

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 Food Safety Education Program encompasses the Certified Food Managers course, the Food Handlers course, as well as other food safety education resources.
- The Certified Food Managers course helps prepare individuals for the National ANSI Certified Food Manager exam. The Food Handlers course is accredited by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Both courses train participants on safety principles related to food preparation and storage, personal hygiene, maintenance of a sanitary facility, and pest management.
- The goal of the Food Safety Education program is to increase the adoption of safe food handling practices at the retail and



consumer levels to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

- In 2021, more than 560 food-service employees completed the Certified Food Managers course and 6,030 food-service employees completed the Food Handlers course. 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 can provide food safety training to their employees.

Economic Impacts

- The Food Safety Education Program directly supports approximately 6,600 food-service and food-preparation jobs, with an estimated annual salary base of \$187 million (estimate based on average annual wages for food-service and food-preparation professionals).
- The primary benefit of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's Food Safety Education Program is to reduce incidents of foodborne illness by improving food-safety practices.