

Association of Food and Drug Officials

◆ Elliot O. Grosvenor Food Safety Award ◆

*This nomination must be submitted by **April 1**
to be considered for the current year's award*

Criteria for Nominations

The Elliot O. Grosvenor Food Safety Award is given to recognize outstanding achievements made by food safety programs within State Departments of Agriculture, Natural Resource Agencies, Public Health Departments or Environmental Conservation Departments in the United States or Canada. The award will go to the program that best showcases improvement, innovation or sustained high performance within a food safety program. A food safety program could include responsibility for: food safety, food protection, and food defense or food sanitation. The applications will be made to the AFDO awards committee by the deadline.

(PLEASE TYPE)

Date of Nomination: April 1 for the year ending December 31, 2018

Program's Full Name: Georgia Department of Agriculture Food Safety Division

Nominator Jessica Badour and Angie Corder

Immediate Georgia Department of Agriculture
Organization:

Agency: Food Safety Division, Manufactured Food Program

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AFDO Member Yes

Executive Summary

The Georgia Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Division (GDA-FSD) administers state laws, rules and regulations for retail and wholesale grocery stores, retail seafood stores and places in the business of food processing and plants which are currently required to obtain a license.

In September 2008 we enrolled in the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards (MFRPS) and in January 2009 GDA, FDA, CDC and other regulatory partners investigated the salmonella outbreak associated with Peanut Corporation of America. The Georgia's State Legislature was in session and passed legislation establishing the GDA Food Safety Division's Manufactured Food Section. The Governor signed the bill and it became law with his signature on May 1, 2009.

In 2011, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) began to publicize information about upcoming cooperative agreements that would be available for state food protection agencies to apply for, to help support their program's development. In 2012, the GDA-FSD applied for six cooperative agreements, thinking there might be one, maybe two, amounts awarded. Much to the program's surprise, Georgia was awarded every

single grant opportunity applied for – totaling just under \$5 million for program improvements to be developed and implemented within three to five years. Those cooperative agreements included:

1. Support for Georgia’s conformance with the MFRPS, specifically focusing on Training, Audits, Compliance and Community Outreach (1, 2, 4, 6 & 7);
2. Enhanced inspection capabilities through improved information technology strategies (1, 3, 8);
3. Improved recall notifications and communication with Georgia stakeholders about pertinent food safety issues (1, 3, 5 & 7);
4. Development of a Rapid Response Team for Georgia (known as the Georgia Food & Feed RRT) (1, 3, 5);
5. Support for the GDA’s Laboratory to develop and implement a quality assurance management system that now currently meets ISO Accreditation Standards (10); and
6. Support for Georgia’s advanced conformance with the Voluntary National Food Regulatory Program Standards (VNFRRPS).

In 2017, we applied for and were awarded the MFRPS “bridge” funding cooperative agreement designed to allow for the continuation of improvements and conformance in our regulatory program in anticipation of the announcement of the Flexible Funding Model cooperative agreement request for applications. In March 2018, we applied for the Flexible Funding Model cooperative agreement that included MFRPS, RRT, Task Force, and five (5) special projects. We are anticipating notification of funding later this summer.

The GDA-FSD maintains a regulatory program that fosters communication, consistency, and accountability. The self-assessments, strategic planning, and corrective actions support our ability to adapt our inspection program to meet the ever-changing regulatory landscape. The accomplishments made to-date have helped us maintain conformance with federal standards and is directly attributable to the successful teamwork by agency staff.

Agency Demography (Population Served, Age and Diversity)

The State of Georgia is currently the ninth most populated state in the nation, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Based on estimates for 2017, Georgia’s population is 10.4 million people. Of that number, an estimated 6 percent are aged five or younger, and 13 percent are aged 65 or older; meaning nearly 20 percent of the state’s population falls into a highly susceptible age group when it comes to foodborne illness complications.

The GDA Food Safety Division regulates food sales throughout the State of Georgia, including retail food establishments, manufactured food facilities, seafood/shellfish firms, dairy processing plants and dairy farms. The Georgia Department of Public Health regulates food service facilities and, by state statute, is the lead agency for foodborne illness investigations.

The Food Safety Division licenses and inspects 18,384 food sales establishments across the state including:

1. 15,499 retail food firms
2. 2,318 manufactured food firms including seafood, shellfish and food storage warehouses
3. 841 dairy firms including Grade A plants, manufacturing plants, dairy farms, milk tankers, milk haulers/samplers, plant samplers, tank washing stations, substations, and warehouses.

Agency Resources and Budget (Staff, Facilities, Revenues)

The Food Safety Division’s annual budget including grant funding is roughly \$8 million. Currently, we fund ninety-one (91) full-time positions and three (3) part-time positions. The program is comprised of administrative and field personnel in four programs: Retail Food Safety, Manufactured Foods, Dairy, and Farm Safety.

Agriculture Compliance Specialists enforce regulatory requirements for retail food sales establishments, manufacturing/warehouse distribution facilities, dairy farms/plants, and produce. The staff includes sixty-two (62) full-time field inspectors and two (2) part-time field inspectors who are responsible for ensuring compliance with laws, rules and regulations by performing routine inspections, sampling, complaint and foodborne illness investigations, monitoring recalled food products, educational training, and disaster response.

The Division Director and Deputy Director provide leadership and vision for the entire program and staff. There are four (4) Program Managers. Three (3) of the Program Managers provide additional leadership and management, along with five (5) program associates and three (3) administrative assistants who provide support to the program and field staff. One (1) Program Manager provides additional leadership and management with three (3) District Supervisors and three (3) administrative assistants providing supervision and support to the field staff. Eleven (11) full-time individuals and one (1) part-time individual provide administrative support to the Division.

Program Planning/Self Evaluation (Vision, Staff Participation)

Throughout the development of the manufactured food regulatory program, Georgia has demonstrated continuous improvement and implementation of the MFRPS by: 1) conducting biannual comprehensive self-assessments; 2) developing and utilizing a 6-Year MFRPS Strategic Plan; 3) completing MFRPS Appendices as required; 4) identifying deficiencies and developing corrective actions; 5) developing programs in accordance with MFRPS requirements, including Standard Operating Procedures, policies, and relevant forms, spreadsheets, and guidance documents; 6) developing an Exit Sustainment Strategy; 7) developing and implementing two Standard Enhancement Projects (SEPs); 8) meeting the objectives outlined in the cooperative agreements, and the requirements listed in the Notice of Award documents; 9) participating in the MFRPS-related initiatives that advance the integrated food safety system; and 10) participating in partial/full program assessments conducted by FDA's Audit Team and site visits conducted by MFRPS Implementation Staff. Today, our program has been recognized by the FDA as being in full conformance with the manufactured food program standards.

When it comes to program planning, the GDA-FSD has taken an innovative team approach. For example, while many states employ a single coordinator to oversee the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards implementation and conformance for their program, the GDA has developed a group of employees to share the responsibility and work together to achieve standards conformance and program deliverables.

Please find additional examples pertaining to this within the “**Program Management**” and final “**Summary**” sections below.

Program Management (Staff Control, Community/Industry/Consumer Support)

The GDA MFRPS team is comprised of a dedicated group of individuals committed to maintaining conformance with the standards and the integrated food safety system. We use a comprehensive strategic plan that is updated annually and outlines program gaps and tasks needing to be addressed. We also use a GANTT chart to track progress made from the strategic plan.

The following information details the positions and key responsibilities to ensure future success of the regulatory program:

1. Food Safety Division Director

- Serves as a subject matter expert to lead Georgia's MFRPS team toward compliance with the standards.
- Ensures MFRPS Cooperative Agreement deliverables and reporting requirements are met.
- Participates in GDA MFRPS team meetings and attends the annual MFRP Alliance meeting.
- Participates in conference calls, webinars, regional/national meetings, and serves on regional/national committees with local, state, federal, and industry partners.
- Promotes a national Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS).

2. Contracts Coordinator

- Assists in the selection of firms for contract inspections for FDA contract inspections (GMP, Juice HACCP, Seafood HACCP, Low-Acid, Audits, and Egg) and USDA contract inspections (COOL).
- Issues contract inspection workloads to District Managers to ensure all assigned inspections can be performed in a timely and efficient manner before contract deadlines. Monitors the status of assigned contract work, and shifts inspection assignments as necessary to ensure their completion.
- Ensures that all of the Department's contract responsibilities, in addition to the actual inspection, are fulfilled.
- Coordinates the assignment of replacement firms with FDA and USDA as needed to fulfill contract requirements.
- Participates in GDA MFRPS team meetings.
- Promotes a national IFSS.

3. Recall Outreach Specialist

- Manages Georgia's Recall and Outreach Program to ensure compliance with Standard 3 Inspection Program and Standard 7 Industry and Community Relations.
- Participates in GDA MFRPS team meetings and attends the annual MFRP Alliance meeting.
- Serves on GDA's Audit Team to meet Standard 4 Inspection Audit Program requirements.
- Participates in conference calls, webinars, regional/national meetings, and serves on regional/national committees with local, state, federal, and industry partners.
- Promotes a national IFSS.

4. Manufactured Food Program Associate

- Reviews and evaluates inspection reports.
- Coordinates investigational activities between inspectors, industry, and regulatory partners.
- Receives processing approval documents from Processing Authorities on firms in Georgia that are licensed and/or inquiring about a license to process low acid and acidified foods and writes letters to these firms regarding their products.
- Works closely with Compliance Officer by alerting of compliance issues identified on GDA's Reportable Conditions Form.
- Participates in GDA MFRPS team meetings.
- Promotes a national IFSS.

5. Training Coordinator

- Manages Georgia's Training Program to ensure compliance with Standard 2.
- Drafts and finalizes MFRPS reports for submission to meet cooperative agreement reporting requirements.
- Serves as the MFRPS Project Coordinator to ensure implementation of the strategic plan and cooperative agreement goals.
- Serves on GDA's Audit Team to meet Standard 4 Inspection Audit Program requirements.
- Participates in GDA MFRPS team meetings and attends the annual MFRP Alliance meeting.
- Participates in conference calls, webinars, regional/national meetings, and serves on regional/national committees with local, state, federal, and industry partners.
- Promotes a national IFSS.

6. Manufactured Food Program Manager

- Manages Georgia's Manufactured Food Program to ensure compliance with MFRPS.
- Serves on GDA's Audit Team to meet Standard 4 Inspection Audit Program requirements.
- Participates in GDA MFRPS team meetings and attends the annual MFRP Alliance meeting.
- Participates in conference calls, webinars, regional/national meetings, and serves on regional/national committees with local, state, federal, and industry partners.
- Promotes a national IFSS.

7. Compliance and Enforcement Coordinator

- Manages Georgia's Compliance and Enforcement Program to ensure compliance with Standard 6.
- Participates in GDA MFRPS team meetings.
- Promotes a national IFSS.

8. Field Training Coordinator

- Conducts joint training inspections and evaluations of trainees to meet GDA training program requirements for basic and advanced food processing inspections.
- Conducts training inspections and evaluations of staff to meet prerequisite requirements to attend face-to-face FDA Manufactured Food training courses for advanced inspections.
- Serves as a state program contract auditor.
- Serves on GDA's Audit Team to meet Standard 4 Inspection Audit Program requirements.
- Participates in GDA MFRPS team meetings and attends the annual MFRP Alliance meeting.
- Promotes a national IFSS.

9. Deputy Director

- Manages Georgia's regulatory program to ensure compliance with Standard 1.
- Participates in GDA MFRPS team meetings.
- Participates in conference calls, webinars, regional/national meetings, and serves on regional/national committees with local, state, federal, and industry partners.
- Promotes a national IFSS.

10. Rapid Response Team Program Manager

- Manages Georgia's Rapid Response team and ensures compliance with Standards 3 and 5.
- Participates in GDA MFRPS team meetings and attends the annual MFRP Alliance meeting.
- Participates in conference calls, webinars, regional/national meetings, and serves on regional/national committees with local, state, federal, and industry partners.
- Promotes a national IFSS.

11. Director of Emergency Management

- Serves as ESF 11 liaison to GEMA-Homeland Security, state, federal, and NGO partners.
- Coordinates NIMS ICS trainings in support of RRT development and implementation efforts.
- Serves as part of the Georgia Traceback Instructor Cadre for courses in the southeast region.
- Creates RRT EMAC Mission Ready Packages and coordinates logistical and support initiatives for the GA RRT program with local, state, and federal partners.
- Develops and implements discussion based and operational exercises in support of RRT and IFSS initiatives.
- Coordinates and supports GDA and support agency Ingestion Pathway plans, protocols, procedures, trainings, and outreach initiatives.
- Participates in conference calls, webinars, regional/national meetings, and serves on regional/national committees with local, state, federal, and industry partners.
- Supports RRT Program Manager will program functions.

12. Atlanta Laboratory Manager

- Manages the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Atlanta Food Safety Laboratory to ensure compliance with Standard 10.
- Participates in GDA MFRPS team meetings and attends the annual MFRP Alliance meeting.
- Promotes a national IFSS.

13. Manufactured Food Administrative Assistant

- Supporting and advancing conformance with the MFRPS
- Providing correspondence with industry and regulatory partners
- Tracking inventory and supplies
- Arranging stakeholder meetings
- Attends MFRPS internal meetings
- Compiling data from reports and databases for tracking/trending analysis.
- Promotes a national IFSS.

Program Implementation (Training, Compliance, Enforcement)

The goal of the GDA's Food Safety Program is to protect consumer health by ensuring food is prepared, stored, and sold in a clean environment, and is honestly presented to the customer. We accomplish this by developing and administering state laws, policies, procedures, rules and regulations; conducting sound inspections and investigations of food processing establishments; conducting foodborne illness complaint investigations; and responding to food emergency incidents and disasters. We strive to continually improve quality services through enforcement, communication, education training and cooperation with stakeholders and regulatory partners. The information below outlines the achievements made by implementing the MFRPS.

Regulatory Program - The application of MFRPS elements has improved the GDA's procedures for evaluating legal authority and regulatory provisions for food facilities under our jurisdiction. The annual regulatory assessment has proven beneficial to ensure Georgia's regulatory foundation corresponds to FDA's.

Training Program - The Food Safety Division evaluated and updated its training program in accordance with MFRPS, Standard 2. Numerous written documents and forms have been developed and are used to track an inspector's progress and to meet recordkeeping requirements. Additionally, a software program was developed to track and trend training and outreach information and includes the following categories: 1) Settings; 2) Job Descriptions; 3) Outreach; 4) Employees; 5) Standards; 6) Letter Templates; 7) Reports; and 8) Training Courses. Inspectors attend face-to-face manufactured food training courses to maintain training standards for the Food Safety Division and to conduct food contract inspections. Today, the training program is more efficient and organized. Inspectors are better prepared to conduct high quality food safety inspections in Georgia's processing facilities. This standardized approach has established a procedure for inspectors and management to follow, and provides uniformity and accountability across the manufactured food program.

Inspection Program - Throughout the cooperative agreements, many improvements were made to the inspection program including establishing risk categories in the Digital Health Department (electronic inspection system) that prioritize inspections and the frequencies associated with the inspections. Also, multiple procedures were developed to address the inspection system, consumer and industry complaints, the recall system including recall audits and effectiveness checks, and sampling. The result is an effective inspection program that supports GDA's ability to meet regulatory requirements and protect public health.

Quality Assurance Program - The Food Safety Division implemented a quality assurance program that complies with MFRPS Standard 4 and conducts annual audits to evaluate the effectiveness and accuracy of the inspection program, inspection records, and sampling records. This process has improved the quality of inspections and sample collections by identifying deficiencies: 1) that need to be addressed; 2) that need a corrective plan developed; 3) that need implementation of the identified corrective action; and 4) re-evaluation plus any follow-up activity required to achieve compliance.

Emergency Response Program - Implementation of the requirements in MFRPS, Standard 5 has resulted in an emergency response program with the ability to investigate food-related incidents to stop, control, and prevent the hazards that are likely to result in foodborne illness, injury, or outbreak. A Memorandum of Understanding was developed between GDA and the Georgia Department of Public Health to coordinate food-related illness, outbreak, and hazards response activities. We developed a surveillance program that uses epidemiological

information from regulatory partners to detect incidents or outbreaks of foodborne illness or injury, and maintain notification of food-related incidents. We have also developed the procedures and response requirements for completing investigation/environmental assessments. We have implemented control measures that include written procedures and strategies for containing food-related illness, injury and hazards, and for releasing prevention guidance and information to the public. An implemented post response program: 1) maintains investigation and environmental assessment findings and reports; 2) distributes final program investigation reports; and 3) distributes recommendations, when available, from investigations and environmental assessment findings and reports to relevant stakeholders.

Compliance and Enforcement Program - Through the implementation of requirements in MFRPS Standard 6, Georgia has established policies and procedures that provide a framework for compliance in food processing facilities by outlining directives that establish the necessary follow-up and/or enforcement activities when: 1) sample results are positive for pathogenic organisms of concern and/or; 2) when tolerance levels of food samples have been compromised. An annual review is used to determine if our compliance and enforcement procedures were followed. Corrective actions were developed to address deficiencies and throughout the cooperative agreements, the overall performance review percentage has improved. In January 2018, the performance rating was 80 percent.

Industry and Community Relations Program - The Georgia Department of Agriculture participates in numerous activities annually that support communication and information exchange among regulatory partners, industry, academia, and consumers. Additionally, we have a high level of participation in outreach activities and events that provide educational information about food safety. Written procedures, an outreach activity form, and event documentation have improved our ability to track and trend data related to outreach activities.

Program Resources and Assessment - By implementing the requirements in MFRPS, Standards 8 and 9, the Food Safety Division has established timeframes for assessing conformance with each standard and the resources needed to support the manufactured food program. Established procedures and an innovative recordkeeping and approval process in SharePoint have improved our document control program. Biannual reviews have improved our ability to assess staffing, funding, and equipment needs.

Laboratory Support - The Georgia Department of Agriculture Laboratory Division (Lab) is the primary servicing laboratory for the GDA Food Safety Division, and was awarded a five-year cooperative agreement in 2012 to obtain ISO/EIC 17025 accreditation in support of becoming compliant with Standard 10, Laboratory Support of the MFRPS. In 2017, the lab was awarded a two-year bridge grant to maintain and enhance its ISO/EIC accreditation. GDA is committed to collecting and testing samples, maintaining the capacity of the Lab, and providing overall contributions toward a national food safety surveillance system. The Lab and the Food Safety Division utilize a collaborative approach for developing sampling agreements and determining laboratory capacity.

Strategic Plan - GDA developed and utilized a Strategic Plan for the 5-year cooperative agreement and the 1-year "bridge" cooperative agreement. The plan outlined program elements, gaps, tasks, responsible person(s), due dates, suggested deliverable, and status updates. Throughout the project periods, accomplishments made on existing tasks were updated along with the addition of any new elements and/or tasks. Project milestones, reporting requirements, and sustainability information was also included. Biannual updates were made in accordance with standard operating procedure guidelines. In the fall of 2017, a new and more comprehensive Strategic Plan was developed to track program information and serves as a tool for maintaining conformance and writing grant reports. This plan has proven to be an essential part of goal-setting and planning to achieve and maintain conformance with the MFRPS.

On-site visits – These visits are important for assessing the level of implementation and conformance within the program. They provided clear instruction on areas that needed attention and items that are partially completed

or need developing as related to the standards. The MFRPS Team actively participates in on-site visits and program assessments as requested by the FDA. During each visit, we demonstrate continuous improvement with the MFRPS. A 60+2 MFRPS Audit has been scheduled by the FDA's Audit Team to be conducted, May 14-16, 2018, at GDA's State Office in Atlanta. Prior program audits include: 1) Pre-Assessment Validation Audit (PAVA), November 2012 - The audit was to determine the validation of GDA's self-assessments and improvement plan. Findings by the audit team discussed conformance levels for each standard, identified program elements needing implementation, and prioritized and cross-referenced standards for future compliance; 2) 36-Month Assessment of MFRPS Implementation, May 2014 - The audit findings indicated GDA was moving forward toward full implementation and conformance with each of the standards. Findings reflected outstanding elements in the Strategic Plan that needed to be addressed. FDA Audit conclusions revealed Standards 3, 7, 8, and 9 to be fully implemented. Standards 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 10 were found to be partially implemented; and 3) 60-Month Comprehensive Audit, July 2016 - The audit was to determine the status of implementation and conformance with the 2013 MFRPS. Findings indicated GDA is moving toward full implementation and conformance with each of the standards. Audit results for each standard: Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 have been fully implemented and Standard 2 is partially implemented. Standards 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 are in full conformance. Standards 4 and 6 are not in conformance, and Standard 2 was not evaluated.

Participation in MFRPS Initiatives - During the 5-year MFRPS and 1-year "bridge" cooperative agreements, manufactured food program personnel demonstrated substantial involvement in initiatives supporting the MFRPS as outlined in the following examples: 1) participated in numerous online and face-to-face FDA training courses; 2) attended/participated/presented at numerous food safety events, outreach events, and local/regional/national meetings; 3) served in numerous roles and capacities of local/regional/national organizations including board positions, committee chairs, sub-committee leads, and voting members; 4) participated in numerous webinars, and conference calls; 5) at least two key MFRPS personnel attended the FDA annual meetings; 6) participated in meetings with the FDA Atlanta District Office; 7) participated in multiple meetings, trainings, and workshops with local, state, federal, industry, and academia partners; 8) hosted an on-site technical session for the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA); 9) fully participated in on-site visits and information submission for the PAVA/full-program FDA audits; and 10) shared MFRPS information with numerous food safety partners when requested, and posted information on multiple food safety integrated websites including the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Alliance (MFRPA) portal.

Food Safety Inspection Contract - The FDA has contracted with the Food Safety Division for more than thirty-five (35) years to conduct manufactured food inspections including: Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP); Juice HACCP; Seafood HACCP; Acidified Food; environmental swabs; and Phase II audits. To fulfill obligations of the FY18 Food Contract, Georgia is in the process of conducting 208 food contract inspections including 175 GMP inspections, 25 Seafood HACCP inspections, 3 Juice HACCP inspections, and 5 LACF inspections. Additionally, we will conduct 3 contract audits with FDA conducting 9 audits, and collect 1,000 environmental swabs. In FY17, the contract work was fulfilled and all audits of the inspectors were rated acceptable. Georgia continues to maintain a satisfactory standing with the food safety inspection contract.

Program Outcomes (Measurable Outcomes)

In the current fiscal year (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018), 1,485 manufactured food inspections have been conducted from the inventory consisting of 2,318 firms. Under the current Food Safety Inspection Contract, the following work has been completed to date:

- Sixty Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) inspections
- Sixteen Seafood HACCP inspections
- One Juice HACCP inspections
- Three-hundred environmental swabs
- Three audit inspections

During Fiscal Year 2018 thus far, 42 recall notices have been issued to the inspection staff. Externally, weekly recall updates for Georgia-specific recalls are sent out to more than 7,500 subscribers. The GA RRT has fully

activated once, with three partial activations, and followed up on four positive reports and/or Reportable Food Registry (RFR) incidents.

We rely on the multiple types of documents and software to track, trend, analyze, and measure information, including:

- Training forms, appendix forms, spreadsheets, FileMaker Pro training reports.
- Cooperative agreement reports, carryover requests, budgets, budget justifications, appendix forms, strategic plans.
- Outlook, Microsoft Office products documents, Adobe pdf documents, SharePoint, Dropbox, the MFRP Alliance Portal, FoodSHIELD, Digital Health Department (DHD) reports/inspections, The Georgia Food Safety and Defense Task Force website, Outreach Activity Form, meeting agendas, meeting notes, program assessment audit reports, SOPs, policies, program data, investigation reports and assessment findings, best practice documents, service agreements, annual reviews, sample collection reports, sample results reports, spreadsheets, videos, and any other viable means of retaining data.
- Analytical data is available from MailChimp, Twitter, Instagram, recall spreadsheets, Reportable Food Registry (RFR) spreadsheets, complaints spreadsheets, and any other viable means of retaining data.

Goals for Improvement

Our manufactured food regulatory program's vision includes continuing to advance efforts for a nationally integrated food safety system by achieving and maintaining conformance with the current version of the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards to ensure a high-quality regulatory program in Georgia.

The strategy includes:

- Achieving and sustaining conformance with the most current version of the MFRPS.
- Attending the annual face-to-face meeting and actively participating in committees and other initiatives that support the MFRPS.
- Developing strategies and resources for achieving and maintaining conformance with the MFRPS that can be shared on a national basis.
- Providing FDA with the foundation for pursuing regulatory action based upon GDA findings.
- Providing for the collection of FDA regulated product samples to support laboratory capacity development and produce surveillance.
- Performing enforcement or other follow-up activities based on sample results.
- Developing sampling plans in cooperation with the laboratory to support the objectives of both programs.

Through a unified partnership and shared responsibility approach, Georgia will continue: 1) serving as a leader in the development of an IFSS by utilizing a "states helping states" approach; 2) working with regulatory partners and the FDA to leverage resources; and 3) working with the MFRPS states to share best practices and information that can be duplicated and utilized across regulatory programs.

Issues/Challenges/Risks

Changes in federal leadership can create a lack of support and funding for state food safety programs. If this happens, a lack of funding and/or support may adversely affect Georgia's ability to maintain full conformance with the MFRPS. Additionally, changes in state leadership including Governor, Legislature, and Commissioner of Agriculture can also create a lack of support and funding for the state's food regulatory program. The Georgia Department of Agriculture's Commissioner is an elected position and holds the position for four years.

Disasters (whether natural or manmade) requiring an emergency response can cause a tremendous strain on resources and funds. In light of an unfortunate natural or man-made disaster, GDA must utilize all resources and available funds to support consumer protection and food safety initiatives.

Through current state appropriated funding levels, the Food Safety Division's ability to maintain conformance with the MFRPS will be difficult at best. Without federal funding, the state would have to lobby the legislature for additional funding and, given Georgia's planning and budgeting process, there could be a multiyear lag between our request and any additional state appropriated funding.

Summary (Improvement or Innovation that Merits Award)

The Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) will continue advancing efforts for a nationally integrated food safety system (IFSS) by maintaining conformance with the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards (MFRPS) and providing the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the foundation to improve the quality of contracts, coordination of inspections, investigations and enforcement to effectively and efficiently protect public health.

By using the standards as a road-map, we have made tremendous strides in building a high-quality regulatory program that is organized, focused, and accountable. We will continue building capacity and maintaining the foundational core necessary to sustain a robust integrated system by relying on mutual reliance tactics that protect public health. This joint approach is beneficial in conserving resources, avoiding duplication of work, improving communication between agencies, and promoting an integrated methodology of a unified workforce.

We hope this application has effectively outlined the progress our program has made over time, and the unique ways in which we have implemented this approach to meet conformance with the MFRPS. Thanks for your time and consideration!

□ **Attachments**

- Testimonials (maximum of two)
- Acknowledgements
- Appendices

Jessica Badour

Nominated by:

Jessica M. Badour

Signature:

The winner of this award will identify an individual to receive travel funds (if available and pursuant to AFDO's travel policy) to attend the annual AFDO conference held in June in order to publicly receive an official plaque of recognition and will be given time on the program agenda to comment on the award. The winner will be invited to attend the AFDO Wiley Awards Banquet during the conference.

Attendance is not mandatory for receiving the award. Return this form, a photocopy of this form (both sides) and ***please submit by April 1*** to:

Dr. Joanne M. Brown
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