peter Muriana, Center food microbiologist.

The speakers discussed food safety topics such as the need for biosecurity in the food system, the FSIS food security initiative, processing facilities security systems, the role of American colleges of agriculture in agricultural security, a terrorism preparedness plan, foodborne disease surveillance and biosecurity, and Listeria monocytogenes.

Edger, the founder of 3CI Consulting, suggested some steps during his presentation to prepare for a terrorist attack.

“The harsh reality is we cannot protect all of our agricultural sites,” Edger said. “However, risk

See SYMPOSIUM, page 4
A message from the director

One of the fiscal issues of technology-based businesses is the investment cost of product development.

The food and agribusiness sector is generally considered to be technology-based, and businesses in this sector thrive on product development investments.

From an accounting point of view, research and development is overhead and does not contribute to the short-term profitability of the company. Although research and development is an investment for the future, it also is an expense liability.

When the economy is strong and profit margins are relatively wide, business management usually focuses on production, marketing and selling of products.

When margins are narrow and competition is severe, lean manufacturing and trimming business costs are key.

In recent times, businesses find themselves reviewing the need to maintain research and product development departments. Many businesses have chosen to minimize or eliminate research and development and outsource when needed.

The budget allocated to research and development has ranged from 0.5 percent to 2 percent of gross sales on average. A large U.S.-located food company recently reported annual sales of just under $30 billion. Even at a moderate investment, the research and development annual budget was substantial.

Large companies with significant research and development investments have increasingly greater pressure to minimize those overhead costs and develop some plan to outsource as much as possible.

Small companies usually cannot support research and development overhead, and try to be creative in manufacturing for product-line extensions and other development activities.

Small- and medium-sized businesses usually incorporate the duties of product development and marketing into the position description of one of the company principals.

The Food and Agricultural Products Center has been an investment by the Oklahoma Legislature to provide research and development support for the food and agribusiness sector in Oklahoma for value-added technologies, processes and products.

Facilities and infrastructure are in place, and scientists and technologists are working to meet the objectives. Product development support can be accessed in essentially all foods and agricultural commodities, as well as agribusiness investments, business marketing, quality manufacturing, compliance, food and process engineering, and employee training.

The Center could be an asset to your business without the heavy cost liability of your own research and development. Contact the Center to see what we can do for you.

J. Roy Escoubas, Director

Center welcomes new communications specialist

Andy Gross joined the Center team as the new communications specialist. Gross grew up on a small farm south of Mountain View, Okla. She is a 2000 graduate of Oklahoma State University with a bachelor of science degree in agricultural communications and animal science.

While attending Oklahoma State University, Gross was involved in several student organizations, including Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow and Block and Bridle, as well as numerous honorary organizations.

Gross was named the Outstanding Graduating Senior for the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and the Outstanding Graduating Senior in Agricultural Communications. After graduating from college, Gross was hired at the Arizona Farm Bureau Federation in Phoenix as the research and legislative specialist and then was promoted to communications specialist.

In 2002, she began working as a communications specialist for the Agricultural Communications Services at Oklahoma State University, then transferred to the Food and Agricultural Products Center.

Gross currently resides in Stillwater with her husband, J.W.
Quick Bites...

New Web site look
The Center Web site has a new look. While information offered by the Center remains the same, the layout offers easier navigation and clearer links. New to the site includes links to all the Center publications, including annual reports and fact sheets. Visit the site at www.fapc.okstate.edu.

Marketing workshop
A fall marketing workshop is planned for Oct. 22, 2003. The topics will include establishing a brand to market a product, how to use brokers and case studies of recent marketing success stories of the Center. Speakers will consist of restaurant and store managers. For more information contact Jim Brooks at (405) 744-6071 or brookjw@okstate.edu.

Research symposium
The Center is making plans for the Fall Research Symposium. The symposium will include oral and poster presentations that will cover a variety of Center projects. Further information will be available soon. For questions about the symposium, contact Peter Muriana at (405) 744-6071 or muriana@okstate.edu.

Food Facts Newsletter
Editor: Rachel Johnson
Managing Editor: Mandy Gross
Publisher: J. Roy Escoubas
Published quarterly

*For a free subscription, please call (405) 744-6071.

Advisory committee elects officers

The Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center Industry Advisory Committee recently elected their 2003-2004 officers.

The committee is appointed by the Governor, Senate President-Pro-Temp, Speaker of the House and the Dean of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. The advisory committee meets biannually to discuss issues concerning the Center and the food industry.

During the last meeting, Dean Smith, Roger Ediger and Don Ramsey were elected to serve as chair, vice chair and secretary, respectively. A brief biography of each follows.

Dean Smith
Smith farms on fifth-generation land near Hinton, Okla. Smith received a bachelor of science degree in mechanized agriculture from Oklahoma State University and began producing traditional crops in 1972. Smith added vegetable production to his farm in 1980 and currently farms 3,000 acres of horticultural crops, including chili peppers, potatoes, watermelon and spinach.

He was appointed to the original advisory board of the Food and Agricultural Products Center by former Gov. Frank Keating. Smith has served on the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Board, is a member and past president of the Oklahoma Vegetable Association and an active alumnus of the Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership and Leadership Oklahoma programs.

Roger Ediger
Ediger is an Of-counsel for Mitchell and DeClerck, P.L.L.C. in Enid, Okla. He received a Juris Doctor from the University of Oklahoma College of Law and a bachelor of arts degree in business administration and economics from Tabor College. Ediger was a managing partner for Ediger and Ediger Farms from 1976 to 2001. He was involved in the production of approximately 3,000 acres of commercial and registered seed wheat, alfalfa, soybeans, grain sorghum and feeder cattle.

He has served on numerous boards and advisory committees, including the Food and Agricultural Products Center Industry Advisory Committee since 1997, the Dean of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Advisory Board at Oklahoma State University, the Oklahoma Grain and Stocker Producers Association and the Oklahoma Wheat Growers Association.

Don Ramsey
Ramsey graduated from OSU with a bachelor of science degree in agricultural education. He worked as a vocational agriculture teacher for 20 years until retiring to start his company. Ramsey began Blue & Gold Sausage Co. in 1972, providing beef, pork and chicken products to schools as fundraiser items.

He has been active in the Center since its inception, working to raise start-up money and serving as a member of the board continually.

Members of the Industry Advisory Committee include (from top, left to right) Gary Crane, Ralph’s Packing Co.; Don Ramsey, Blue & Gold Sausage; Roger Ediger, Mitchell & DeClerck, PLLC; Dean Smith, SS Farms; Robert Bingham, Bil-Jac Foods Inc.; Gregg Ladd, Hiland Dairies; Charles Nichols, Davison & Sons Cattle Co.; David McLaughlin, Advance Food Co. and J. Roy Escoubas, Center director. Not pictured are Brett Burk, Elanco Animal Health; James Cochran, Pfizer Animal Health; Virgil Jurgensmeyer, J-M Farms; Rodger Kerr, Southwest Technology Center; Mike Mitchell, Mrs. Smith’s Foods; Linda Whitworth, Food with a Flair; Michael Wright, Hormel Foods; and Sam Curl, OSU Dean of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.
management is key. Larger sites and key transport nodes should be hardened, and the private sector needs to join forces with government.”

Edger also suggested to survey and increase security at the largest, most vulnerable agricultural sites and food processing and to launch expanded education programs for managers and employees.

Other security steps include to improve state-to-state communication and cooperation in the area of agricultural security, provide survey results across the industry, resist the urge to publicize tailored solutions and consider minimum mandatory guidelines similar to sanitary standards.

The symposium provided an opportunity for participants to interact with some of the experts in the area of food safety, said J. Roy Escoubas, Center director.

“From initial production practices on the farm, to the many multi-faceted processes food undergoes, the food industry continually searches to better food safety practices.”

Sponsors of the symposium were the Center; the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry; and the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

For more information or to register, call (405) 744-6071 or see our Web site at www.fapc.okstate.edu.

Participants listen to food safety experts during the Food Safety Symposium.