



For Immediate Release

The Western Institute for Food Safety and Security (WIFSS) at the University of California, Davis is in the forefront of preparing California and the nation for a potential terrorist attack on the food supply. Government agencies, food industry representatives and others in California share the immediacy of this concern and have taken demonstrative steps to address the problem. Through active dialogue, training, and policy development, WIFSS, working closely with our partners in government, industry, and academia has taken the lead in the development of a comprehensive food security defense plan.

Initial efforts have focused on education and awareness of the community. WIFSS presented an introduction to Agroterrorism Partnership Preparedness Training Program at the Heritage Complex in Tulare. The program was attended by close to 200 representatives of local emergency response organizations, dairy and produce industries, government agencies including CDFA, FDA, California Public Health Officers, USDA and Agricultural Commissioners. The training provided not only food security awareness, but also provided an interactive forum for discussion of the issues confronting the food community.

Continuing WIFSS' effort to bring our partners to the table for active discussions, WIFSS and the California Association of Environmental Health Administrators (CAEHA) are hosting a two-day conference at UC-Davis to provide a forum for California's Environmental Health Directors, Public Health Lab Directors, Health Officers, Agricultural Commissioners, and Disaster and Emergency Services Directors to learn about local, state, national and international developments in food defense. This conference will help participants to understand the universe of players in this field and will identify the ways and means to interact collectively.

Leveraging the established long term public-private partnership in California between industry, government and academia, WIFSS has developed a one-day Food Security Tabletop Exercise designed to stimulate constructive thinking on the challenges faced by the fresh and processed produce industry. Appropriate local, state, and federal government agencies will participate alongside industry to emphasize public-private collaboration in addressing this critical infrastructure vulnerability. The exercise is scheduled for June 14, 2005 at the Heritage Complex in Tulare.

All of the above is part of a statewide agroterrorism-response training program being developed and delivered by WIFSS as a designated training partner of the Department of Homeland Security. The results will be certified courses and training for local frontline response teams to prevent, detect, respond to, and recover from agroterrorism events in their communities.

The public-private partnership is critical to the safety and defense of California's food industry. With our industry, government and university partners, WIFSS has taken up the challenge to provide leadership and focus as we prepare California for the potential impact of a food security incident. Raising community awareness through the activities discussed above, WIFSS is providing the leadership and cohesion to prepare, prevent, respond to and recover from an attack on our food supply.

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