

Summary

Attendees at the NECAFS Annual Conference and Meeting overwhelmingly reported that they learned something new (99%), most notably about individual needs of food safety community members. By learning more about these individual needs, attendees described that they feel better prepared and more informed about food safety. This new knowledge allows attendees to "*better serve the farmers in [their] state*" since they now have more information give producers and "*new ways to approach trainings.*"

Attendees (100%) stated that they met someone new at the Annual Conference and Meeting and reported that this new relationship provides for enhanced networking and communication. To help facilitate networking and connection the agenda was built with several networking opportunities (welcome reception, long breaks across both days, and a poster session) as well as several breakout group discussions. It is noteworthy that several attendees described how their networking experience offered opportunity to gain and learn from others' perspectives. Furthermore, they explained how this

networking, welcome and plenary session with NECAFS activity updates and state educational partner updates

- awareness around existing resources.

Many attendees included multiple responses that corresponded with several themes, indicating that they learned more than one thing from attending the Annual Conference and Meeting.

Several respondents described learning that everyone is having the same issues and struggles as they are experiencing.

Additionally, respondents explained that they learned about the frequency of state inspections with some occurring every 3-5 years. As a result

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do more " *farmer peer to peer learning,*" " *hands on learning,*" and " *creating more relevant educational videos based on need.*"

Slightly less common themes that also emerged in response to this question included:

- provides clarity and focus moving forward in the FSMA landscape,
- work collectively, and
- will look for existing resources to use in education and outreach to reduce redundancy.

As seen in the "What did you learn?" section above, respondents described that understanding the frequency of inspections will change their approach toward " *supporting crew culture assessment and implementations of best practices,*" that this low inspectional frequency " *highlights the need to address food safety culture...[as the] driving force..behind food safety conversations,*" and that " *it is not simply about certification but more about understanding and utilization.*"

How will new relationships change your approach to FSMA?

Regional Capacity, Competency and Collaboration

Attendees were asked how they would rate NECAFS around regional capacity, competency, and collaboration. The following were provided as examples of this area of work: webinars, the training support stipend program, and working groups. The data shows that on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent, the respondents rated NECAFS regional capacity, competency, and collaboration with 52% (n=36) choosing rating 5, 41% (n=29) choosing rating 4, 6% (n=4) choosing rating 3, and 1% (n=1) respondents rated NECAFS in this area as a 2.

Respondents are interested in more continued learning opportunities throughout the year. Specifically, attendees expressed a lot of interest in facilitating a continuing education type environment with more hands-on activities, more discussion of research that informs practices, and more scenario-based discussions. The discussions are appreciated, and attendees are "*impressed with group being comfortable sharing thoughts,*

apprised of new material coming out, alert them to upcoming webinars and trainings, highlight a few resources from the Clearinghouse, and update them on relevant information from federal partners.

The structure of the Annual Conference and Meeting remains successful. However, turnover is constant which results in a need to always go back to the basics to keep everyone on the same page. Attendees like breakout group activities and benefit greatly from the networking and perspective sharing they offer. One need described is the network's interest in more discussion that focuses on operationalizing the rule. Attendees specifically asked for facilitation that allows for continuing education type environment with more hands-on activities, discussion of research that informs practices, and more scenario-based discussions/breakouts.

Finally, attendees identified the need to shift messaging away from inspection as the motivating factor to adopt practices and move toward the importance of producing safe food and establishing a food safety culture.