

INTERNATIONAL COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE PROJECT

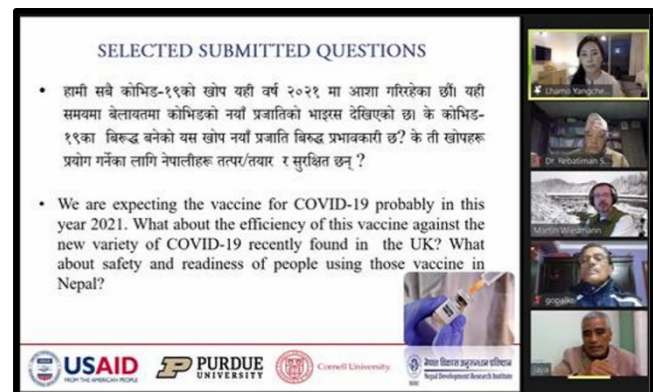
CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING THE FOOD INDUSTRY IN NEPAL

PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS

The International COVID-19 Rapid Response Project, funded by the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Safety, is designed to mitigate food safety and food security challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic in several low- and middle-income countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Nepal, and Senegal). Our goal is to provide the food industry in these countries with the tools and resources to implement technical, organizational, and personnel measures to reduce person-to-person coronavirus transmission in all parts of the food system. In the long term, the project's scalable approach and network of experts can be mobilized to address future pandemics or natural disasters, which threaten the food systems in these and other countries.

APPROACH

We are using a comprehensive approach to deliver science-based messaging on COVID-19 and guidance on mitigation strategies. Our team has created and mentored a community of international food systems COVID-19 subject matter experts. We have launched a centralized online hub for reliable, web-based resources that are customized and translated as appropriate for each target country. In addition, we host live in-country "Food Industry Virtual Office Hours," which allow food system affiliates (e.g., farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers) to access a panel of experts and ask questions in real time.



Nepal task force members answering questions during Food Industry Virtual Office Hours.

TAKING ACTION

We have supported task force members as they develop resources and lead Food Industry Virtual Office Hours in their countries. Using the Nepal program as an example, project outputs include:

- Development and curation of a dedicated [COVID-19 webpage](#) with tailored resources for Nepal
- Creation of an FAQ Video in Nepali: [How do we know for sure that COVID-19 is not spread through food?](#)
- Delivery of two sessions of Food Industry COVID-19 Virtual Office Hours in Nepal

MEASURING SUCCESS AND MAKING AN IMPACT IN NEPAL

Virtual Office Hours Session I Metrics:

- Thirty-five participants attended, including the hosting Nepal task force member, five invited panelists (field experts in Nepal), and three mentors from Cornell University.
- Representatives from the food industry, academia, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the general public were in attendance.
- Attendees asked a total of 29 questions.

Virtual Office Hours Preliminary Survey Results:

Twenty-five participants completed a pre-survey before attending the first session of virtual office hours; 17 participants completed the post-survey afterwards. Fifteen questions designed to assess attendees’ understanding of coronavirus biology, transmission, symptoms, prevention strategies, and the associated risks of certain activities were included in both surveys to assess the effectiveness of the session.

- Participants demonstrated a gain in knowledge, based on the number of questions answered correctly in the post-survey compared to the pre-survey.
- The questionnaire identified the following key knowledge gaps that were subsequently addressed in the second session of virtual office hours:
 - The risk of contracting the coronavirus is high during carpooling even if all passengers wear face coverings. In contrast, food packaging and contaminated surfaces carry little risk of spreading the coronavirus.
 - The coronavirus is not a direct food safety risk because it is not transmitted through food. However, a healthy workforce is needed to maintain the routine food safety processes and policies that prevent foodborne illnesses.
 - Food on a production line is not considered a vehicle for coronavirus transmission even if a worker on the production line develops COVID-19; the food does not have to be discarded or treated in any way.

