



Food Security

STOCK PHOTO

Research and education combine to fight food contamination

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control estimate that 48 million people become ill from foodborne illnesses annually, resulting in 3,000 deaths. Through research and education, land-grant institutions are working to reduce the pathogens contained in food and increase food security.

Here are a few examples of that work:

- In **Vermont**, a certification program known as CAPS+ was developed to assure retailers that growers who participate do provide produce that meets or exceeds food safety standards. Also developed was a processors food safety toolkit to help small and medium-sized operations better sell to large retailers. *University of Vermont; Other USDA Competitive, Smith-Lever (3b&c)* ([See full statement](#)).
- **New Mexico** researchers developed a method to continually monitor food products for aflatoxin, a potentially cancer-causing compound produced by certain molds. The noninvasive process detects the pathogen without destroying a portion of the crop. *New Mexico State University; Private grants and contracts* ([See full statement](#)).
- After a multistate salmonella outbreak, Extension educators in **Indiana** supported growers by communicating with federal agencies that the contaminated products were no longer in the supply chain (since the state's harvest season had passed), averting a large recall. They also provided food safety education to the growers. Federal testing found that all the farms were in compliance with food safety rules. *Purdue University; Smith-Lever (3b&c)* ([See full statement](#)).

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- **Connecticut** has a coordinated food safety testing program to detect pathogens such as chemicals, harmful molds and pesticides. They also ensure that foods contain the nutrients claimed on labels. *University of Connecticut; Other funding ([See full statement](#))*.
- In **Maryland**, researchers developed several technologies to detect contamination in fresh produce, poultry and seafood, which have been transferred to processors and regulators for use in ensuring safe, fresh food. *University of Maryland – Eastern Shore; Evans-Alan, 1890 Extension ([See full statement](#))*.
- **Oklahoma** and **Indiana** provided ServSafe training to restaurant workers, high-school students, convenience store staff and food pantry workers to help ensure that food pathogens are not passed on in food-handling practices. *Oklahoma State University; state appropriations, county funding ([See full statement](#)) and Purdue University; Smith-Level (3b&c) ([See full statement](#))*.