Center for Produce Safety Awards $1.8M to Ten Projects

Davis, California, October 1, 2012 – The Center for Produce Safety (CPS) at the University of California, Davis, today announced ten new grant awards for research directed at answering critical questions in specific areas of food safety practices for fruit, vegetable and tree nut production, harvest and post-harvest handling. The objective is to provide the produce industry with practical, translatable research data that can be used at all levels of the supply chain.

The broad range of the projects reflects the commitment of CPS’s Partners in Research (PIR), which include a cross section of public and private partners. To date CPS has funded 69 projects valued at $10.6 million. The awards announced today resulted from the CPS request for proposals issued in February. The awards were made possible by funds provided by PIR members and contributors to the CPS Campaign for Research.

California Department of Food and Agriculture www.cdfa.ca.gov
Washington State Department of Agriculture www.agr.wa.gov
California Cantaloupe Advisory Board www.cmrb.org
California Leafy Greens Research Program www.calgreens.org
California Melon Research Board www.cmrb.org
CPS Campaign for Research cps.ucdavis.edu
Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission http://www.treefruitresearch.com

“The research being conducted at CPS is applicable to all points of the supply chain – farmers, shippers, handlers and consumers. CPS’s collaboration with its Partners in Research demonstrates what is possible when we work together to share knowledge to help keep fresh produce safe,” said Stephen Patricio, CPS Advisory Board chairman. “I encourage industry stakeholders to fund the Center for Produce Safety research program to continue filling knowledge gaps.”

The CPS Technical Committee reviewed 50 proposals, the highest number of proposals received in response to its annual request for proposals since the initial RFP in 2008. The CPS Technical Committee is an advisory group that includes experts from industry, academia, government and non-governmental organizations. In collaboration with technical experts from PIR organizations, the CPS Technical Committee recommended ten proposals for funding. Research work on these new projects will begin in January 2013:

Reducing the risk for transfer of zoonotic foodborne pathogens from domestic and wild animals to vegetable crops in the southwest desert.
Michele Jay-Russell, University of California, Davis

Assessment of sanitation techniques for tree fruit storage bins.
Karen Killinger, Washington State University
Rapid assessment of oxidative stress induced in microbes to evaluate efficacy of sanitizers in wash water.
Nitin Nitin, University of California, Davis

Practical validation of surface pasteurization of netted melons.
Trevor Suslow, University of California, Davis

Avirulent Salmonella strains and their use to model behavior of the pathogen in water, composts, in and on vegetables.
Max Teplitski, University of Florida

Die-off rates of human pathogens in manure amended soil under natural climatic conditions using novel sentinel chamber system.
Keith Warriner, University of Guelph

Genomic elucidation of the physiological state of enteric pathogens on pre-harvest lettuce.
Martin Wiedmann, Cornell University

Science-based evaluation of risks associated with wildlife exposure for contamination of irrigation water by Salmonella.
Anita Wright, University of Florida

Evaluation of the level of white-tailed deer fecal colonization by E. coli O157:H7 and the ecological role of dung beetles with the pathogen in produce farms.
Vivian Wu, University of Maine

Novel coating systems with sustained release of food antimicrobials to improve safety of cantaloupe.
Qixin Zhong, University of Tennessee

“CPS has expanded upon basic core research areas from the farm through processing and up the supply chain through distribution. Working with stakeholders, key knowledge gaps in food safety were identified, and CPS anticipates these new research projects will provide depth from which those stakeholders can develop science-based food safety programs,” said Dr. Robert Whitaker, CPS Technical Committee chairman.

California Department of Food and Agriculture
The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) protects and promotes California’s agriculture. California’s farmers and ranchers produce a safe, secure supply of food, fiber and shelter. These commodities are marketed fairly for all Californians and produced with responsible environmental stewardship. www.cdfa.ca.gov

Washington State Department of Agriculture
The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) serves the people of Washington by supporting the agricultural community and promoting consumer and environmental protection. Its staff carries out a broad spectrum of activities that support the producers, distributors, and consumers of Washington’s food and agricultural products. http://agr.wa.gov

California Leafy Greens Research Program
The California Leafy Greens Research Program funds University and USDA research projects in the areas of genetics, pest management, water quality, and food safety. The program also provides opportunities for researchers to interact with leafy greens handlers and growers. This helps producers to stay on top of the latest research findings and helps researchers in identifying objectives that will contribute to the continued success of the leafy greens industry in California.  
www.calgreens.org

Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission
The Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission (WTFRC) was established to promote and carry on research and administer specific industry service programs which will or may benefit the planting, production, harvesting, handling, processing or shipment of tree fruit of the state.
http://www.treefruitresearch.com

California Cantaloupe Advisory Board
The California Cantaloupe Advisory Board (CCAB) was formed in 1988 by cantaloupe shippers, largely to control the quality of marketed cantaloupes. The board, composed of seven shippers and a public member, works to develop research-backed safety standards for growing and shipping cantaloupes, as well as mandating a trace-back system for the protection of the consumer.

California Melon Research Board
The California Melon Research Board (CMRB) was formed in 1972 by melon growers to provide research with respect to varietal development, production, harvesting and transportation from field to processing points on all varieties of melons, with the exception of watermelons.  
www.cmrb.org

Center for Produce Safety
The Center for Produce Safety (CPS) is focused exclusively on providing the produce industry and government with open access to the actionable information needed to continually enhance the safety of produce. Established by public and private partnership at the University of California, Davis, initial funding for CPS was provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the University of California, Produce Marketing Association and Taylor Farms. Ongoing administrative costs are covered by the Produce Marketing Association, enabling industry and public funds to go exclusively to research.
http://cps.ucdavis.edu