

FOOD SAFETY SPECIALTY SECTION



SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2026

Letter from “El Presidente”

Dear FS³ Colleagues and Friends,

Welcome to the August 2026 Food Safety Specialty Section (FS³) Newsletter! I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our members for your active participation, unwavering support, and dedication to the Specialty Section throughout this past year. It was wonderful to connect with so many of you at the Annual Meeting this past March in beautiful San Diego. The annual meeting was a tremendous success for our Specialty Section, highlighted by our engaging career mentoring event and the always-popular FS³ reception, which provided fantastic opportunities to mingle, expand our professional networks, and celebrate our shared achievements.

As we transition into the new SOT year, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our outgoing officers—especially our outgoing President, Kevin Boyd—for their outstanding dedication and leadership over the past year. I also want to warmly welcome our incoming officers who are joining the Executive Committee to help guide FS³ into the future. Our new leadership team has already hit the ground running; under the leadership of our incoming VP, Laura Markley, we recently completed the review process for 5 different high-quality session proposals submitted for endorsement to the organization. We are incredibly proud of the strong science and critical food safety topics our members continue to champion.

Looking ahead, we have an exciting lineup of events planned, including a special Spanish-language webinar scheduled for September 17, 2026 in collaboration with the Hispanic Organization of Toxicologists (HOT). The webinar, titled “Qué hay en tu empaque? — What’s in Your Packaging? FDA’s Approach to Food Contact Safety,” will feature FDA scientists Dr.

Jessica Camacho and Dr. Rafael Cerrato. They will provide a detailed overview of how the FDA evaluates the safety of food contact substances (FCS) through the food contact notification (FCN) process, while also introducing novel scientific approaches that are shaping the future of food packaging safety. This session will be an invaluable resource for our Spanish-speaking toxicologists, food chemists, and regulatory scientists. Please visit the [FS³ website](#) under the [Events](#) tab to learn more about our upcoming webinars.

To ensure we continue to meet the needs and interests of our diverse community, I invite all members to submit your ideas and suggestions for future webinars or networking events. Your input is vital to keeping our programming relevant, informative, and engaging for everyone. Additionally, please consider ways to become more involved with FS³ activities, such as contributing to the [Endowment Fund](#), running for an EC Officer position, organizing a webinar, being a speaker, or volunteering to assist in the award selection process. If you would like to become more involved, please contact any EC member with your ideas or questions. You can also follow FS³ on [LinkedIn](#) as an additional means of communication and involvement.

I am incredibly optimistic about the year ahead and confident that together we will continue to advance the science of food safety and elevate our specialty section. Thank you for your continued dedication, and I wish you all a wonderful and productive summer!

René Viñas, PhD, DABT, ERT
FS³ President, 2026-2027



President: René Viñas

Vice President: Laura Markley

Vice President-Elect:
Khatera Rahmani

Secretary/Treasurer: Christine Thiffault

Past President: Kevin Boyd

Councilor: Maresha Charles

Councilor: Vivian Lu

Councilor: Carmen Rubio-Armendáriz

Councilor: Matt Linman

Postdoctoral Representative: **OPEN**

Graduate Student Representative:
Wagner Tamagno

Junior Graduate Student Representative:
Destini Thornton

Incoming FS³ Officers

Vice President-Elect: Khatera Rahmani



Dr. Rahmani is a board-certified toxicologist with more than nine years of experience in the food industry. Currently, she is a Principal Toxicologist at Mars Wrigley, where she serves as a technical expert in chemical food safety supporting all Mars Wrigley products globally. In her role, Dr. Rahmani provides human health risk assessments and guidance on chemical risks associated with food products, packaging, and manufacturing processes.

Prior to Mars Wrigley, she was a Senior Food Safety and Regulatory Affairs Specialist at Conagra Brands, where she served as toxicologist supporting chemical food safety and regulatory compliance of food products and packaging. During her tenure at Conagra, she was an active member of IAFNS (formerly ISLI North America) and supported the development of the Metal Dietary Exposure Screening Tool.

Dr. Rahmani received her PhD in Toxicology from the University of Rochester School in 2017. In 2024, she co-authored a publication on carcinogenicity risk assessments within the US FDA GRAS notification process. She is recognized by her industry colleagues as setting an example for early career toxicologist and was invited to speak about her career at the 2022 Toxicology Forum

Summer meeting. Dr. Rahmani is a member of the Society of Toxicology, the International Association for Food Protection (IAFP), and the Toxicology Forum.

Junior Councilor: Carmen Rubio-Armendáriz

Dr. Rubio-Armendáriz is a Professor of Toxicology at Universidad de La Laguna, where she also serves as Director of the Master's degree in Food Safety, Quality, and Sustainability.

A significant portion of Dr. Rubio-Armendáriz's career has been dedicated to university governance and strategic leadership. From 2015 to 2019, she served as Vice-Rector for Internationalization at Universidad de La Laguna, where she developed and implemented numerous internationalization projects, cooperation agreements, and mentorship programs. She also served on the Executive Committee for CRUE's Internationalization and Cooperation sector and chaired the Internationalization Working Group, contributing to policy and best practices across Spanish universities.

Dr. Rubio-Armendáriz's expertise in risk assessment has been recognized by national public health bodies. From 2017 to 2021, she served on the Scientific Committee for the Spanish Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition, where she coordinated several scientific reports related to food risk assessment. She also has served as an evaluator for international organizations including the Organization of Ibero-American States and the Ibero-American University Postgraduate Association. As a researcher, she is a principal investigator within the Interuniversity Group of Environmental Toxicology and Food and Drug Safety, has participated in 15 research projects, directed or co-directed 18 doctoral theses, holds four consecutive six-year research excellence accreditations, and has published more than 180 scientific articles.



Her leadership within SOT includes service in the Hispanic Organization of Toxicologists Special Interest Group, where she has served as Councilor, Vice President-Elect, Vice President, President, and Past President. She also has been involved in the Women in Toxicology Special Interest Group, the Risk Assessment Specialty Section, and the Food Safety Specialty Section.

Junior Councilor: Matt Linman



Dr. Matt Linman is a board-certified toxicologist and PhD chemist specializing in food and beverage ingredient safety and global regulatory strategy. As a Managing Consultant at Trinity Consultants, he advises leading companies on toxicology, risk assessment, and compliance for food and beverage ingredients, color additives, specialty chemicals, consumer goods, and pharmaceuticals.

Dr. Linman has more than 15 years of experience spanning scientific consulting, trade association leadership, and biotechnology research and development. At the Flavor and Extract Manufacturers Association, he supported the FEMA GRAS program, prepared toxicological monographs, and contributed to international evaluations of flavoring substances through JECFA submissions.

Dr. Linman earned his BA in Chemistry from The College of Wooster and PhD in Analytical Chemistry from the University of California, Riverside, where his research focused on biointerfaces and materials for surface plasmon resonance-based biosensing.

Junior Graduate Student Representative: Destini Thornton

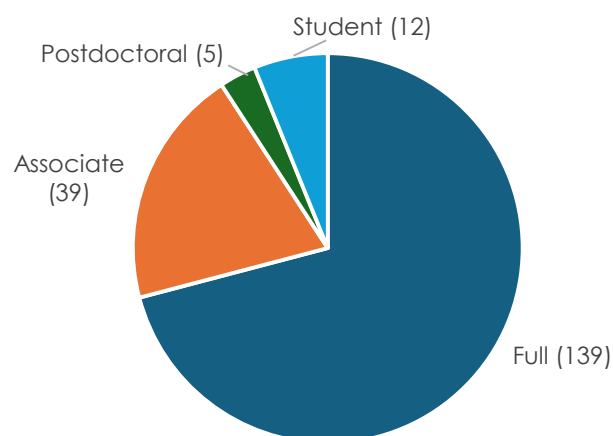
Destini Thornton is currently a PhD candidate in the Drug Discovery and Development department in the Harrison College of Pharmacy of Auburn University. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Chemistry from Columbus State University. Her research focuses on two distinct botanical-drug interactions and their implications for human health. One project evaluates the pharmacodynamic mechanism underlying cardiovascular toxicity associated with Açai-containing botanical dietary supplements when co-administered with anticancer therapies. This work utilizes a variety of *in vitro* approaches, including cellular injury assays, fluorescence imaging, and liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS) to characterize mechanisms of toxicity and confirm injury biomarkers. In a complementary line of research, Destini studies the pharmacokinetic interactions between kratom and HIV antiretroviral therapies. Using quantitative PCR and LC-MS-based activity assays, she evaluates botanical-induced modulation of cytochrome P450 enzymes and its potential impact on drug metabolism and therapeutic outcomes.

Beyond her academic research, Destini served as a 2025 R&D Investigative Toxicology Intern at Takeda Pharmaceuticals in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she gained industry experience in translational toxicology and drug development. She has been an active member of the Society of Toxicology (SOT) since 2024 and presented her research on botanical-drug interactions at the 2026 SOT Annual Meeting.

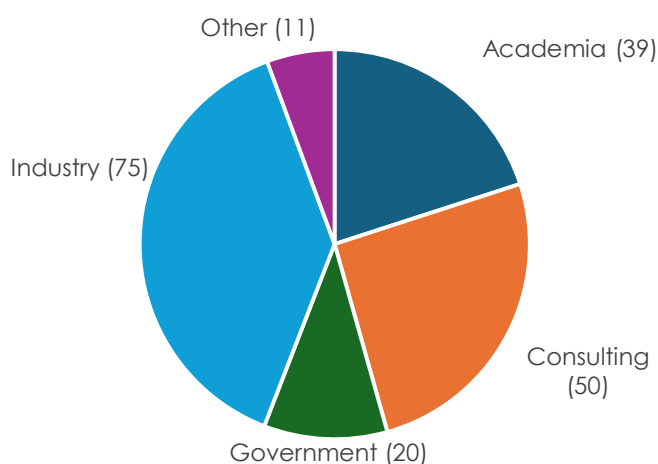


FS³ Membership and Treasury Update

FS³ Membership Type



FS³ Membership by Sector



The current balance is \$42,562 after paying expenses of \$9,568 incurred during the 2026 Annual SOT meeting (meeting rooms, awards plaques, etc.) and including sponsor donations of \$3,500. The net assets for the Frank C. Lu Endowment Fund hold a current balance of \$67,305 as of June 2026.



2026 Sponsorship Update

Thank you to our Company Sponsors thus far in 2026!

Cargill, Inc.
The Coca-Cola Company
Exponent
PepsiCo

[There is still time to become a sponsor and help drive FS³'s mission forward!](#)



Announcements

Upcoming Webinars

September 17, 2026 11:00 AM to 12:00 Noon (US EDT, UTC - 4) ¿Qué hay en tu empaque? — What's in Your Packaging? FDA's Approach to Food Contact Safety. [Register here!](#)

Recent FS³ Membership Publication

Principles of Food Safety and Toxicological Risk Assessment: Refining Hazards, Risk Management Communication, and Common Misconceptions ([Access here](#))

New approach methodologies in food safety: A survey and commentary on industry adoption, barriers, and the path to regulatory adoption ([Access here](#))

Postdoctoral Student Representative Needed

Are you interested in this role, or do you know someone who may be? Email **René Viñas** (revinas.tox@gmail.com) or contact any FS³ officer.

Say the Quiet Part Out Loud

What topic are we missing? What conversation is overdue? Share your webinar ideas.

[Follow FS³ on LinkedIn!](#)

Past FS³ Events

Cultivated Chocolate: The Sweet Side of Cellular Agriculture

Webinar, [Recording Link Here](#)

Speakers: Steven Lang (California Cultured) and Deepti Kulkarni (Covington & Burlington LLC)

The webinar on the emerging field of cultivated chocolate attracted 148 registrants and 75 attendees from around the world. Expert speakers Steven Lang and Deepti Kulkarni explored the groundbreaking science behind producing sustainable, high-quality chocolate through cellular agriculture, highlighting the innovative techniques driving this emerging technology. They also examined the critical safety considerations associated with this novel production process and provided valuable insights into the rapidly evolving domestic and international regulatory landscape for cultivated foods, equipping attendees with a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges shaping the future of chocolate.

Expanded Decision Tree: US FDA's Food Chemical Toxicity Screening Tool

Webinar, [Recording Link Here](#)

Speakers: Szabina Stice (US FDA)

We had 400 registrants and 278 attendees from around the world, and Dr. Stice delivered a truly impressive session on the FDA's newly developed Expanded Decision Tree (EDT) tool, a chemical structure-based classification system that sorts chemicals into one of six classes of chronic oral toxic potential, each associated with a threshold of toxicological concern (TTC) level. Dr. Stice presented for 45 minutes and then expertly handled 30 minutes of live Q&A, with more than 30 thoughtful questions submitted by participants—an indication of the high level of engagement generated.

Upcoming FS³ Events

¿Qué hay en tu empaque? — What's in Your Packaging? FDA's Approach to Food Contact Safety

Upcoming Webinar, September 17, 2026 (11 AM – 12 PM ET) [Register Here](#)

Speakers: Jessica Camacho (US FDA), Rafael Cerrato (US FDA)

Substances used in food packaging, processing equipment, and other food-contact applications can migrate into food at low levels. In the United States, food contact substances (FCS) that are food additives must be authorized by the US FDA prior to marketing — typically through a food contact notification (FCN). FCN submissions undergo interdisciplinary review encompassing chemistry, toxicology, environmental science, and, where applicable, microbiology. This webinar, presented in Spanish, will provide a detailed overview from a toxicology reviewer and a review chemist of how US FDA scientists evaluate the safety of food contact substances and will introduce emerging issues and novel scientific approaches that are shaping the future of food contact safety.

SOT 2026 Annual Meeting Report – San Diego, California

FS³ Endorsed Sessions for 2026

1 Submission (1 for Primary Endorsement): 1 Information Session

Understanding the GRAS Loophole: History, Science, and Legal Challenges

Information Session, 1 hr 30 mins

Recent discussions have centered on the potential for closing the generally recognized as safe (GRAS) loophole for food ingredient approval and strengthening US FDA oversight of food ingredients, leading to mandatory notification of GRAS conclusions to FDA. The Human and Health Services Secretary has directed the US FDA to explore eliminating the self-GRAS pathway. This change could lead to premarket approval for food additives, potentially impacting the availability of some currently used ingredients and delaying the entry of future ingredients. It will create more work for the US FDA and increase costs for food manufacturers. Is rule-making to enforce US FDA-notified GRAS as mandatory possible? Potential legal hurdles and challenges will be illustrated. The history of GRAS, its current status, and related controversies will be discussed. Self-GRAS pros include streamlined approval, faster innovations, focus on established safety, and the role of qualified experts, while self-GRAS cons potentially include weakened oversight, lack of resources, potential for harm, lack of transparency, conflict of interest, and public health concern. These points must be considered and discussed before changing the current GRAS regulation. In recent months, the food regulatory landscape has been intensely scrutinized, with particular focus on the mechanisms and policies governing food ingredient approvals. This scrutiny has been sparked by growing public and scientific concern over the adequacy of current oversight practices.

Editorial update: On August 11, 2026, FDA published a proposed rule that would require manufacturers to notify FDA when concluding that a substance added to human or animal food is GRAS. The proposal would replace the current voluntary notification framework with mandatory notification but would not establish a conventional premarket approval requirement. Public comments are due December 9, 2026.



2026 FS³ Awards Recipients

Frank C. Lu Graduate Student Award

Wagner Tamagno

(Purdue University)

Trace amount of lead exposure during critical development period can lead to alteration of neurotransmitter systems later in life and predispose organism to long-term neurological dysfunction.

Elsevier Postdoctoral Award

Umamaheswari Sathisaran

(Purdue University)

Early life exposure to PFAS disrupts mitochondria bioenergetics and impairs dopaminergic development in the zebra fish model.

Burdock Group Student Scientific Award

Xue Wu

(University of Florida)

Using computational toxicology (PBPK and PopPK) to develop a model to predict the appropriate withdrawal intervals period to ensure safe levels of veterinary drugs residue contributing to the safety of our food supply.

FS³ Mentoring Event

FS³ partnered with the Career Advancement, Mentoring, and Networking (CAMAN) Committee for the new Annual Meeting event, NetworX Night, held on Monday, March 23, 2026, at the San Diego Marriott Marquis. This trainee-focused networking event was designed to help graduate students and postdoctoral fellows build professional connections across disciplines and employment sectors.

The event drew strong interest, with all 240 trainee spots filling quickly. Sixty table hosts were selected from recommendations provided by the partnering Component Groups, representing a broad range of scientific backgrounds and career sectors. Trainees participated in three rounds of small-group networking discussions before transitioning into open networking.

The evening began with a brief introduction from the CAMAN Committee highlighting its mission, the participating Component Groups, and networking best practices. During each networking round, hosts facilitated introductions, shared insights into their career paths and current roles, and answered trainees' questions about career development and professional opportunities.

The session was well attended and sparked vibrant discussions throughout the evening. FS³ extends a heartfelt thank you to all of the hosts, organizers, and trainees who contributed to the success of this exciting new event.

FS³ Reception

At this year's reception, FS³ members came together for a lively conversation, networking, and refreshments. The energy continued into the business meeting, where attendees received updates on the year's finances, membership, communications, and the FS³ Awards

Ceremony. We extend our sincere thanks to Past President Kevin Boyd and the Executive Committee for leading such an engaging and well-organized session. We can't wait to see everyone in San Antonio, Texas!

