FOOD FRAUD

“Do You Know What You Are Eating?”

Washington, DC – For Immediate Release – Intentional food adulteration is the subject of National C-FAR’s “Lunch~N~Learn” Hill Seminar on Monday, May 9, at noon in 1302 Longworth House Office Building. The featured speaker is John Spink, PhD, an Assistant Professor and Associate Director for the Anti-Counterfeit and Product Protection Program (A-CAPPP) at Michigan State University.

“Intentional contamination of the food supply can have a large public health impact,” says Spink. “There are many ‘best practices’ employed by the food industry to increase the likelihood that their food products are authentic, and that consumers are getting what they are paying for.”

“This presentation provides excellent perspectives on the value of federally funded food and agricultural research in producing the scientific outcomes and outreach needed to meet 21st century challenges and opportunities,” says Chuck Conner, President of the National Coalition for Food & Agricultural Research (National C-FAR).

The Food Safety Modernization Act includes 11 mentions of “intentional adulteration” which includes “economically motivated adulteration” such as melamine in pet food and the heparin contaminations. Dr. Spink will introduce the broader term of Food Fraud and how the public-private partnerships are aligning to shift from reactive enforcement and prosecution to the more efficient and effective prevention. Food fraud, often driven by economics, is more prevalent than the average consumer may think. While food fraud has occurred since the beginning of time, with the adulteration of high value foods such as tea and spices, a true understanding of the issues requires input from multiple disciplines and recognition of the field is just beginning. This presentation will discuss the chemistry of the crime and the motivations and enablers behind food fraud. While often done for economic gain (including tax evasion), intentional contamination of the food supply can have a large public health impact, as in the case of the contamination of wheat gluten with melamine, which sickened or killed hundreds of US pets. Before discussing risk mitigations it is necessary to recognize how food fraud occurs and the percent of foods impacted. That said, there are many “best practices” employed by the food industry to increase the likelihood that their food products are authentic, and that consumers are getting what they are paying for.

Dr. Spink directs Executive Education and research programs within A-CAPPP. He serves on the State of Michigan’s Agriculture and Food Protection Strategy Team and as a Participating Member/Delegate to the ISO/TC247 Fraud Control and Countermeasures. His presentation will be available at http://www.ncfar.org/Hill_Seminar_Series.asp. The seminar is open to the public and the media.

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NATIONAL C-FAR is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based, and customer-led coalition that brings food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and natural resource stakeholders together with the food and agriculture research and extension community, serving as a forum and a unified voice in support of sustaining and increasing public investment at the national level in food and agricultural research, extension, and education. National C-FAR’s Hill Seminar Series, now in its sixth year, regularly presents leading-edge researchers working to provide answers to pressing issues confronting the public and Congress. The Hill Seminar Series helps demonstrate the value of public investment in food and agricultural research—investment that returns 45 percent per year on average. Go to http://www.ncfar.org/Hill_Seminar_Series.asp for more information about the seminar series and past topics. Interviews with National C-FAR President Chuck Conner are available by request. For additional information, go to www.ncfar.org; or contact Tom Van Arsdall, Executive Director, at tom@vanarsdall.com or (703) 509-4746.