

## Executive Director Report

Economically motivated adulteration (EMA) continues to be an issue of concern for ASTA and something that all ASTA members should be addressing in their companies. The entire spice industry can expect to come under increased scrutiny for EMA in the coming years.

As mentioned in the Food Safety Committee report, ASTA published new guidance, *Identification and Prevention of Adulteration*, which is the primary publication available in a new section in the Food Safety area of the ASTA website focused on adulteration and food fraud.

ASTA hosted a webinar featuring Professor Christopher Elliott of Queens University in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during which he detailed a worldwide study he has conducted on adulteration in oregano. His study found that 25% of the oregano he looked at worldwide was adulterated, with the highest rates of adulteration in South Africa and Australia. In his examination of retail samples in the U.S., he found seven of 28 samples were adulterated with sumac, olive and myrtle leaves and the amount of adulterant in the oregano ranged from 22% to 78%.

Prof. Elliott is looking to publish his study on oregano adulteration in 2017 in an international scientific journal. In addition, he announced plans during the webinar to devote additional resources for research into the oregano supply chain to identify where the adulteration is occurring as well as to look into potential adulteration in other spices and he named paprika, garlic and sage as examples. Prof. Elliott also indicated that he is looking to partner with U.S. research organizations and/or businesses to pursue research specifically into EMA in spices in the U.S.

Prof. Elliott is widely recognized in the area of food fraud after leading the U.K. government investigation into the 2013 horsemeat scandal in that country and his ongoing efforts to uncover and highlight EMA in the spice industry will draw worldwide media attention likely to raise concerns among both consumers and spice industry customers. The ASTA Board has discussed the potential for media attention and has approved a statement to be provided if and when inquiries are received. This statement clearly notes that ASTA has zero tolerance for adulteration, even when the result is not a safety issue.

I draw this to your attention because everyone in the spice industry is impacted by those who resort to adulteration and it must be a priority for everyone to ensure appropriate steps are taken to weed out those practices.

I would like to finish by acknowledging the many people who make ASTA's accomplishments possible. All associations, regardless of their size, rely on a combination of paid staff and unpaid staff to achieve their strategic goals. The unpaid staff is made up of the many volunteers who participate on ASTA committees and the Board of Directors. These volunteers made it possible for ASTA to complete the work detailed in this 2016-2017 Annual Report. Their expertise, experience and industry perspective are essential for ASTA's success. The accomplishments of this past year are particularly noteworthy when one considers that our volunteers' first priority is always their paying job and not their work for ASTA.

The ASTA staff also deserves recognition for the work they did over the past year. Margarita Passero and Meegan Kavanaugh continue in their long-time roles, with Margarita overseeing ASTA operations and Meegan managing membership functions. We have had some other staffing changes this year and are pleased to welcome Jessica Skerritt as our new Director of Government Relations. Jessica joined ASTA in late February and will have the opportunity to meet many of you at the Annual Meeting in Austin.

And finally, we say goodbye this month to ASTA's Director of Meetings, Kelly Marks. Kelly and I have worked together for ASTA for much of the past 14 years. Kelly's husband has been transferred to England and they are off on a grand adventure with their three children.

Cheryl Deem  
Executive Director