

The latest news, views, and announcements

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## Message from the Chair

- By Dr. Sadhana Ravishankar



To our food safety community, I extend a warm welcome to this second issue of the Food Safety Consortium Newsletter! September is National Food Safety Education Month, allowing an important opportunity to reinforce the shared responsibility we all have in preventing foodborne illness. With foodborne outbreaks taking the media headlines this year, it is more important than ever to promote food safety awareness, strengthen prevention practices, and share reliable, science-based information throughout our communities. I am so happy that our newsletter team is continuing their efforts to share timely news, resources, and opportunities. Our Youth Professional Development team has also been very active this summer, educating high school students participating in various UA camps about food safety and the prevention of cross-contamination. These efforts are essential to preparing the next generation of food-safety leaders. Upcoming is our Annual Food Safety Conference, which will be held virtually on November 5, 2026. We look forward to having Food Safety Consortium members join us for the opportunity to learn, connect, and collaborate! Please help spread the word about the conference and encourage colleagues, students, and community partners to participate. Again, my special appreciation to the newsletter team for their continued and sustained efforts in keeping everyone updated on the Food Safety Consortium activities! Ensuring food safety is everyone's responsibility. By working together across academia, industry, government, and our communities, we can do our part to prevent foodborne illnesses and contribute to a safer food supply for consumers across Arizona and beyond.

# The Food Safety Consortium Newsletter

## From the editors

- By: Hope Wilson and Dr. Margie M. Sánchez-Vega

I'm excited to share this latest issue of the newsletter with you! With fall upon us, there's plenty to explore, along with new developments on the horizon. I hope you enjoy this issue and find something helpful, timely, or inspiring to carry with you into the season ahead!

-Hope



It is my pleasure to contribute to this second edition of the Food Safety Consortium newsletter. We tried to keep it light for your enjoyment, while providing interesting information to keep you in the loop. As always, I'm open to suggestions, ideas and contributions!

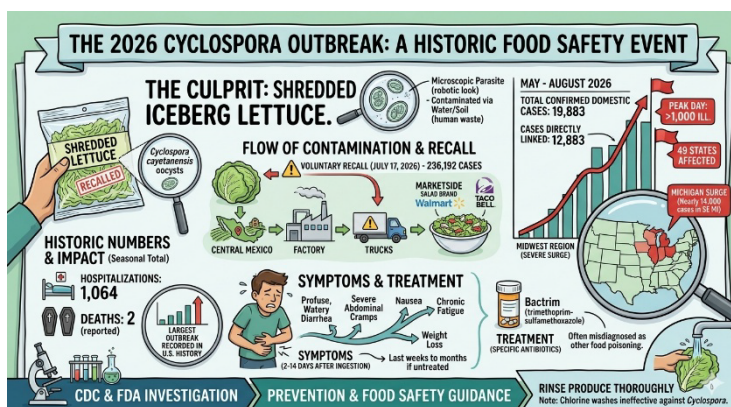
-Margie



## Featured Space: A look at food safety in 2026- a reflection

-By: Dr. Margie M. Sánchez-Vega

As we look at 2026 so far, it has been another busy year for food safety. We have seen recalls and foodborne illness outbreaks involving a variety of foods and pathogens, reminding us that food safety challenges can happen at any point from the farm to the table. Each event gives us an opportunity to learn, ask questions, and look for ways to strengthen the practices we use every day to keep our food supply safe. One event that has received particular attention is the Cyclospora outbreak associated with iceberg lettuce. It is a good reminder that fresh produce can present unique food-safety challenges and that identifying the source of an outbreak can take time and cooperation across the food system. While outbreaks and recalls can be concerning, they also highlight the importance of prevention, good agricultural and processing practices, traceability, and communication. As we move through the rest of 2026, these events serve as a reminder that food safety is an ongoing effort—and that there is always an opportunity to learn and improve.



# The Food Safety Consortium Newsletter

## Food Trivia

- By: Dr. Margie M. Sánchez-Vega

Here is some random Food trivia for everyone's enjoyment!

1. White chocolate is technically not classified as true chocolate by many food standards. What essential component of the cacao bean is completely absent from white chocolate?
  - White chocolate is made from cacao butter, sugar, and milk solids, but it contains zero cacao solids, which give dark and milk chocolate their color and characteristic flavor
2. Long before it was made with tomatoes, ketchup originated in 17th-century China as a fermented sauce called ke-tsiap. What was the primary base ingredient of this original condiment?
  - The original ke-tsiap was a savory, briny sauce made from the juices of pickled and fermented fish, which traders eventually brought to Europe where local ingredients were substituted.
3. Cashews are never sold inside their natural shells in commercial grocery stores. What hazardous chemical compound, also found in poison ivy, coats the outer shell of a cashew?
  - Cashew shells contain urushiol, the exact same blistering oil found in poison ivy and poison oak, which is why raw cashews must be rigorously processed and steamed before sale.
4. Archaeologists have found pots of honey in ancient Egyptian tombs that are thousands of years old and still completely edible. Which combination of physical properties grants honey its near-immortality?
  - Extremely low moisture content and high osmolarity. Honey has very little water content and a high sugar concentration, creating a hyperosmotic environment that dehydrates and kills any bacteria or microorganisms trying to grow.
5. Blue cheeses like Roquefort and Gorgonzola get their signature sharp taste and blue-green marbling from the intentional addition of a specific mold. What genus does this fungus belong to?
  - Blue cheeses are inoculated with strains like Penicillium roqueforti, sharing a genus name with the famous medical antibiotic mold discovered by Alexander Fleming.



# The Food Safety Consortium Newsletter

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## Trainings, seminars, certifications, activities...

- By: Dr. Margie M. Sánchez-Vega and Hope Wilson

Here is a list of some courses and activities that might be of interest to you:



- **Food Safety Consortium Annual Conference**  
**November 5, 2026 | 1-5pm**  
More information can be found at: <https://safefood.arizona.edu/food-safety-conference>
- **Freeze-Drying Class – Coconino County Cooperative Extension**  
**Sept. 25, 2026 | 5–6:30 p.m.**  
Learn the basics of freeze-drying through this hands-on food preservation class.  
[More information](#) | Contact: Mariah Johnson, [mcj263@arizona.edu](mailto:mj263@arizona.edu)
- **DIG IN PERSON: Vines with Purpose – Maricopa County Cooperative Extension**  
**Oct. 11, 2026 | 2–4 p.m.**  
Explore edible and ornamental vines for shade, ground cover, beauty, and harvest. [More information](#)
- **Soil & Site Evaluation for Onsite Wastewater Systems**  
**Oct. 19–21, 2026 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m. | Cottonwood**  
Three-day ADEQ-approved course covering soil and site evaluation for onsite wastewater systems. Prerequisite: NAWT Inspection Training. [More information](#) | Contact: Aaron Tevik, [atevik@arizona.edu](mailto:atevik@arizona.edu)
- **Food Protection Manager Certification Training – In Person**  
**Oct. 20, 2026 | 8:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. | Prescott**  
**Oct. 23, 2026 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m. | Kingman**  
**Oct. 27, 2026 | 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m. | Cottonwood**  
ANAB-accredited training to prepare food managers and supervisors for certification. Contact: Tracey Waters (Yavapai), [twaters@arizona.edu](mailto:twaters@arizona.edu) | Bree Daugherty (Mohave), [daugherty@arizona.edu](mailto:daugherty@arizona.edu)
- **Advanced Soil & Site Evaluation of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems**  
**Oct. 22–23, 2026 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m. | Cottonwood**  
Explore caliche formation, identification, and applications in wastewater treatment and design. Prerequisite: Intro to Soil & Site Evaluation. [More information](#) | Contact: Aaron Tevik, [atevik@arizona.edu](mailto:atevik@arizona.edu)
- **High Altitude Baking Workshop – Yavapai County**  
**Oct. 28, 2026 | 5–7 p.m. | Prescott**  
Learn how elevation affects baking and how to adjust recipes for better results. [More information](#) | Contact: Tracey Waters, [twaters@arizona.edu](mailto:twaters@arizona.edu)
- **Wine Grape Grower Workshop – Tucson**  
**Nov. 4, 2026 | 9 a.m.–Noon**  
Practical information for Arizona wine grape growers on water management, climate conditions, and the 2026 growing season. **Free.** [More information](#)
- **Sourdough Bread Demonstration – Yavapai County**  
**Nov. 9, 2026 | 10 a.m.–Noon | Prescott**  
A guided demonstration covering starter basics, fermentation, shaping, baking, and troubleshooting.  
Contact: Tracey Waters, [twaters@arizona.edu](mailto:twaters@arizona.edu)

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- **Introduction to Design of Onsite Wastewater Systems**  
**Nov. 16–17, 2026 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m. | Maricopa**  
Two-day course on designing onsite wastewater treatment and dispersal systems using Arizona regulations. Prerequisites required. [More information](#) | Contact: Aaron Tevik, [atevik@arizona.edu](mailto:atevik@arizona.edu)
- **Virtual Food Protection Manager Certification Training**  
**Nov. 3–5, 2026 | 9–11 a.m. | Online**  
ANAB-accredited online training to prepare food managers and supervisors for certification. [More information](#). Contact: Tracey Waters (Yavapai) or Bree Daugherty (Mohave)
- **Arizona Cottage Food Safety Training – Yavapai & Mohave Counties**  
**Dates & times: To be determined**  
Learn food safety practices for home-based food production and information on the AZ Cottage Food Program. Participants will complete the Arizona food handlers card exam at the end of class. Contact: Tracey Waters (Yavapai), [twaters@arizona.edu](mailto:twaters@arizona.edu) | Bree Daugherty (Mohave), [daugherty@arizona.edu](mailto:daugherty@arizona.edu)
- **Event Details & Registration:** Visit the [University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Events Calendar](#) for additional upcoming events, complete details, and registration information. **Some events require preregistration and/or registration fees.**

## REGISTRATION OPEN

# 2026 Food Safety Conference

Hosted by the University of Arizona Food Safety Consortium



[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

**November 5, 2026 | 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm (MST/AZ time)**  
**Virtual**

Join us virtually for presentations on food safety topics  
NO COST to attend, registration required  
Zoom link sent after registering

Visit [safefood.arizona.edu/food-safety-conference](https://safefood.arizona.edu/food-safety-conference) for more information.

# The Food Safety Consortium Newsletter

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## Extension presents...

- By: Hope Wilson

The core mission of the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension is to engage with people through applied research and education to improve lives, families, communities, the environment, and local economies in Arizona and beyond. As part of our land-grant mission, our statewide network of faculty, staff, and county agents works directly with residents to solve real-world problems by making university expertise practical and accessible.

This fall, Family, Consumer, and Health Sciences (FCHS) faculty and staff in many counties are putting that mission into practice by hosting canning classes and advising residents on safe food preservation. This focus on food safety extends throughout our ongoing nutrition and cooking education statewide.

Along with proper preservation, protecting stored food from uninvited pests is essential. Dr. Dawn H. Gouge, Interim Associate Director for ANR – Cooperative Extension, notes that managing Indian meal moths (*Plodia interpunctella*) requires understanding their biological traits. A single female can lay over 400 eggs in grains, spices, pet food, or chocolate. Larvae thrive up to 95°F and often travel away from food to pupate inside cardboard, while adult moths easily spread between rooms. Because these pests rarely survive Arizona outdoors, indoor sightings signal an internal infestation. Protecting food requires routine cleanliness, product rotation, avoiding cardboard storage, and using sealed, insect-resistant containers. For more detailed guidance, you can read the full article at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10150/578402>.



Building on these food safety and health principles, Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) and FCHS teams are actively collaborating on local programming across the state:

**Yuma County Cooperative Extension** kicks off a busy fall schedule this October with *Today's Mom*, a six-week program offering expectant mothers practical guidance on nutrition, fetal development, and local family support. On November 10th, the U of A Farm Tours resume in partnership with the Yuma Agricultural Center. Yuma County is also co-hosting *Med Instead of Meds*, a Mediterranean lifestyle course featuring live recipe sampling and wellness talks, alongside Encompass Health/Onvida Rehabilitation Hospital. Keep an eye out as well for the new Onvida-sponsored *Recipes for Health* box at the Yuma Community Food Bank, which operates like a Little Free Library to share recipes, food safety tips, and nutrition guidance.

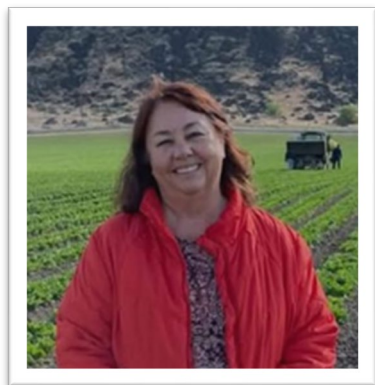
**Cochise County Cooperative Extension** is similarly driving impact by strengthening local food security, boosting safety, and reducing food waste. Through [Building Healthy Communities](#), partnerships with local growers and produce prescription outlets offer food tastings paired with research-backed recipes for preparing both familiar staples and new ingredients. ANR and FCHS also recently joined forces for a *New Homesteaders* series covering beekeeping, gardening, home canning, and freezing. Looking ahead to October, the Cochise Leadership Academy in Benson will bring community partners together around participant-led projects focused on building resilient, sustainable local food systems.



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
**Cooperative Extension**

## Member Showcase: In Memoriam: Vicki-Lynne Scott

- By: Dr. Sadhana Ravishankar



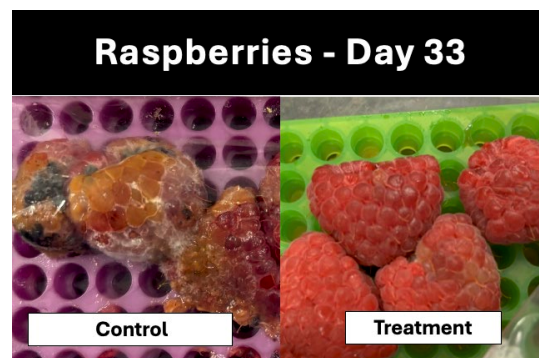
The University of Arizona Food Safety Consortium honors the memory of **Vicki-Lynne Scott**, a respected leader, colleague, and advocate for Yuma agriculture and food safety. Vicki passed away on May 20, 2026, after a short battle with cancer.

Vicki was a very active and valued member of the University of Arizona Food Safety Consortium, and a longtime board member of the Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association. She was a welcoming friend and a trusted voice in the Yuma agricultural community. Vicki was exceptionally generous with her time and food safety knowledge. She regularly attended food safety consortium meetings and seminars, served as a member in the Consortium's Advisory Committee, supported students and emerging food-safety professionals, served as a guest lecturer for a UA food microbiology course, served as a judge for poster competitions at the Annual Food Safety Conference, shared practical industry perspectives, provided sponsorships for the Annual Food Safety Conference, and provided letters of support for grant proposals and collaborative projects. She helped lead the annual Southwest Ag Summit at Yuma, with a strong dedication to educating others about the food safety culture, including the shared responsibility, everyday practices, and leadership commitment needed to protect consumers and produce safe food. Her encouragement helped connect university research and student training with the real-world needs of the fresh produce industry. Her leadership, mentorship, generosity, passion and dedication to protecting the food supply will remain an important part of her legacy in Yuma and throughout Arizona. The 2026 Food Safety Conference will be dedicated to Vicki Scott in honor of her services to the Food Safety Consortium and the University of Arizona. She is really missed by the food safety community!

## Natural Plant-derived antimicrobials help keep berries fresh

- By: Dr. Bibiana Law

Dr. Sadhana Ravishankar's laboratory at the University of Arizona is developing natural, plant-based approaches to help fresh foods stay safe, attractive, and enjoyable for longer under refrigeration. These antimicrobial ingredients can be incorporated into edible-film liners or applied as a fogging treatment on produce-based foods. The goal is to slow the growth of bacteria, yeasts, and molds while helping foods retain moisture, color, texture, and overall quality, without relying on synthetic chemical preservatives. Preliminary studies with berries are promising. Compared to untreated samples, berries treated with natural antimicrobials or stored with an antimicrobial edible-film liner showed substantially less mold growth, browning, and spoilage during refrigerated storage. Treated raspberries remained in markedly better condition after 33 days, while treated strawberries maintained better quality after 45 days. This technology has the potential to reduce food waste and allow fresh, minimally processed foods to stay fresh longer in the refrigerator, for consumers to store and enjoy.



# The Food Safety Consortium Newsletter

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## University of Arizona Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP) welcomes new Faculty Director Dr. Gerardo López

-By: Kathryn M. Orzech

Gerardo “Jerry” López, M.A.T., M.Ed., Ph.D., an Associate Professor & Extension specialist focusing on STEM, food safety, and environmental microbiology in the School of Animal and Comparative Biomedical Sciences, has recently taken on a new leadership role as Faculty Director with the [Vertically Integrated Projects](#) (VIP) program.

University of Arizona VIP teams engage undergraduate and graduate students in ambitious, long-term, multidisciplinary project teams. VIP teams cover a broad array of research, scholarship, and creative activities, and team leaders are connected to 13 U of A Colleges, five additional campus units, and three external partners.

Dr. López leads a statewide Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Leadership Team that implements a 4-H STEM Program, bringing STEM projects to urban and rural youth across the state of Arizona.

He also offers undergraduate and graduate research opportunities through his food safety and environmental microbiology research, focused on the protozoan parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis* in agricultural waters and fresh produce to understand potential sources of *Cyclospora* contamination and prevent Cyclosporiasis infections.

Dr. López has led the VIP team [Investigating the Foodborne Parasite Cyclospora in Environmental Waters](#) for three years, and we welcome him as a strong collaborator in VIP leadership.

## López STEM Extension Program: Inspiring the Next Generation of STEM Professionals- Undergraduate Research Opportunities – Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP)

-By: Gerardo “Jerry” López

The López lab had 6 undergraduate students seeking research experiences during the Spring Semester to better prepare them to be competitive for graduate school and to enter the workforce. Amadia Molina, Victoria Velasco, and Jack Lu graduated in May with Microbiology majors. Amadia completed two years in the lab and is ready to apply to dental school. Victoria and Jack plan to take the MCAT this summer and apply to medical school. Korina Loya will finish her last semester with us and graduate this coming December. Korina completed a summer internship in Minnesota in plant sciences. She will continue with Arizona, Science, Engineering, Math Scholars Program (ASEMS) mentoring students. We had two new students join the lab; Esteban Romero, Fernanda López-Morales both Microbiology majors. All 6 students participated in the Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP) undergraduate research program and some enrolled in 3-units of ACBS 492 Directed Research. Undergraduate students commit to 9-hours/week to be in the laboratory conducting research on *Cyclospora cayetanensis*, a foodborne human parasite associated with fresh produce outbreaks causing Cyclosporiasis. Students learn and gain research experience using molecular methods such as DNA extractions, qPCR, PCR, and next generation sequencing. Students in addition, read research articles, prepare posters, and for lab seminars or conferences. Students presented posters at the ACBS Poster Session in March, at the VIP and the CALES Research Showcase in April. Korina won the VIP Viewer’s Choice Award. We had our end of the semester lab meeting and students gave PowerPoint presentations. With the Cyclosporiasis outbreak this summer we were busy providing media interviews and my students participated as well.

# The Food Safety Consortium Newsletter

## Food Safety Consortium: Website

Want to stay up to date with everything related to the Food Safety Consortium? Scan this QR code and it will take you straight to the website.



## Unseen Guardrails: How Food Safety Science Protects Your Produce

-Provided by: Debbie Reed

Behind every meal is a complex system of science and prevention keeping our food supply safe. A recent article from the [University of Arizona College of Agriculture, Life & Environmental Sciences](https://cales.arizona.edu/news/unseen-guardrails-how-producers-protect-your-food-it-reaches-grocery-store) highlights how researchers collaborate with agricultural producers to stop foodborne pathogens like *E. coli* and *Salmonella* before crops ever reach store shelves:

- **Preventing Exposure:** Farmers actively mitigate environmental hazards by treating agricultural water, monitoring fields for wildlife intrusion, and studying how weather patterns transfer pathogens across regions.
- **Rigorous Testing:** In the week leading up to harvest, crops undergo pathogen screening. If a sample returns a "presumptive positive," the entire field section is destroyed and abandoned to guarantee safety.
- **Post-Harvest Precautions:** Sanitizing flume washes, immediate field dry-packing for delicate crops like cantaloupes, and temperature controls ensure produce and meat remain safe through transit.
- **Multilayered Oversight:** Beyond federal Produce Safety Rule standards, local organizations like the Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (LGMA) and University Extension programs provide third-party audits and direct harvest worker training.

See the complete article at:

<https://cales.arizona.edu/news/unseen-guardrails-how-producers-protect-your-food-it-reaches-grocery-store>