

President's Report

One year ago, at the 2013 ASTA Annual Meeting in Palm Beach, ASTA's new mission statement and strategic plan were unveiled to drive ASTA forward during the next three years.

That strategic plan is built on four pillars:

Strong association: Strengthen resources to effectively represent the spice industry

Advocacy: Monitor and shape U.S. policy issues affecting the spice industry

Food safety: Provide resources to support industry efforts ensuring clean, safe spice and utilize global alliances to reach the entire supply chain

Education: Ensure clean, safe spice throughout the supply chain by providing education.

The underlying theme for our strategic plan is SAFE which encompasses these four pillars and highlights ASTA's commitment to food safety.

I am pleased to provide an overview of the many steps that were taken in the past year to advance our strategic plan. You will find greater detail on many of our accomplishments in the committee reports presented by ASTA's committee chairs.

STRONG ASSOCIATION

ASTA took a number of steps to ensure our association remains strong and viable. ASTA's committees, which are responsible for implementation of the bulk of the strategic plan, were realigned to match with the strategic goals and a new Education Committee was established. Board Liaisons were appointed for each committee to ensure strong communication and an orientation Webinar was conducted for committee chairs and board liaisons to review the strategic plan and ensure roles and responsibilities are well established to allow the committees and Board to work together to achieve our goals.

The Membership Committee was given additional responsibility for developing recruitment and retention strategies to ensure a strong membership base and you will see in the Membership Report that the number of Active members has grown impressively. The Board of Directors reviewed ASTA's financial policies and committed to allocating resources from reserves to fund key activities during the year, notably ASTA's response to FDA's Draft Risk Profile on Pathogens and Filth in Spices. We have also

committed to development of a new Web site which should go live just prior to the 2014 Annual Meeting.

ADVOCACY

This has been an area of great focus in the past year with significant activity related to the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and publication of the Draft Risk Profile. The Government Relations and Advocacy Committee has overseen development of ongoing Webinars as key FSMA draft rules were published to ensure ASTA members learn what steps they need to be taking to comply with the new law. The Committee also worked to provide input on ASTA's comments on the draft rules which we hope will help shape the final rules in a way to make them practical for the spice industry to implement.

The Draft Risk Profile was published at the end of October. Virtually every media outlet in the US reported on the story giving the spice industry our 15 minutes of fame. ASTA responded quickly and effectively with our own press release, website posting, and media interviews. ASTA was also successful in obtaining a 60 day extension on the comment period, and the Board of Directors committed significant resources to outside consultants to provide a scientific evaluation of the risk profile and to draft our comments. We believe our submission to FDA appropriately addresses our concerns as to the validity of the Draft Risk Profile, and provides suggested solutions to address the Agency's concerns.

As detailed in other reports, ASTA is an active participant in a range of coalitions and took on a leadership role with the International Organization of Spice Trade Associations (IOSTA) and its activities related to Codex this year.

FOOD SAFETY

ASTA's Technical Committee was renamed the Food Safety Committee and has shifted its focus to areas related to food safety, including the revision of the *Cleanliness Specifications* and continued enhancements to ASTA's Check Sample Program focused on the new micro options. ASTA continued its commitment to food safety by ensuring the spice industry has the resources it needs to provide clean, safe spice to consumers. Validation of microbial reduction processes will become an important part of FSMA when it is enacted and ASTA published a white paper this year on process validation to ensure members understand steps they need to be taking. We also worked with the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) North America to jointly fund research to develop surrogates for process validation and establish protocols. This work is currently underway at Virginia Tech, Texas A & M and Iowa State University with results expected to be published in about 18 months

EDUCATION

The ASTA Board of Directors appointed a new Education Committee this year to ensure better coordination of all ASTA's educational programs with input from the Food Safety Committee and Government Relations and Advocacy Committee. Ongoing programs such as the FSMA Webinar series continued to draw great interest and the new committee is now focused on identifying and developing

additional resources to support ASTA's *Clean, Safe Spices* guidance to ensure industry has all the tools required to implement these best practices. The importance of the *Clean, Safe Spices* guidance was underscored during the World Spice Congress in February 2014 in Kochi, India. FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg lauded ASTA's efforts to provide education on industry best practices and ASTA's participation in FDA sponsored educational events to provide details on the guidance. ASTA is able to track the number of times the guidance document is downloaded from our Web site and we are now over 1,000 downloads, with approximately 10 people each week accessing this important spice industry tool.

Overall, we are well positioned to continue to move forward to achieve the goals set forth in our strategic plan, with strong volunteer leaders on our Board of Directors and committees. I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their professional and enthusiastic participation at the Board and committee meetings.

The ASTA Board of Directors has set the course, but the execution of our Strategic Plan would not be possible without the input and efforts from our volunteer committees and their respective chairs, as well as our permanent staff. And so I take this opportunity to thank all the Volunteers and Committee Chairs: Larry Lichter (Education), Doug Williams (Food Safety), Kerry Goad (Membership), Whitney Sayia (Government relations and Advocacy), and Greg Sommerville (Annual Meeting).

Thank you as well to our Executive Director Cheryl Deem, Kelley Poole, John Hallagan, Margarita Passero and Meegan Kavanaugh for working in front and behind the scenes to execute our plan, and to Verto Solutions for providing a professional and welcoming environment to the ASTA team as we move toward our second complete year with our new management company.

Respectfully submitted,

Gaspare Colletti
President, American Spice Trade Association