

Improper Food Handling Leads to Foodborne Illnesses

- More than 250 known diseases are transmitted through food.
- Foodborne diseases cause approximately 48 million illnesses, 128,000 hospitalizations, and 3,000 deaths each year in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Food can become contaminated at any stage, from the farm to the dinner table, including in food-service operations in restaurants, nursing homes, day care centers, and hospitals.
- Most outbreaks of foodborne illness are a direct result of improper food-handling practices, such as improper holding time and temperature, poor personal hygiene, and contaminated equipment.

AgriLife Extension's Response

- The primary benefit of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's Food Protection Management Program is to reduce incidents of foodborne illness by improving the food-safety practices.
- The program's accredited, certified Food Handlers' Course trains participants on safety principles related to food preparation and storage, personal hygiene, maintenance of a sanitary facility, and pest management.
- In 2017, more than 560 food-service managers and 8,288 food-service employees attended the program. Many of these participants were in underserved rural areas of the state, where public health oversight is limited.
- As a result of AgriLife Extension's "train-the-trainer" approach, course participants in turn provided food handlers' training to their employees.



Economic Impacts

- The Food Protection Management Program directly supports approximately 8,848 food-service and food-preparation jobs, with an estimated annual salary base of \$214 million (estimate based on average annual wages for food-service and food-preparation professionals).
- The primary benefit of the program is a more educated workforce in the food service industry, with the goal of using safe food handling practices to reduce the number of foodborne illness incidents.