

NECAFS PCHF Awareness and Knowledge Survey

This survey was created by the NECAFS PC Working Group using Qualtrics Survey Software. It was distributed by email to the NECAFS mailing list as well as to FSPCA lead instructors located in the Northeastern U.S. A total of 103 responses were received, some complete and others only partially complete. The survey was open between August 16 and December 31st, 2019. This report presents the results in table form and summarizes them as Key Learnings.

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Background Information on Survey Responders:

The most frequently cited way in which respondents work with small and very small processors was as a consultant, within Extension, Other (incubators, and shared kitchens, and Regulators. Most were located in Pennsylvania, New York, Other States outside of the Northeast, and Massachusetts also mostly serving those in the same states. The most often cited food products were Ready-to-eat foods, Other, Fruits and Vegetables, Acidified Canned Foods, Confections/Candy/Chocolate, Cereals Bread and Baked Goods, Condiments, 100% Juice Products, and Beverages other than 100% Juice. The most often cited business sizes were Small and Very Small Business, Farms expanding to sell value added products, and Business not yet selling products. Most respondents said that working with food processors was their main or partial responsibility or they referred processors to another subject matter expert. Over Two thirds (68%) thought that their level of knowledge of regulatory requirements was above average

Awareness, Knowledge & Progress Towards Compliance with PCHF Rule:

Respondents believed that most small and very small food processors (97%) had no to average awareness of PCHF requirements. They also thought that most of the processors (79%) had average or less than average knowledge of the basic food safety and sanitation procedures, with nearly one-third (32%) having average knowledge. Respondents also believed that most small and very small food processors (92%) had no to average awareness of risk-based PCHF requirements for writing a food safety plan.

Perception of Processor Challenges and Barriers:

74% of responders felt that “Lack of awareness and understanding of the regulation” was very or extremely challenging. For “Lack of scientific knowledge of potential hazards” and “Lack of knowledge regarding costs of implementation” the percentage of very and extremely challenges responses were 69% and 60%. 81% of responders felt that “Costs for hiring additional workers to manage a food safety program” was very or extremely challenging. “Costs of paying third party consultants” was the second most challenging with 81% of responders stating that this was very or extremely challenging, but fewer responders stating that this was extremely challenging. 65% of responders felt that “Lack of time for training” was extremely or very challenging for producers. For “Training content does not match training needs (materials too advanced)” and “costs for training classes” the percentage of very and extremely challenging responses were 57% and 56%. Respondents most often said they have taken courses in HACCP, Preventive Controls, GMPs, Serve-Safe, and Sanitation. With respect to being an instructor, most often cited were HACCP, Preventive Controls, and GMPs. 83% of responders felt that GMP training was most helpful. The percentages of very helpful and extremely helpful responses for sanitation training and general HACCP were 82% and 69%, respectively

Processor Resource Needs:

Processors most often are asking for template or model PCQI food safety plans, where to find food safety training classes, and process authority contact information, although where to find private or extension contacts, training events, and regulator contact information also ranked high. Respondents thought that resources beneficial to processors were most often were information on regulations, hazards, and food safety and sanitation basics. Information delivery methods most helpful to small and very small food processors were thought to be One-on-one advice and consultation, Training workshops, Printed fact sheets and articles. Resources most beneficial to small and medium food processors included hands-on training, site visits and industry meetings.

Value of PCQI Course:

Among Lead trainers responding, 83% felt that the Validation Procedures topic was very or extremely challenging. For Hazard Analysis and Verification Procedures the percentage of very and extremely challenging responses were 77% and 64%. Most Lead trainers (82%) thought that processors they worked with were making average or less than average progress on developing a food safety system and writing a food safety plan. 81% felt that a course on risk-based identification of food safety hazards would be most beneficial. For GMP course and HACCP course the percentage of very and extremely beneficial responses were 71% and 62%. Nearly all lead trainers (95%) used some type of evaluation tool but nearly half (48%) did not use the PC Alliance evaluation tool. This might be explained by the fact that 72% of Lead Trainers thought that the tool was not or less than somewhat useful. Very few (5%) conducted follow-up surveys to verify that processors took any action after the course to write their plans. We are encouraged to learn that most responders (95%) were open to including an additional evaluation tool to help NECAFS collect additional data on the impact that the FSPCA course has had on small and very small processors in the region.