

Dr. Jodi Williams
National Program Leader, Food Safety
Institute of Food Safety and Nutrition, Food Safety Division
National Institute of Food and Agriculture
Room 2380 Waterfront Centre, 800 9th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20250

June 1, 2016

Dear Dr. Williams,

With efforts to address the obesity epidemic and childhood diet-related health issues, reduce chronic disease and eliminate health disparities focusing increasingly on improving access to healthier, fresher, foods such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and lean protein sources, the importance of food safety also heightens at all points of the food production system at which foodborne illness risks can be controlled or minimized. As well, improving access to healthy, safe foods has economic, environmental, and cultural benefits beyond improved nutrition and safety. Supporting food safety and equitable food access through an integrated systems approach, as this proposal aims to achieve, improves the food system as a whole and reduces barriers for innovative food business models striving to meet the demand for healthier foods.

In my position as the food access coordinator for the Minnesota Department of Health I work with local public health, Extension, and other partners to increase access to healthy, safe foods from a systems-based approach. I'm also member of the Local Food Advisory Committee and on the Bush Foundation Innovation Grant – Changing the Approach to Regulation of Local Food Systems in Minnesota committee. The proposal for “Joint Food Safety Education and Food Enterprise Innovation Forums in 8 Regions of Minnesota” builds upon existing collaborations and state structures to integrate FSMA, state and local food regulations, and farmer and food entrepreneur innovations within Minnesota. What is most exciting about the proposal to me is that it will provide opportunities for public health nutrition and others working to create healthier food environments, in communities across Minnesota, to build relationships and collaborate across sectors and disciplines. This proposal would encourage, foster and advance collective problem solving and process improvement. In my experience people across disciplines want to move away from working in silos to the integrated holistic approach of building healthy, safe, sustainable and vital communities together.

The five major partner organizations; Renewing the Countryside, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, Minnesota Farmers Market Association, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and Minnesota Department of Health; have a solid track record of collective impact and concrete deliverables and are trusted partners in food systems work in Minnesota.

I would gladly assist in the advancement of the proposed initiative, promote it through state networks and share the materials generated in any future trainings or relevant communication channels.

Sincerely,



Tim Jenkins, MPH, REHS
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