



# final report

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## Food Safety Centre Membership

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## BACKGROUND

The Food Safety Centre (FSC) was formed out of the successful Commonwealth's National Food Industry Strategy (NFIS) initiative to produce Centres of Excellence supporting food innovation. The FSC and its stakeholders evaluated the value proposition of the Australian Food Safety Centre of Excellence (AFSCoE) and determined that the new Centre was best positioned to provide knowledge management and R&D 'hub' services to the food industry.

The FSC is supported through an annual tiered membership scheme, ranging from \$500-\$10,000. These funds support production and delivery of a portfolio of FSC products including *Food Safety News*, *Capability Map*, *Journal Alert*, *Risk Management Tools*, *R&D Locator Service* and customised data mining of *ComBase*. Additional communal and commodity-specific products are produced through funds for members at the \$10,000 level.

The Centre's web portal provides customers with an efficient means to keep abreast of emerging food safety issues and to quickly locate R&D providers. The R&D Capability Map provides an efficient mechanism for clients to access a broad network of R&D providers to solve specific food safety and quality problems.

## OBJECTIVES

- Identify R&D resources for MLA projects
- Collect and collate general food safety news
- Provide a capability map for Australian food safety R&D resources
- Met with MLA on the direction of R&D undertaken by the FSC

## RESULTS

*Website Statistics* – in 2008 there were 7405 visits to the FSC website. Of these, 5280 were unique visitors (unique IP addresses). The top countries that accessed the FSC site were, in decreasing order, Australia, United States, Canada, China, UK, Spain, Ireland and France. The top FSC content sought were the Tools and News services.

*Membership* –membership increased to 13 organisations, providing the FSC with approximately \$77,000 of operating funds. In 2009, assuming we maintain our current membership level and operating expenses, a balance of ~\$10,000 will be leveraged into membership funds for new initiatives in 2009.

*News Service* – in 2008, 1748 different news articles were sent to FSC members. Most articles were linked to more than one category. The number of articles associated with each news category were:

Allergens – 99

Confectionary and Snacks - 54

Dairy - 267

Fats and Oils – 96  
 Grains – 108  
 Ingredients and Additives - 165  
 Meat - 338  
 Packaging - 168  
 Poultry - 162  
 Seafood – 180  
 Water – 73  
 Microbial Contamination – 372  
 Regulatory – 189  
 Fruits and Vegetables – 209

The delivery of the *Food Safety News* service also resulted in an unexpected outcome. When it came to sourcing persons to collect and deliver food safety news to FSC members, students were the first to raise their hands. When offered a casual salary for their services, nearly all of the students declined personal payment but instead choose to use their FSC 'account' to attend national and international conferences. As such, member funds that were used to produce news articles also helped students present their research findings and network with Australia food organisations. This is a very positive outcome and one that we could expand to students outside of UTAS as FSC membership grows.

*Consultations*—FSC members found this to be an efficient means to address smaller-scale food safety and spoilage issues that could be solved via a desktop exercise. Scientists in the FSC provided services to various members, especially in the areas of food microbiology, risk management tools and risk assessment. When necessary expertise was not located in the FSC, the FSC helped members find other providers with skills that best matched their problem.

*R&D Capability Map* - the *Capability Map* grew to over 180 entries of researchers, consultants and trainers in Australia. Two advertisements placed in *Food Australia* helped increase the number of profiles listed in the *Capability Map*. FSC members agreed to move the *Capability Map* into the public domain as a way of increasing its use, expanding the number of entries and enhancing awareness of the FSC.

*Journal Alert Service* – through the purchase of journal alert licenses, this service has proven to be an efficient way for FSC members to keep up-to-date with the latest peer-reviewed science. Journals that the FSC monitors include *Applied & Environmental Microbiology*, *International Journal of Food Microbiology*, *Journal of Dairy Research*, *Journal of Dairy Science*, *Journal of Food Protection*, *Journal of Food Safety*, *Journal of Food Science*, and *Meat Science*. Feedback from members indicates that this service provides them with a time-efficient means to keep abreast of relevant publications.

*Tools* – in the past year, the FSC added four (4) risk management tools to the website. These resources are in the public domain and have received in-depth

evaluation to ensure appropriate use by risk managers. The tools include *ComBase*, *Risk Ranger*, the MLA *E. coli Refrigeration Index*, and the MLA *E. coli in Fermented Meats Model*. Also, supporting documentation was provided for each resource.

*Meetings with MLA on the direction of R&D undertaken by the FSC* – the FSC Director met with Ian Jenson on 6 June 2008 and 2 December 2008 to discuss the FSC knowledge management portal and the direction of R&D conducted in the FSC.

### **Proposed 2009 Activities**

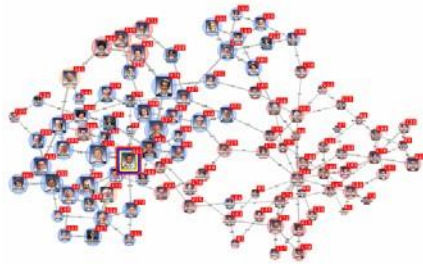
In the coming year, membership will support all of the services mentioned above, increase the value of existing resources and help the FSC develop new services. In each of these proposed activities, the FSC seeks continued input about how it can best deliver the highest value to MLA, your stakeholders and customers.

*Summer- and Winter-School food safety risk management classes/workshops at UTAS* – we are currently developing a strategic plan at UTAS that would provide FSC members with reduced/waived HECS fees and travel scholarships to attend Summer- and/or Winter school at UTAS. These would be intensive 1 to 2-week units that could stand-alone or be applied towards a degree, diploma or certificate. Plans are to have this program in-place for Winter 2009 and/or Summer 2010. The number of persons within a FSC member organisation eligible for these benefits would depend on membership level. We expect that these courses would be in one or more of the following areas: food safety risk management, predictive modelling, sampling plans, and risk assessment. Topics and dates will be determined through surveys of FSC members.

*News Service* –the FSC is proposing to produce a quarterly newsletter summarising emerging issues for selected news categories. These FSC-branded newsletters could be used by members within their organisation and/or provided to customers. We will survey members to determine categories that are best suited for quarterly newsletters.

*Capability Map* –the *Capability Map* is a database that allows users to locate service providers with specific types of expertise. As such, it is a two-dimensional tool. However, additional value could be gained from the database if we were able to visualise ‘networks’ of providers and end-users. For example, if we could visualise organisations that are ‘linked’ on specific research topics, this may help members locate providers with relevant project linkages and those that could bring the greatest value to food safety solutions. Of course, this information would be driven by organisations that wish to make this information public, and it will require that each organisation recognise links identified by another organisation(s). As such, this approach

will be a transparent process and one guided by the person placing the entry in the *Capability Map* and not the FSC, much as our current model.



*Journal Alert Service* – the FSC will expand the alert service to include additional journals based on FSC member interested and requests. Some of this information will serve as content for the newsletters proposed above.

*Tools and Training Resources* – the FSC will continue to add new resources to this section of the website as they become available, as well as those identified by members. We also propose to develop an organised (menu-driven) set of links to resources maintained on other websites. In addition, there may be opportunities to develop interactive training modules on specific topics. To promote the use of FSC tools, we propose to host periodic web-based training.