



North Carolina Food Safety and Defense Task Force

Established 2003

December 30, 2019

North Carolina Food Safety and Defense Task Force – 2019 Annual Report

The North Carolina Food Safety and Defense Task Force (“Task Force”) was established in 2003 for coordinating interagency and public-private efforts to enhance protection of the State’s food supply system and agricultural industry. Executive Order No. 47, issued by Governor Roy Cooper, requires the Food Safety and Defense Task Force to provide an annual report to the Governor that includes recommendations or proposals for changes in laws, rules, policies, and programs that the Task Force determines are appropriate to enhance food safety and defense in the State. The following is the annual report for 2019.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee, comprised of members established in Section three of the Executive Order, held six meetings in 2019. Meeting minutes for each Executive Committee meeting are available upon request and are given as an update at bimonthly meetings of the Task Force.

The by-laws of the Executive Committee were updated in July 2019 to specify duties of the officers of the Executive Committee, and to establish specific roles for Past Chair, Chair, and Chair Elect. Elections were held on September 3, 2019, and Veronica Bryant, NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), was elected Chair and Nicole Lee, also from NCDHHS, was elected Chair Elect. Terms of office are September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020.

Conference Planning Committee

The Task Force coordinated its annual conference entitled, “From the Fork Back to the Farm: Outbreaks, Recalls, and Traceability” on May 7 and 8, 2019, at the NC Biotechnology Center in Durham. The conference drew 133 attendees from federal, state, and local regulatory agencies as well as industry representatives. The conference was funded by a grant allocated to the Task Force by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), registration fees, and sponsorships.

Food Emergency Response Communication Committee

The Food Emergency Response Communication (FERC) committee meets every Monday via phone conference to discuss food safety and emergency response concerns. The FERC objectives are to serve as a multi-agency food safety “core communication group,” provide situational awareness regarding events of food safety significance, identify projects to enhance response, and strengthen coordination for food emergencies. Multiple federal, state, and local jurisdictions as well as industry partners participate regularly in this meeting.

The Task Force met bimonthly in 2019 and discussed communicable disease outbreaks, legislative issues and other food safety and emergency response topics and provided educational information on emerging technology and issues, such as use of Blockchain technology for food tracking and traceability, and cannabidiol (CBD). In addition, the Task Force serves as a model for other states. Representatives from Virginia and South Carolina attended meetings to observe North Carolina's Task Force and a Task Force member from the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services spoke at the Georgia Task Force meeting in October.

In March 2019, the Task Force wrote a letter of support for adopting the 2017 Food Code in North Carolina. The Task Force monitored legislation throughout 2019 and noted that Session Law 2019-129, "Adopt Rules Incorporating 2017 Food Code," provides the NC Commission for Public Health the authority to adopt all or part of the 2017 edition of the Food Code. In 2020, the NCDHHS's Division of Public Health plans to start the process of updating North Carolina's Food Code to the 2017 edition.

A new website was established for the Task Force in 2019 and is funded through an FDA grant. To date, the site has received 335 unique visits and 660 views. This website provides information on upcoming meetings, members, and food safety-related resources and maybe accessed at www.ncfoodsafetytaskforce.com.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide an annual report regarding Task Force activities. Additional details on Task Force activities can be made available upon request.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Veronica Bryant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Veronica Bryant
Chair, Executive Committee
NC Food Safety and Defense Task Force