

For over 30 years FDA has collaborated with state and local regulatory partners to present the FDA Annual Northeast Retail Food Protection Seminar. Each year, representatives from federal and state regulatory agencies responsible for ensuring food safety at retail food establishments throughout New England and New York meet with industry representatives, academia and consumer groups. The Seminar is hosted by the Northeast states in the following order: Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Massachusetts and Vermont. The 2018 seminar will be held in South Portland Maine on September 19th to the 21st.

FDA's responsibility to assist state and local regulatory agencies is derived from numerous federal laws and regulations, including the Food Safety Modernization Act, the Public Health Service Act and the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. The annual seminar is one important method employed by the FDA to help meet this obligation. The seminar provides an opportunity for federal, state, and local stakeholders to meet face-to-face to discuss current topics and issues impacting retail food protection. It also serves as a venue to exchange information, problem solve, and present new ideas and developments. Past seminar topics have included the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards, Food Code interpretations and updates. FDA considers the information delivered to be so important that attendance is mandatory for all FDA Standardized Retail Food Safety Inspection Officers to maintain certification.

The 2018 Seminar promises to be informative and interesting, and attendance is highly encouraged. This year FDA is pleased to work with the Yankee Conference of Environmental Health Associations as a co-sponsor of the event. The agenda includes presentations on FDA funding opportunities for retail regulatory programs, new strategies for pest prevention, FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition update, food salvage, kelp harvesting and distribution, clean meat and farms of the future, and the utilization of virtual reality in the food industry.

For more information about the 2018 Seminar contact, please Tom Nerney, FDA Retail Food Specialist at thomas.nerney@fda.hhs.gov or Lisa Silva, Program Manager from the Maine Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at lisa.silva@maine.gov.