

Mexico and the United States of America agree to bolster food safety

Mexican and United States organizations will exchange information about food microbiological contamination risks, laboratory methodologies and traceability.



To protect the population against risks arising from the food trade between Mexico and the United States of America, the National Service of Food Safety and Agriculture Quality (SENASICA) and the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) agreed to bolster technical cooperation, specifically actions associated with microbiological contamination, laboratory methodologies and traceability.

The aim is that Mexican product exports to the U.S. meet the FDA standards, mainly for fresh produce, since they are more susceptible to microbial (i.e., salmonella) and parasitic (i.e., Cyclospora) contamination.

Representatives from the FDA visited the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline a bilateral cooperation strategy that includes training opportunities imparted by U.S. specialists to qualified personnel of the federal and state governments, academia and private institutions, that in turn will train Mexican producers in safety subjects.

During the meeting it was agreed to continue the collaboration in regard to the exchange of sampling techniques and laboratory analysis with specialist from SENASICA.

This actions not only protect the consumers of fresh vegetables with minimum processing, but also helps to maintain and increase the trade of such products between Mexico and the United States of America.

Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, Head of the Mexican government agricultural and livestock health agency, underlined the high commitment of the Secretariat of Agriculture to attend to established markets and seek new ones, for which “transparency is of the utmost importance.”

He stated that Mexico has great international prestige as an exporter country because domestic producers have undertaken the commitment to meet the health and safety regulations established by importing countries, a task whose verification is in charge of SENASICA.

Amada Velez Méndez, Head of Agri-food, Aquaculture and Fisheries Safety, said that the SENASICA works together with the industry and producers to improve techniques to reduce the risk of food microbiological contamination.

She explained that the analyses carried out in SENASICA’s laboratories have demonstrated that water management is one of the main contamination factors.

Fran Yiannas, Deputy Commissioner for Food Policy and Response, stated that the joint work with SENASICA helps to protect the health of consumers and to maintain and expand current markets.

He underlined the importance of communicating the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), which governs the food safety guidelines for U.S. foods and drugs established by the agency, among Mexican producers, with the aim of preventing food consumption disease outbreaks.

Katherine Serrano, Director of the FDA’s Latin American office, proposed the integration of interagency technical groups aimed to analyze priority subjects.

Mexican and U.S. officers agreed to meet again in November of this year to formalize the first technical cooperation agreements.

José Luis Lara de la Cruz, Head of Agri-food Safety of the SENASICA and Donald A. Prater, Assistant Commissioner for Food Safety Integration of the FDA, Douglas W. Stearn Acting Deputy Director for Regulatory Affairs, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, and Michelle Rodríguez Regional Deputy Director of the Latin American office also attended the meeting.