



Seafood Extension Program

Pamela Tom, Program Manager, University of California, Davis



SeafoodNIC



Background

Pamela Tom is program manager of California Sea Grant's Seafood Extension Program and the only staff member within the University of California system whose sole responsibility is to transfer technical information to seafood processors, distributors, importers, inspectors, retailers, analytical laboratories, teachers, researchers and consumers. Her outreach programs and educational activities have many end benefits, not the least of which is making seafood safer for the public.

SeafoodNIC Website

Tom maintains the website SeafoodNIC, short for Seafood Network Information Center, at <http://seafood.ucdavis.edu>. SeafoodNIC is a clearinghouse for seafood information, a hub and starting place for finding reliable information on virtually any seafood topic from regulations, product development, and marketing to consumer safety.

Workshops/Conferences

Tom also collaborates with agency and industry partners such as the National Fisheries Institute and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in technical planning of professional seafood workshops and conferences. Recent examples include the 2007 NFI Seafood Innovations Technical Conference, 2006 Food and Fish Safety Update for Community, Health and Agricultural Educators held in Woodland, Calif.; the 2007 International Smoked Seafood Conference and Workshop in Anchorage, Alaska; and the 59th Pacific Fisheries Technologist conference, which will be held in San Francisco in 2008.

These events provide key audiences with forums to learn, share and sometimes debate relevant scientific information. Examples include "sensory decomposition training" workshops, which Tom helps organize in collaboration with the FDA and NOAA's Seafood Inspection Program.

These hands-on training workshops teach seafood professionals how to "calibrate" their noses and eyes to quickly judge whether a fish sample—participants work with real fish samples—would pass or fail FDA standards. Tom organizes two or three of these workshops each year, one of which is usually offered in California. Others have been held in Vietnam and Thailand to help exporters to the United States understand and comply with U.S. federal standards.

HACCP Alliance

Tom is a member and co-chair of the training program for the acclaimed Seafood HACCP Alliance steering committee, which is charged with helping seafood businesses understand and bring the seven science-based HACCP food safety principles to their operations.

HACCP, short for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point, is a state-of-the-art approach to food safety management that identifies and prevents hazards that could cause food-borne illnesses. Prior to HACCP, the approach relied on spot-checks of manufacturing processes and random sampling of finished seafood products.

Tom and colleagues help processors develop HACCP plans—an often-tedious process since these plans are species and company specific. Indeed, one of the features of HACCP is that it is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Businesses tailor their plans according to their location and products handled.

As co-chair of training, Tom trains trainers on HACCP and sanitation control procedures courses, which use standardized curricula developed by the Alliance and administered through the Association of Food and Drug Officials. Trainers who complete these courses receive certificates recognized nationwide by the FDA and state inspectors that allow recipients to teach basic HACCP principles to, industry professionals. Tom is also co-chair of the Alliance's

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“Compendium of Fish and Fishery Product Processing Methods, Hazards and Controls,” a leading scientific resource for seafood processors developing HACCP plans. A companion document to the training curriculum developed by the Seafood HACCP Alliance and the FDA’s Fish and Fisheries Products Hazards and Controls Guidance, the Compendium describes known hazards to seafood safety and applicable methods for controlling them. California Sea Grant Extension led the creation of the Compendium, and Tom now helps to update and otherwise maintain this important document on the SeafoodNIC website.

Seafood Listservs

Tom maintains the Seafood HACCP Discussion Listserv, an email group of more than 1,000 subscribers in 55 countries who are actively interested in seafood safety and quality, new regulations, HACCP, processing, importing, ingredients, labeling and more. The listserv provides a forum for exchanging information among people who may be oceans away.

Another outreach tool is the California Seafood Industry Outreach listserv—an educational, public service email group for seafood professionals, which Tom created. Tom collects and distributes news to this group on topics such as seafood regulations, key technical publications, training opportunities, conferences and more.

Safe Oysters

Safe Oysters is a collaboration with Georgia Sea Grant to educate healthcare professionals about a naturally occurring bacterium sometimes found in raw oysters called *Vibrio vulnificus*. Tom helped create the campaign’s website at <http://SafeOysters.org>, which contains the basics of *Vibrio* and oysters; its public health impacts; and how to diagnose, treat and prevent infections, especially in high-risk patients.

By cooking oysters, immuno-compromised individuals can protect themselves against what could be a lethal infection, which can also occur when open wounds or sores are exposed to *Vibrio* contaminated seawater (e.g., by swimming, wading, or fishing) or objects exposed to seawater (crabs, hooks, etc.). Information is also provided for processors, consumers and fishermen in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Tom and colleague Tori Stivers at Georgia Sea Grant have presented information on *Vibrio* at several medical conferences, including the 2006 American Diabetes Educators Association meeting in Los Angeles, and Digestive Disease Week in Washington, D.C. in 2007, which nearly 16,000 medical professionals attended.

Collaborators

California Sea Grant’s Seafood Extension Program could not exist without its many partners, including the Food and Drug Branch of California’s Department of Health Services, California Fisheries and Seafood Institute, the National Fisheries Institute, NOAA’s Seafood Inspection Program, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

No list would be complete without sincere gratitude to the national Sea Grant network, especially the Alaska, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Oregon and Rhode Island Sea Grant programs.

Professional Affiliations

President, 2007-08, Pacific Fisheries Technologists; member, Pacific Fisheries Management Council’s Highly Migratory Species Advisory Sub-Panel; member, board of directors, California Salmon Council; member, International Association of Fish Inspectors; and Fellow, Institute of Food Technologists

Awards

2006 Calvert L. Willey Distinguished Service Award, Institute of Food Technologists; 2005 Technologist of the Biennium, International Association of Fish Inspectors; and 2002 Seafood Safety Award, National Fisheries Institute

For More Information

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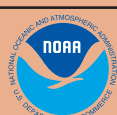


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