

From The Past President

John F. Kennedy once said, “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

The general theme for our fall 2015 AIMFES meeting is centered on various changes throughout the food industry. The FDA will be soon implementing the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and there will be many companies affected, as will most regulatory agencies. We are providing a workshop that will provide guidance in complying with the new regulations. The workshop will be led by one of the most respected leaders in the food industry. In addition, environmental testing will be a major area of concern and we will be having presentations on how to make these programs solid and value-added.

The tasks of change lying ahead of us may be somewhat daunting and I’m sure anxiety levels have greatly increased in getting prepared for FSMA. Personally I am grateful for the help and direction on exactly what is expected and look forward to this program.

While we are all aware of FSMA timetables and are working to be prepared, sometimes life does not give us the benefit of doing so. In April 2015, the Crest Foods warehouse in Ashton was struck by a tornado that upended our business for a while. By the grace of God, no one was hurt but extensive damage was done. What was most impressive was the way in which things transpired after the disaster. Actions by both Crest Foods and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) led to a relatively rapid turnaround time and somewhat smooth recovery.

By luck, coincidence, or fate, Crest had conducted a mock disaster preparedness drill shortly before the event happened for real, specifically using a warehouse disaster with similar issues as the scenario. Roles, tasks, and responsibilities were fresh in many peoples mind and things happened like clockwork when they were put in motion. We will have the opportunity to listen to the industry and regulatory perspective on how to be prepared for an unexpected disaster that can happen at any time.

Another change affecting all of us is the safety of our products and our families. We will have a presentation from the FBI on what measures they are carrying out to ensure that we are as secure as we can be.

You are facing decisions of change every day. Options are really somewhat limited.

You can deny that change is upon us and choose to do little or nothing. As JFK mentioned, you will likely miss the future and will be passed up. If you're not moving forward, you're moving backwards.

You can approach change begrudgingly. It will more than likely require as much time and energy (if not more) to resist change than to actually work towards it. Why not make it worth your time and energy?

You can embrace change. Look for it as a challenge that will make not only your company stronger but yourself as well. Apply change to all facets of your life. Be a leader of change.

Charles Darwin once said that it is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change.

I have one last quote. Jim Rohn wrote, "You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of."

Are you ready? Ready or not, here it comes! Let's work together to usher in the transformation. Thank you.

Dan Brown

AIMFES Past President (2015)