IIT INSTITUTE FOR FOOD SAFETY AND HEALTH LAUNCH EVENT ATTRACTS MORE THAN 100 VISITORS

(BEDFORD PARK, IL) April 18, 2011 – The Institute for Food Safety and Health (IFSH), Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), celebrated its official opening with keynote commentary from IIT, state and federal dignitaries and a ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 11. More than 100 guests attended the event held in the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) pilot plant from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The inaugural launch event marked the National Center for Food Safety and Technology's (NCFST) transition to a principal operating center within the newly formed IFSH organizational structure, which also includes three others: the Center for Processing Innovation, Center for Nutrition Research, and Center for Specialty Programs.

In his welcoming remarks to the event audience of institute members, research partners and guests from the food industry, government and the IIT community, IFSH Vice President and Director Robert E. Brackett, Ph.D., noted that the reclassification of the long-time food safety, food defense and nutrition research center to institute status, approved by the IIT Executive Committee on December 8, 2010, better reflects the organization’s expanded scope of research, expertise and new state-of-the-art facilities available to its food industry members and government partners.

"The Institute for Food Safety and Health is a product of the remarkable success and expansion of the National Center for Food Safety and Technology," said Brackett. "As the food industry has advanced technologically, the supply chain has become more globally integrated, consumer attitudes about nutrition have evolved, and government has worked to modernize food safety regulation. This institute has responded in kind. In recent years, our operations and facilities have expanded to include research in human clinical nutrition..."
and health. We've started a virology program and have built an FDA-commissioned and certified Biosafety Level 3 laboratory and pilot plant."

These enhancements, said Brackett, have positioned IFSH as key player in partnering with stakeholders to contribute science-based solutions to assure positive food safety and nutrition outcomes, especially as new requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) come into force.

IIT President John Anderson noted the importance of the newly established institute achieving the university's mission. "IFSH is the natural progression of the 20 years of success of NCFST, a partnership between IIT, the US Food and Drug Administration, and the food industry. The university's vision is to be internationally recognized in distinctive areas of education and research using as its platform the global city of Chicago, driven by professional and technology oriented focus, and based on a culture of innovation and excellence. IFSH is a key component of our vision."

In addition to Brackett and Anderson, the opening event also featured commentary by dignitaries from industry, state and federal government, and IIT, including FDA Associate Commissioner for Food Protection Jeff Farrar, US Representative Dan Lipinski, Illinois Director of Public Health Damon T. Arnold, Executive Vice President of Research, Development and Quality for Kraft Foods Jean E. Spence, and IIT Vice President & Motorola Chair Professor in Chemical Engineering Darsh Wasan.

U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-Ill.), who represents Illinois' Third Congressional District where the institute is located, noted that IFSH's elevation to institute status reflects the growth and important contributions the scientific organization is making to the food safety and health of the nation. "Today the food supply is more globalized than ever and ensuring the food we eat is safe is more complex and challenging," said Lipinski. "The reason I supported the proactive approach to food safety embodied in the Food Safety Modernization Act, which Congress passed in December, is also the reason that IFSH exists and the reason why its growth and expansion are cause for celebration."

Lipinski added, "[IFSH] really is one-of-a-kind. It provides the sound science that food producers and regulators need to keep our food safe. Its research and expertise are important to enabling our rapid response when food related public health issues arise. The work that IFSH does may happen behind the scenes, but it is really on the front lines of a critical battle that is important to all of us.

"The institute's work, however, is not just about preventing illness," he continued. "It is also about helping producers and consumers determine which foods and products can really make a positive contribution to health. As a diabetic, I know how important that is."
Kraft Foods Executive Vice President of Research, Development and Quality **Jean Spence**, noting that the company was a founding industry member of NCFST in 1988, reiterated the importance of ensuring food safety through science-based research. "Making delicious food that’s safe to eat is paramount to our success," said Spence. "It’s the core of our heritage and part of our culture. We’re strengthened by the work that’s done at the institute, and we look forward to continuing to partner with IFSH, a place where academia, industry and government can come together to solve problems that help ensure that consumers continue to feel good about the food they serve to their family and friends."

Collaborative partnerships in food science research are also key to successful implementation of FSMA, FDA Associate Commissioner for Food Protection **Jeff Farrar** told the launch event audience. FDA’s 23-year public-private partnership with NCFST has been a successful one, and its transition to a principal operating center under the newly formed institute makes this partnership even more significant.

"Partnerships in FDA have been and remain very important in order for the agency to leverage the resources, the knowledge and the expertise that exists to fulfill our public health mandate," said Farrar. "With the passage of the FSMA, these partnerships take on a whole new meaning. Over the next 18 months, FDA must implement approximately 50 regulations, guidance documents and summary papers, which is quite a significant challenge. We recognize that the only way to achieve the requirements of the new law is through partnerships such as the one we have with IFSH."

He added that collaborative research partnerships are especially important because of the role that science-based information plays at FDA, USDA and other regulatory agencies and as reflected in the new legislation. "Implementing this law is much more than developing new regulations and issuing guidance documents," Farrar said. "It is about ensuring that we have the infrastructure and expertise to support the science and prevention-based food safety systems required in the law. The focus [at IFSH] on preventive controls will fit well with the work ahead of us in implementing this new law. The work in validating these controls that's already being done by the institute will help industry ensure that their new operating plans will meet the requirements of FSMA."

The program also featured a ceremonial signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between IFSH and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS), in which the organizations will work together to develop and enhance cooperative farm-to-fork research initiatives over the next five years. USDA-ARS Midwest Area Director **Laurence Chandler** served as the agency’s signatory at the event.
The Institute for Food Safety and Health (IFSH) is a one-of-a-kind applied food research institute that provides stakeholders in government, industry and academia the opportunity to develop and exchange knowledge and expertise to address key issues in food safety, food defense and nutrition. Powered by a singular combination of in-depth food science expertise and state-of-the-art research capabilities, IFSH's collaborative research model helps stakeholders define and design innovative and practical approaches to solving real-world challenges in food industry operations. Located at the Illinois Institute of Technology's (IIT) Moffett Campus in Bedford Park, IL, IFSH is also home to the FDA CFSAN Division of Food Processing Science and Technology. For more, visit www.iit.edu/ifsh

PHOTO CAPTIONS

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Caption: Guest speakers at the IFSH Inaugural Opening and Tour, held April 11, 2011, observe the official ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the launch of the Institute for Food Safety and Health at Illinois Institute of Technology. From left: Darsh Wasan, IIT; Damon Arnold, Illinois Department of Health; Laurence Chandler, USDA-ARS; Robert Brackett, IFSH; John Anderson, IIT; Jean Spence, Kraft Foods; U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski, and Jeff Farrar, US FDA.

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Caption: IFSH Vice President and Director Robert Brackett welcomes 100 industry, government and academic stakeholders in food safety, food defense and nutrition who attended the April 11 IFSH official opening, held in the institute's Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) pilot plant.

Note: A selection of additional speaker photos is available upon request. Please contact Julie Larson Bricher, jbricher@iit.edu, for details or view our website photo gallery.