The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) is in their final year of a five-year cooperative agreement with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) aimed at expanding their scope of ISO 17025:2005 accreditation to advance a nationally integrated food safety system. As part of their cooperative agreement, ODA is required to develop and execute a sampling plan with the Ohio Division of Food Safety regulators that targets high-risk, manufactured food items.

ODA realizes the value of this routine sampling plan and accreditation as a whole. The laboratory was first accredited through the Pesticide Data Program in 2009, and their scope of accreditation has grown ever since. Accreditation helps the whole organization, from sample receiving to sample reporting. Beverly Byrum, director of laboratories at ODA, notes, “ISO 17025 is a common language for organizations and helps to build trust between FDA and laboratories.” This trust is important when the laboratory has a positive sample as it can lessen the time between detection and recall, which can prevent human illness.

In 2016, there was increased interest in testing frozen foods after recalls were issued elsewhere for frozen vegetables. In April 2016, laboratorians at ODA tested frozen vegetable products for *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella* and *E. coli*. Two frozen vegetable products, corn and peas, screened positive and confirmed for *L. monocytogenes*. ODA asked the Ohio Department of Health to perform whole genome sequencing (WGS) on the isolates, which revealed a linkage to nine human illness cases, including three deaths. The manufacturer ceased production at their implicated Washington state facility on April 22, 2016 and recalled products manufactured or processed in that facility from May 1, 2014 onward. In all, the manufacturer recalled over 350 consumer products sold under 42 separate brands; other companies recalled almost 100 additional products that contained these ingredients.
Identifying contaminated food products is not unusual for ODA laboratorians. In January 2016, ODA tested packaged salad as part of their routine sampling plan and isolated *L. monocytogenes* from a packaged salad manufactured in Springfield, OH. WGS revealed that the *L. monocytogenes* isolate was closely related genetically to isolates collected from 19 people in nine states, including one person from Michigan who died as a result of listeriosis.

Although these samples were collected from retailers in Ohio, the contaminated products were distributed nationally and internationally. The laboratorians at ODA understand that the US food system is expansive, and laboratories must work with other agencies to help protect the food supply. The ODA laboratory is co-located with the Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory, the Ohio Department of Health, Ohio EPA and their regulatory officials. This co-location allows for easy communication about potential outbreaks.

In Ohio, food safety is viewed from a “farm to fork” perspective, which acknowledges the interconnectedness of human health to animal and environmental health. ODA is part of a network that ensures the safety of animals and the environment so that finished food products are safe for human consumption. As Byrum states, “Our food system is integrated nationally, so the food safety system must be integrated.” Utilizing this approach enables ODA to protect the citizens of Ohio and others across the United States.