





## Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA) Data Exchange (DX)

### Coffee Talk with






**Richard Beckstrand, MPH**

**Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Manager  
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF)**








The Partnership for Food Protection (PFP) Information Technology Workgroup (IT WG) recently had an opportunity to catch-up with Richard Beckstrand, for a Coffee Talk about the ORA DX.

	<p><b>Hello Richard! Tell us about yourself and your involvement with the ORA DX Program.</b></p>
	<p>I am the Manufactured Food Program Manager at UDAF, which encompasses many different areas of responsibilities. I oversee the wholesale inspection team and conduct most of the training and audit of manufactured food inspectors. I also manage the FDA inspection contract and act as the standards coordinator for the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards. As a natural extension of my role with the Regulatory Services Division at UDAF, I became involved with the ORA DX program. Having worked with our FDA counterparts for many years and developed a</p>



	<p>great relationship in Utah and the Denver Division office, it was an easy decision to enter into a formal partnership agreement.</p>
	<p><b>In your role as a Manufactured Food Program Manager for Utah Department of Agriculture and Food as well as a DX participant, what do you think are some of the advantages of participating in the ORA DX?</b></p>
	<p>One of the big advantages that comes to mind is the ability to easily share inspectional data back and forth with FDA. Anyone who has worked in eSAF (FDA system) for any length of time will agree that the ORA DX will make life easier for all of us. There is a lot of duplication of work in the way we share information currently. Utah is not as far along as some of the other states in meeting System-to-System requirements. We developed Food Safety Management System in-house and have a bit more work to do than a state that uses a system like USAFoodSafety; however, we are confident we will be able to meet the requirements for the DX in the very near future.</p>
	<p><b>What was your experience with signing agreements for the DX and what advice do you have for other states yet to sign agreements?</b></p>
	<p>We had a few internal discussions to make sure our team members were on the same page. We had to get our legal department to sign off, but overall, the process was very easy. The FDA has done most of the heavy lifting so far. They developed a strategic plan that outlines how the work will proceed, but they have also been very flexible. We were concerned about a couple of the deliverable dates and found that it was easy to have those dates pushed back so that we were confident to get that piece completed on time. I would encourage any state considering a partnership agreement and the DX to sign up! System-to-System data sharing really is the way forward and will save time and resources by eliminating a lot of the duplicative efforts, along with all the other benefits of the ORA Partners Portal (ORAPP).</p>
	<p><b>What benefits do you hope to gain by using Firm Search, Firm History, Produce Safety, and Inventory Reconciliation capabilities in ORAPP, and in the future System-to-System integration?</b></p>



	<p>One of the big benefits we hope to gain is harmonization of our establishment inventory with FDA. When both agencies can plan their work using the same current and accurate inventory listing, we will benefit in multiple ways. It will make planning the work much easier and eliminate a lot of wasted time and effort that inevitably happens when the Official Establishment Inventory is not synced up and consistent on both sides. State-to-State Firm Search is another benefit we are very interested in. Many of the food processors in Utah also have facilities in other states. It will be valuable for us to be able to capture information about firms in other states with all the food that now crosses state lines.</p>
	<p><b>Looking ahead, are there particular capabilities or enhancements you would like to see within ORA DX?</b></p>
	<p>Of course, we want to be able to share our inspectional data with FDA, but we also want to have FDA share data with us. This needs to be a two-way street with information flowing freely back and forth. Presently, we waste too much time in eSAF, on phone calls, and with emails, trying to exchange needed information. I know this can be frustrating for FDA as well. I feel ORA DX should save both agencies a lot of time and effort that could be used more productively.</p>
	<p><b>What is your advice for states considering participating in ORA DX?</b></p>
	<p>My advice would be to reach out to some of the states already participating in ORA DX. Some of the states are very willing to share their experience.</p>
	<p><b>What DX issues matter most for your state and how can the ORA DX continue to work together with Utah to ensure successful data sharing?</b></p>
	<p>I think the DX issue that matters the most is where our state can get the most bang for the buck. We know there will be some expense in making our system compatible with FDA's system. When we look at the big picture, we see this as a great opportunity to enhance our ability to regulate Utah's food industry and do an even better job of protecting public health in the state. As more states get on board with ORA DX, we will get closer to the goal of a fully Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS) nationwide.</p>



The PFP IT WG would like to thank Richard Beckstrand for his support of the ORA DX program and the PFP. We look forward to continued collaboration with Richard and expanding the ORA DX program.

For questions or information about the ORA DX program or the PFP IT WG, contact us at [appsdesk@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:appsdesk@fda.hhs.gov).



<https://www.pfp-ifss.org>