

IRAC 2024 Annual Report

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Introduction

The Interagency Risk Assessment Consortium (IRAC) is a collaborative network of federal agencies with responsibilities and interests in the conduct and use of food safety risk assessments. It was established in response to Presidential Executive Order 13100, in 1998, to enhance cross-agency coordination of food-safety risk assessment activities and to provide support for the then emerging field of quantitative microbiological risk assessment and application in guiding federal food-safety policies. In 2011, in response to a recommendation from the President’s Food Safety Working Group, the IRAC was re-chartered¹ to further enhance coordination and information-sharing among federal agencies.

The Consortium aims to improve risk assessment research, enhance the development and use of risk assessment tools, and serve as a forum for communication about risk assessment and related research issues. IRAC accomplishes many of its goals through the work of its Policy Council and Technical Committee, both of which include representatives from 23 Federal agencies and offices that constitute the consortium’s current membership.

Over the past two decades, IRAC has explored a range of issues related to the conduct and use of federal food safety (microbial and chemical) risk assessments. Research topics addressed by IRAC include data quality, peer review, food safety and nutrition, susceptible sub-populations, nanotechnology, microbiomes, genomics, dietary exposure and more recently, rigor and reproducibility in risk assessment. IRAC also has continued to explore evolving approaches to assessing food safety risks and application of risk assessment in decision-making. In addition, IRAC member agencies make their risk assessment tools

IRAC Signatory Agencies:

- **Department of Agriculture (USDA)**
 - ❖ Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
 - ❖ Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
 - ❖ Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
 - ❖ Economic Research Service (ERS)
 - ❖ Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)
 - ❖ Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
 - ❖ National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)
 - ❖ National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
 - ❖ Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS)
 - ❖ Office of Pest Management Policy (OPP)
 - ❖ Office of Risk Assessment and Cost Benefit Analysis (ORACBA)
 - ❖ U.S. Codex Office (USCO)
- **Department of Commerce (DOC)**
 - ❖ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- **Department of Defense (DOD)**
 - ❖ Defense Health Agency (DHA)
- **Department of Energy (DOE)**
 - ❖ Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL)
- **Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)**
 - ❖ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID)
 - National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
 - ❖ Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
 - Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER)
 - Human Foods Program (HFP)
 - Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM)
 - National Center for Toxicological Research (NCTR)

¹ 2011 IRAC Charter available at: <http://foodrisk.org/irac/charter>

more easily available on the Consortium's host website:

Foodrisk.org

IRAC 2024 Accomplishments

IRAC successfully advanced the three overarching goal identified in the 2024 Annual Plan:

- *Enhanced Governance and Operation of the IRAC*
- *Strengthen Outreach and Engagement of New and Existing Federal Agencies*
- *Facilitate Information Exchange and Sharing Tools, Data, and Models*

Selected achievements are detailed below.

Enhanced Governance and Operation of the IRAC. The IRAC Policy Council held 2 meetings in 2024 (June and December). These meetings enhance collaboration by developing shared expectations through an annual plan. In addition, in 2024, IRAC's work strengthened cross-agency understanding of the federal requirements for ensuring the quality of federal food safety risk assessments and underlying analyses.

Strengthen Outreach and Engagement of Federal Partners. In 2024, to facilitate outreach and engagement with federal partners, IRAC set meeting themes for the four Technical Committee meetings held in March, June, September and December 2024 (under quarterly meetings). At the Technical Committee meetings, presentations were given by member agency representatives as outlined below and related to the established themes (under quarterly meetings). The meeting minutes, updates, and presentations were posted on the IRAC website. IRAC also completed updates to the website to reflect any changes in the representatives.

Facilitate Interagency Coordination and Information-Sharing. To continue enhanced interagency coordination and information sharing, IRAC exchanged information through quarterly meetings and agency presentations.

Quarterly Meetings

The IRAC Technical Committee met on March 27, June 26, September 25, and December 6th, 2024. Meeting themes for presentation topics and discussion included Disease Outcome Modeling, Use of risk-based food safety "standards" across the US Government, Advancing Data Analytics, and One Health. Members gave agency updates, and invited guests gave presentations (described below). All presentations can be accessed on the IRAC tab on foodrisk.org.

The Policy Council met during separate meetings on June 26, 2024 and December 6, 2024 to discuss mid-year and yearly accomplishments and future plans, as well as potential workgroup proposals.

Presentations at IRAC Technical Committee Meetings in 2024

- Sandra Hoffmann, United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service presented on “Cost of Foodborne Illness in the United States”.
- Francisco Zagmutt, Jane Pouzou and Mason Munro-Ehrlich affiliated with EpiX Analytics presented on “Whole genome sequencing in risk assessment”.
- Sophia Johler, LMU Munich presented on “Risk Negotiation - Integrated risk analysis for One Health”.
- Joanna Zablotzky Kufel and Drew Posny, USDA FSIS, presented an “Overview of the FSIS Salmonella in Poultry Risk Assessments and Final Product Standards”.
- Mark Powell presented on “Trends in Reported Foodborne Illness in the United States Revisited.”

New member representatives joined IRAC including those from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (CDC/NCEZID); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (CDC/NIOSH); Food and Drug Administration, Center for Veterinary Medicine (FDA/CVM); U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service (USDA/ARS); U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service (USDA/ERS); U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA/FSIS); U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Risk Assessment and Cost Benefit Analysis (USDA/OCE/ORACBA); and the U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Health Agency, Veterinary Service Branch. December 2024 concludes the 2-year term of the outgoing IRAC Chair, Sofia Santillana Farakos, and welcomes the incoming IRAC Technical Committee Chair, Jacqueline Heilman, and the new representative for the Food and Drug Administration, Human Foods Program, Kara Dean.

Workgroups

In 2024, IRAC created the Model Credibility Work Group with representatives from FDA’s Center for Biologics and Evaluation, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, National Center for Toxicological Research, and Center for Veterinary Medicine and USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service, Economic Research Service and Agricultural Research Service, convened to discuss federal requirements and options to ensure quality and credibility of federal risk assessments and related analyses. The key value of this work was to enhance IRAC member agency awareness of the federal requirements and options for ensuring the quality and credibility of food safety risk assessments and supporting analyses. In January 2024, the IRAC, in collaboration with the U.S Department of Agriculture office of the Chief Scientist, co-hosted the Office of Management and Budget’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs met to discuss federal requirements under the Information Quality Act. Subsequently “IRAC Memorandum 2024-01: Federal Requirements and Approaches for Ensuring the Credibility of Risk Assessment Models”, issued June 26, 2024, was developed to



provide a streamlined resource for IRAC member agencies of the federal requirements and options for ensuring the credibility of risk assessment models.