Preparing Food and Feed Laboratories for ISO 17025 Accreditation

The Associations Cooperative Agreement with FDA

Specific Aim #1: Resources, strategies and tools to support ISO/IEC 17025:2005 laboratory accreditation
Preparing Food and Feed Laboratories for ISO 17025 Accreditation

Through a cooperative agreement with FDA’s Office of Partnerships, APHL, AFDO and AAFCO are preparing food and feed regulatory testing laboratories seeking to achieve, maintain and enhance accreditation to the ISO/IEC 17025:2005 standard. Objectives of the work include:

- developing laboratory training programs around accreditation
- building a mentoring program for laboratories at various stages of accreditation
- reaching national consensus on equivalency
- enabling direct electronic sharing of analytical data
- improving communication among federal, state, and local testing laboratories and with their associated regulatory and public health programs
- building a framework for unified laboratory response to food/feed safety emergencies
- expanding a proficiency testing program for feed laboratories
- improving the rapid submission of isolates to the public health system
Specific Aim #1: Resources, strategies, and tools to support ISO/IEC 17025:2005 laboratory accreditation


Under this Specific Aim, APHL is leading efforts of the Food and Feed Testing Subcommittee to:

- Gather resources, such as SOPs and required accreditation documents, from member laboratories that have achieved some level of ISO/IEC 17025:2005 laboratory accreditation
- Utilize the knowledge and experience of Quality Assurance officers from accredited laboratories to create summaries of lessons learned, accreditation strategies and best practices
- Assess the current accreditation status of food and feed testing laboratories as well as the resources available to support laboratories that wish to achieve, maintain or enhance the scope of their accreditation
- Create a national work plan designed to move all laboratories further along the accreditation continuum, making the best use of available resources.
Member Involvement

- At least 12 different groups comprised of members from APHL, AAFCO and AFDO are working on nine specific aims of the Cooperative Agreement.
- Most groups meet via monthly conference calls and an annual face-to-face meeting.
- APHL hosts a Food and Feed Laboratory Accreditation Discussion Board, an online forum for laboratory professionals to exchange information related to the process of becoming accredited to the ISO 17025 standard.

Food and Feed Testing Subcommittee Accreditation Activities

- Subcommittee members compiled a set of tools and resources, based on ISO/IEC 17025:2005 categories, for inclusion in an on-line Resource Center that is freely accessible to Food and Feed laboratorians.
- Subcommittee members responded to a “Question of the week” regarding best practices or lessons they learned along their paths to accreditation, such as in-house checklists, databases created to track corrective actions, root cause analyses, etc.
- The subcommittee developed a small set of questions to assess the current accreditation status and intentions of governmental food and feed laboratories nationwide; responses were solicited via a listserv that reaches agriculture laboratory staff.
- The subcommittee identified the best platform for sharing documents and other information relevant to accreditation of food and feed laboratories to the ISO/IEC 17025:2005 standard.
- The subcommittee regularly contributes to the Food and Feed Laboratory Accreditation Discussion Board.
Charges of the Food and Feed Subcommittee

• In collaboration with AAFCO and AFDO, ensure that there is a home for non-federal, governmental Food and Feed Testing Laboratories, and work to define how APHIL can better meet the needs of these laboratories.

• Assist member laboratories in realizing the benefits of extramural funding opportunities.

• Contribute to efforts to achieve the Associations Cooperative Agreement deliverables related to laboratory accreditation. Many of these activities are a continuation of the Partnership for Food Protection workgroups.

• Identify training needs among the Food and Feed testing laboratory community, and work with the Accreditation Training Steering Committee led by APHIL to develop training.

• Enhance intrastate communication and collaboration among governmental laboratories (including Agricultural, State Chemist, Environmental, and Public Health Laboratories) that provide food and feed testing services.
Accomplishments

• Creation of web pages to support Food and Animal Feed Testing Laboratories seeking Accreditation, including a repository of ISO/IEC 17025:2005 resources such as best practices, standard procedures, and work plans. As of October 8, 2013, 172 documents under 14 ISO categories were posted.

• Hosting of a Food and Feed Laboratory Accreditation Discussion Board, an online forum for the exchange of information related to becoming accredited to the ISO/IEC 17025:2005 standard. Interested parties are encouraged to join the board by contacting Dare Akingbade at dare.akingbade@aphl.org.

• Development of a spreadsheet of currently available ISO/IEC 17025:2005 training.

• Delivery of three live webinars (two on Document Control Software, and one on Compliance Management Software) that demonstrated commercially available tools that may be of value to laboratories seeking accreditation to the ISO/IEC 17025:2005 standard.

Impact

• Enhanced and improved partnership among the three associations, their members and FDA, leading to more efficient and effective food protection efforts.

• Progress towards a unified food/feed laboratory system, which will ensure that test results from state and local laboratories are acceptable for regulatory and compliance purposes.

• Protection of public health through uniform laboratory practices via accreditation to the standards of ISO/IEC 17025:2005.

• Creation of an atmosphere for personnel from both ISO/IEC 17025 accredited and non-accredited laboratories to interact and learn from one another regarding best practices and solutions to daily challenges in achieving and maintaining accreditation.

This project was 100% funded with federal funds from a federal program of $750,000.