SUMMARY REPORT

On May 23, 2019, ILSI SEA Region Philippine Country Committee organized the 1st ILSI SEAR Philippines Food Safety and Nutrition Assurance Seminar Series, with Food Safety Trends PH Magazine as media partner. Held in Manila, Philippines, the 1-day seminar aimed to highlight and discuss current epidemiology of different food-borne diseases, present new understanding of current food pathogens, define ‘hazard’ and ‘risk’ in food safety, present government’s efforts and regulations to ensure food products’ quality and safety, share and discuss challenges and opportunities on food safety practices across the food supply chain and discuss current road map and future directions in strengthening food safety culture and in improving food safety in the country.

The seminar started with Dr. Celeste Tanchoco, the Country Scientific Director of the ILSI SEA Region Philippine Country Committee, welcoming the participants and presenting the overview of the program.

The first session was chaired by Ms. Cheryl Singson of Royal FrieslandCampina. This session commenced with Dr. Theodora Cecile Magturo of the Department of Health with the topic, “Epidemiology of Food-borne Diseases.” Dr. Magturo shared that globally, people are at risk of developing a food and water-borne disease daily because food and water can be contaminated at any point of its production. FWBD are a major concern globally because of various reasons: 1) The contaminants are varied (bacteria, viruses, parasitic agents, and toxins); 2) The vehicle (medium) of the agent are the basic needs of humans (water and food); 3) Their outcome may be explosive causing sickness and death to many people; 4) It is difficult to measure the magnitude of the burden as majority of the cases may manifest minor symptoms or self-limiting and are not being reported. They may have consequence on the economic development of a country (tourism, food export industries, agriculture, marine products). The promotion of hand hygiene in all settings and on all occasions is recommended to reduce transmission of microbes that cause of acute infectious diarrhea. All efforts should be made to provide access to clean water, soap and hand drying materials. Food hygiene refers to measures that ensure consumption of safe food. Food hygiene must be observed by any domestic or professional food handler. Although there is limited evidence on effective and sustainable food hygiene interventions, WHO promotes the Five Keys to Safer Food Manual as a tool to promote the principles of safe food handling.

Dr. Ida F. Dalmacio, Professor Emeritus of the University of the Philippines Los Baños, discussed her presentation entitled, “Food-borne Pathogens.” Foodborne pathogens are mainly bacteria, viruses or parasites that are present in food. Some of these organisms cause food infection, food intoxication/poisoning, and food intoxication. Some important characteristics of these causal organisms such as cultural, morphological and physiological attributes, and for some bacteria, the immunologic traits, were presented. Also, important intrinsic and extrinsic parameters like pH, water activity (aw) and temperature, as they affect the survival and growth of the pathogens were enumerated.

The second session was chaired by Ms. Angelina Miles of Coca-Cola. “Strengthening The Philippines’ Food Safety Culture: An Educator’s Point Of View” presented by Dr. Alonzo A. Gabriel of College of Home Economics, University of the Philippines Dilliman was topic 3. Dr. Gabriel presented the framework of the Laboratory of Food Microbiology and Hygiene to answer the noble purpose of the
university which is an interface of these, namely: role of teaching, research and development, and public service are being explored to address the challenge of foodborne illnesses in the Philippines. The LFMH looks at this tripartite role as an opportunity to transfer food safety knowledge to micro-, small- and medium scale enterprises in a country where majority of food industry stakeholders are at these scales. He enumerated efforts of the LFMH in transferring knowledge to stakeholders from the food industry, academia, government units, and non-government organizations and shared experiences in merging teaching of university students and community extension activities to inculcate the values of service and grassroots empowerment.

Topic 4 was presented by Mr. Moises Timothy Mendoza of Food and Drug Administration. He essentially presented the **Food Safety Act of 2013 as the tool in strengthening the Food Safety Regulatory System of the Philippines**. The objectives of the Act covers the - a) protection of the public from food-borne and water-borne illnesses and unsanitary, unwholesome, misbranded or adulterated foods, b) enhancement of industry and consumer confidence in the food regulatory system, and c) achieving economic growth and development by promoting fair trade practices and sound regulatory foundation for domestic and international trade. For the attainment of these objectives, the Food Safety Act of 2013 created the Food Safety Regulation Coordinating Board (FSRCB) to ensure that various government agencies with roles in food safety shall perform their respective duties and responsibilities. The Board is chaired by the Secretary of Health and co-chaired by the Secretary of Agriculture with members comprising of Food Safety Regulatory Agencies (FSRAs) from the Department of Health and Department of Agriculture, support agencies from the Department of Interior and Local Government, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Trade and Industry, and the Local Government Units.

Prof. Abigail A. Rustia of College of Home Economics, University of the Philippines Diliman, presented Topic 5 entitled: "**Defining Risk in Food Safety.**" This paper presented the significance of risk as described in the Philippine Food Safety Act (RA 10611). The framework of risk analysis and its components: risk management, risk assessment, and risk communication. Emphasizing the role of risk management, strategies to achieve food safety objectives particularly existing food controls in the Philippines and concepts, appropriate level of protection as introduced in the WTO SPS agreement were described. Initiatives on establishing risk profiles to support the national food safety risk management in the Philippines was presented.

Session 3 on **Best Practices on Food Safety across the Food Supply Chain** was chaired by Ms. Venus Arguson of Nestle. Dr. Julius Ceasar Sicat of Region III of Department of Science and Technology shared the initiatives of Regional office through the establishment of a food safety team composed of skilled technical personnel of the of Department of Science and Technology and different state universities and colleges in Central Luzon who were trained to lead the food safety-related activities in the Region. The Central Luzon Food Safety team designed its food safety program by adopting the Singapore’s Points Demerit System (PDS). PDS is a systematic and fair approach that deals with the suspension and cancellation of licenses for food hygiene infringements, from local hawker fare to international cuisine. In line with this, DOST-3 launched the project entitled **Establishment of Pilot Model for Ambulant Vendors and Canteen Concessionaires** at Central Luzon State University (CLSU), funded under the DOST-3 Grants in Aids (GIA) program. The DOST-3 implements the Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP) as a primary means to reach out to Filipino entrepreneurs in the region. SETUP supports MSMEs by providing technology assistance, technical training and consultancy services, packaging and labeling design, database information systems, and support for establishment of product standards, including testing and calibration of equipment. DOST-3 has its
own analytical testing laboratory which is an ISO 17025:2005 accredited laboratory that caters to all. It acts as a third party laboratory that provides technical support to the food manufacturing, trading and production sectors through the physico-chemical and microbiological tests it offers. DOST-3 wants to establish not just a food safety program, but a strong food safety culture.

Dr. Ena Bernal representing the food manufacturers presented what several food manufacturing companies in the Philippines have used and applied for accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025 under the Philippine Accreditation Bureau (PAB). ISO/IEC 17025 is a global standard specifically developed for testing and calibration laboratories. Accreditation to this standard is the highest recognition of competence testing and calibration laboratories could achieve. All the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025:2017 are equally important for the desired competence. Metrological Traceability (Resource Requirement), Selection, Verification and Validation of Methods and Evaluation of Measurement Uncertainty (Process Requirements), and Actions to Address Risks and Opportunities (Management System Requirement) were highlighted as best practices of accredited Food Manufacturing Test laboratories.

Representing the in-flight catering services, Ms. Maria Angela Ann Baylon of Macroasia shared the company’s best practices from procurement to service. Loading and off-loading of catering requirements to and from the aircraft were likewise presented.

Jollibee Foods Corporation’s End-to-End Global Food Safety Strategy was presented by Ms. Nicole Laya Alunan. Ensuring food safety is imperative in Jollibee Foods Corporation (JFC). Hence, two of JFC’s Moonshot Goals are ZERO Product Recall and ZERO Food Safety Crisis due to system error. JFC’s Key Strategy to safeguard the JFC Food Chain is to install and end to end world class Food safety and Quality Management systems from farm source, manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, and to the stores. The One JFC End-to-End Global Food Safety Strategy covers the following; Set-up and strengthening of Food Safety Leadership in the organization, Assessment of risks scientifically and have science-based food safety governance, Formation of food safety databases and technology platforms, Establishing and implementation of Food Safety and Quality Management Systems in the entire organization and Development of food safety intelligence and foresight. Almost all in JFC are involved in the implementation of these strategies – Quality Management, Quality Assurance, Purchasing R&D, Manufacturing and Logistics, Restaurant Systems, Store Operations, Network Development Group, HR and Training, among others. Furthermore, tie-ups with government agencies and 3rd party certifying bodies are also being done. Lastly, development and implementation of some technology platforms have started to support food safety and quality systems and controls.

Prof. Joanne R. Bantang of the College of Home Economics, University of the Philippines Diliman presented selected cases of consumer behavior with respect to food safety and explained those behaviors based on the risk information and the factors that influence the behavior. The value of expert opinion backed with evidence-based data, policies informed by research, and consumer education remains to be the essential components in promoting food safety at the consumer level.

A panel discussion immediately followed and chaired by Ms. Mary Jude Icasiano of Wyeth. Panelist of Topic 6 made up the discussant for the topic, “What do you think is the consumers’ perception and acceptance to conformity to assure food safety practices?” The panelist perceived that consumers have good acceptance of the food safety practices by respective key players in the food supply chain. It was recognized that attempts to safeguard food safety should be further disseminated to facilitate better understanding and conformity.
Finally Topic 7 on “Food Safety Risk Analysis: Towards Improved Food Safety System” was presented by Dr. Ma. Concepcion Lizada, Professor Emeritus of University of the Philippines Diliman. Risk analysis is the process that provides the framework for ensuring that safety measures covering food from both domestic and international sources are science-based. This framework was developed and adopted in the Codex Alimentarius, which serves as the benchmark for food safety in the World Trade Organization. Food safety risk analysis is an iterative process consisting of three distinct, but interactive processes: risk assessment, risk management and risk communication. These processes were illustrated with specific food safety issues and the role that risk analysis plays in ensuring that responses to these issues are rational and defensible. The consuming public is, of course, the target beneficiary of evidence-based food safety measures. Consumers need guidance in deciding which food to consume, in light of an abundance of available information, particularly in social media. Even well-intentioned food safety-related statements have to be evaluated in relation to the consumer’s reaction, before dissemination. Risk communication provides guidance in food safety information dissemination, and is pervasive through the risk analysis process.

A technical session entitled “Food Allergen and Globalization: Where are we now?” was presented by Mr. Jeremiah John Zafra of Glenwood Technologies, Inc. To protect the health and safety of the Filipinos, the Food and Drug Administration of the Department of Health, proclaimed Administrative Order No. 2014-0030, mandating the inclusion of allergen information on labels of food products. Food manufacturers are now rapidly detecting and quantifying the presence of allergens by utilizing technologically-advanced food allergen test systems, from rapid lateral flow kits which can be used on-site, providing qualitative results in minutes to ELISA-based kits which provide accurate and quantitative results. These systems are ideal in validating and verifying a food manufacturer’s allergen control program. By testing for food allergens, food manufacturers’ responsibility to protect the health and safety of the consumers is achieved. Labelling requirements and government regulations will be complied, avoiding the consequences of an expensive and damaging product recall.

Interesting discussion was held over the question and answer session. Ms. Jo Ann Marie Salamat concluded the seminar by thanking the speakers for their excellent presentations, and the participants for their attendance at the seminar. This event ended successfully with excellent feedback from the participants.