

FEATURE – CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS SOCIAL MEDIA FOR FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION

INTRO: At a recent US Dept of Agriculture conference, the topic was food safety education, and the role of social media in keeping people food-safe. USDA's Pat O'Leary has more from Atlanta, Georgia. (1:59)

EVERY FOUR YEARS, FOOD SAFETY EDUCATORS MEET TO SHARE IDEAS, AT A CONFERENCE HOSTED BY USDA, NSF INTERNATIONAL AND OTHERS. THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE IN ATLANTA WAS "ADVANCEMENTS IN FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION: TRENDS, TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES," WITH A FOCUS ON HOW SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS ARE CHANGING THE GAME.

Jerold Mande, USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety: It's easy to trivialize social media, but for food safety education it is potentially revolutionary. No doubt you've heard the buzz about Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Consumers are using these social media tools both to network and to get information.

Bryce Quick, USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service: Our food safety education staff has done a remarkable job with the introduction of Ask Karen. It's an interactive tool, now.

USDA'S ASK KAREN DOT GOV WEBSITE LET'S FOLKS CHAT LIVE WITH A FOOD SAFETY EXPERT, OR GET AN AUTOMATED ANSWER. WEB-BASED WAYS TO SHARE INFORMATION LIKE THIS ONE ARE BECOMING VITAL TO PUBLIC HEALTH, ACCORDING TO CONFERENCE SPEAKERS.

Carolyn O'Neil, Atlanta Journal-Constitution: It's not "new media" anymore, I think we have to put that term behind us. It is really the "now" media. So many questions must be answered by the best science and you have the best science: Clean, Separate, Cook, Chill – great take home messages.

Pat O'Leary, USDA (stand-up): This is the fourth major food safety education conference sponsored by USDA and partners, but it's also the largest. Organizers say the conference keeps growing in size, and that says something about the topic of food safety.

Stan Hazen, NSF International: It's front and center, with respect to the media, with respect to the regulators, with respect to industry.

Stephanie Davis, Food Safety Educator: We need more information. There's a need for training, there's a need to educate our clinicians as well as others. I think there's a need to educate the public and get the word out there.

Frank Yiannas, Walmart: Food safety is truly a shared responsibility that's shared along the entire food system. We're doing all that we can to reduce food safety risk early in the food production chain, certainly within our stores and certainly helping consumers become educated on the important role they play.

IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA, FOR THE US DEPT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M PAT O'LEARY.