



FOOD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY CAREER DEVELOPMENT EVENT

Frequently Asked Questions 2025

Updated: 8/1/2025

What format will the contest follow?

All parts of the event, including the written exam, Food Safety Audit Report, sensory evaluation, product specifications, math practicum, customer complaint letters and product development event, will be in person on October 29th. We will run it throughout the day, with teams beginning with Product Development and rotating to the individual practicums, written exam and Food Safety Audit. Rotations of the flights will be distributed by October 1st.

Orientation/Team Meetings

Virtual Orientation for In-Person

A virtual orientation will be via Zoom on Sept. 25 at 3 p.m. EDT.

What are the time allocations for the different parts of the event?

The product development team activity and other parts of the individual practicums will be held in rotations throughout Wednesday.

- Teams will have 60 minutes to respond to the marketing scenario during the product development team activity. At the end of their 60 minutes of preparation time, teams will have 10 minutes to present their product to a panel of judges and 10 minutes of questions by the judges.
- Students will have 60 minutes (including transition time) to rotate through the individual practicums and write thank-you notes to our sponsors. We anticipate the following breakdown for the rotations:
 - Sensory evaluation – 15 minutes
 - Product specifications – 15 minutes
 - Mathematical Calculations – 15 minutes
 - Customer Inquiry Letters – 15 minutes

Contestants will have 60 minutes for the 50-question multiple-choice exam

Teams will have 60 minutes for the Food Safety Audit

What do you mean by flights(rounds)?

Teams will be put into groups of 5 to enter the product development preparation every thirty minutes starting at 8 a.m. All teams will begin with the product development team activity and rotate to the other events after completing the product development. National FFA will post flights to all teams at a later date. We hope to make these available by October 1st. Please make your plans accordingly. All teams will enter the event area by 12:15 p.m.

There are several scoring forms/rubrics included in the rules. What parts of the events will use scan sheets versus paper forms/rubrics?

Teams may practice with the printable copies of the scan sheet used during the events. A copy of the scan sheet is available in the orientation folder of the Food Science CDE page.

A panel of industry judges will use a paper copy of the Team Product Development Project scorecard included in the rules to score the team product development activity. The judges participate in an orientation before judging and will consult with each other to calibrate for a uniformly scored contest.

Each team will complete and submit one Food Safety Audit Report via Google Docs during the event through Google Classroom. A Chromebook will be provided for this exercise.

What materials are participants allowed to bring into the various parts of the event?

Participants will not need to provide any materials during the event. Cell phones will be placed in a storage bin at the beginning of the event.

Can we bring our supplies for the product development team activity?

Teams may use materials provided during the event. All teams will receive identical materials to begin the product development activity. No outside materials will be permitted to ensure every team has the same resources.

The FDA has announced a new nutrition facts label for packaged foods. Manufacturers must use the new nutrition label by January 1st, 2020. Which label do we need to use in the event?

Since the product in the team activity will be listed on the shelves in 2022, all teams will be required to use the new label format. The format can be found at the following link:
<https://www.fda.gov/media/99331/download> .

What information can you share to help prepare for the Food Safety Audit?

During the food safety audit team activity, teams will work together to complete and submit a food safety audit report form. Each team will type their report into the Google Classroom Word document that autosaves. At the end of 60 minutes, teams will submit their report. The Food Safety Audit report form is posted on the FFA website under team preparation. It is also included in the online version of the handbook. You may also review the [Example Food Safety Audit team activity](#) in that folder.

Participants will be provided with a report including videos, pictures, and written scenarios. The team will report on situations that involve food safety issues and provide concerns or observations. After making the observation, the team will recommend a corrective action and select the related policy pertaining to the following areas: facility, sanitation, Pest Control, and GMPs. Allergens, or Foreign Materials. Team members will also identify the risk type as to whether it is a biological, chemical or physical risk.

Teams will not be evaluated for teamwork for the 2024 event.

Are there any specific resources I can use to prepare for completing the Food Safety Audit report?

Yes! We suggest the *Food Safety Magazine* article *Plant Self-Inspections: Keys to Developing In-House Programs* by Richard F. Stier. This article is available online. The following link will provide you with a reference for good manufacturing practices:
<https://www.fda.gov/food/current-good-manufacturing-practices-cgmps/good-manufacturing-practices-gmps-21st-century-food-processing>. We have provided some examples in the current food science and technology handbook.

Where can I get aromas?

There are various places that may provide sets of food-grade aromas from a flavor house. However, most teachers develop their kits using candy-making oils and/or aromatherapy oils available online or at local craft stores (e.g., Michaels, Hobby Lobby, Walmart, LorAnn Oils) or baking supply stores.

What information can you share to prepare for the event's problem-solving/math practicum portion?

There are several common math calculations/concepts we suggest you emphasize as you prepare for this practicum:

- Conversions (e.g., metric ↔ U.S. equivalents; grams ↔ ounces; percent ↔ ppm; Celsius ↔ Fahrenheit)
- Pearson's Square
- Percent of an ingredient in a formula
- Yield
- Shrink loss
- The volume of a container
- Calorie calculations
- Total energy calculations

Are there any specific resources I can use to prepare for the problem-solving/math practicum?

Yes, we suggest the following resources:

Ward, J. D., & Ward, L. T. (2015). *Principles of food science* (4th ed.). Tinley Park, IL: The Goodheart-Wilcox Company, Inc.

United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety Inspection Service Processing Inspectors' Calculations Handbook (revised 1995) available at:
<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/policy/fsis-directives/7620.3>

What information can you share to prepare for the product specification compliance practicum?

Participants will be given sample sets (actual products and/or data sets). and asked to determine compliance with the provided specification requirements. They may also be required to conduct basic analyses, including weights, pH, color analysis, viscosity measurements, sizing analyses, etc. Tools needed to conduct analyses will be provided during the event. You may want to contact local food companies to see if they would be willing to share specifications for their product(s).

In previous years, the customer inquiry scorecard had a "none of the above" option. This response is no longer an option. What does this mean?

In the customer inquiry portion of the food safety and quality, practicum participants will read each scenario and decide if the inquiry reflects a food quality or a food safety issue. Participants will then determine whether the issue demonstrates a biological, chemical, or physical concern, regardless of whether it is a quality or safety issue.

Can participants bring their communication devices (e.g., cell phones, smart watches, fitness bands/trackers) to the event?

We recognize that participants need the ability to communicate with their advisor(s)/chaperone(s) while in Indianapolis. However, we do not allow participants to keep their communication devices with them during event activities. These will be collected at the start of event activities and returned at the conclusion of event activities.

As a "novice" in coaching a team for this event, do you have any general tips to help me?

Yes! We see consistent trends from year to year related to team preparation that we share annually at the event review. The following tips should be of benefit:

- Make sure you and your team have read the event rules and are familiar with each part of the event.
- You can easily access materials from previous years from the [CDE/LDE Webpage](#) on FFA.org. Select Past Tests and Practicums from the Event Preparation column. The materials will be listed by year. 2017 was the first year the event followed the current format using the existing resources.
- We encourage you to obtain and read the reference books and visit the reference websites regularly. The *Principles of Food Sanitation* (5th edition) book is available online as a free PDF download from several sites. We recommend purchasing Janet Ward's *Principles of Food Science* (4th edition) book.
- Train team members to read the marketing scenario closely when preparing for the product development activity. Students should pay attention to specific information related to key aspects of the product they will develop. Ensure you prepare your team to handle the product they have been asked to make.
- Call and ask questions if you do not understand a specific part of the contest. Read all communication provided by the superintendent as examples of activities may be shared.