Innovation Through Collaboration
IFSH | INSTITUTE FOR FOOD SAFETY AND HEALTH

THE 7TH IFSH HIGH-THROUGHPUT SEQUENCING (HTS) SYMPOSIUM
INFORMATION PACKET AND AGENDA

The 7th
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HIGH-THROUGHPUT SEQUENCING (HTS) SYMPOSIUM

New Developments and Technology in Its Use in Food Safety Systems

Perspectives from Governmental Agencies, Biotech Companies, Academia, Food Industry

Chicago Southwest Marriott Hotel at Burr Ridge
1200 BURR RIDGE PARKWAY,
BURR RIDGE, ILLINOIS, USA, 60527
May 19, 2026, Day 1: 1:00 PM – 6:45 PM CDT
May 20, 2026, Day 2**:** 8:30 AM – 4:20 PM CDT

INSTITUTE FOR FOOD SAFETY AND HEALTH - IILINOIS TECH
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DATES/TIMES:

May 19, 2026, Day 1**:** 1:00 PM – 6:45 PM CDT
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FORMAT:

In-person

Place:

Chicago Southwest Marriott Hotel at Burr Ridge
1200 BURR RIDGE PARKWAY,
BURR RIDGE, ILLINOIS, USA, 60527

SYNOPSIS:

In this symposium, we will discuss the new developments in high-throughput sequencing (HTS) technology, including its extensive and limited use by the governmental agencies and industry, respectively, the new instruments, new applications, the analytical tools and the latest in scientific research. We will also address the challenges including legal considerations, benefits and future of HTS in food safety systems in the U.S. and beyond.

BACKGROUND:

New technologies have a great impact on our lives, and their numbers and impacts are only growing. High-throughput or next-generation Sequencing (HTS/NGS) is one of these technologies, and since its invention, it has been reshaping and enriching various fields, including food safety and human health. New sequencers are becoming faster, cheaper, more portable, and powerful, producing higher throughput, better quality, and longer and larger number of reads. With an increase in computational power, HTS has generated its own 'big data' and analytical tools. However, the use and implementation of HTS have been both challenging and rewarding. HTS has shown great potential to tackle issues like pathogenicity, virulence, toxicity, and antimicrobial resistance (AMR), helping enhance current food safety measures. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA FSIS) have recognized the power of HTS technology, and they have implemented and used it in their organizations for over a decade. It is also being used by some food companies. This HTS symposium provides a unique venue for experts from the agencies, food industry, biotechnology enterprises, analytical/consulting companies and academia to gather and discuss the news and views on the latest developments in this technology in relation to food safety.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

The attendees will have the opportunity to meet with and hear from prominent scientists affiliated with FDA, CDC, USDA FSIS, academia, food industry, consulting, groups, analytical companies, and biotech enterprises. The topics include the news and views on HTS and food safety, the latest HTS inventions, innovations, instruments, products and research, their benefits, opportunities, obstacles and challenges, and implementation of HTS by the agencies and the industry.

Two panels of experts, one from the federal agencies, and the other from the industry and academia, will discuss HTS technology, its importance, power, impacts and values; the real and perceived obstacles of its use and implementation by the industry; and its possible future directions. The attendees will have the opportunity to network with this outstanding group of scientists and pose their questions to the panels and participate in their discussions.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND:

This symposium is designed to meet the needs of food safety professionals from industry, academia and government in food processing, food safety, quality assurance, regulatory functions, public health administration, and those involved in developing or using pathogen detection equipment and methods. Students in food science and food safety are strongly encouraged to attend this symposium.

Register Now

REGISTRATION FEES:

Early Bird:

Ends February 28, 2026, at 12:00 AM

$450

General:

$550

Special Categories Fees

Students	$50
Governmental Agencies	$400
Invited Speakers	$200

Sponsorship Levels

Gold	$1,500
Silver	$2,500
Tech	$3,500

Register Now!

Hotel's special group rate for HTS symposium
Chicago Marriott Southwest at Burr Ridge for $199 USD per night

Book your group rate for IFSH HTS Symposium
You will find the information for your online reservation link below. If you have questions or need help with the link, please do not hesitate to ask. We appreciate your participation and look forward to a successful event. Book Your Room Now!

Start Date: December 5, 2025
Last Day to Book: April 27, 2026

Limited ticket fee scholarships available. Contact Behzad Imanian at bimanian@iit.edu for complete details.

Cancellation Policy: *No refunds will be given after registration payment has been completed. However, if IFSH cancels the event, all attendees will receive a full refund. Transferring registration to another person is allowable. Please contact Tina Gettis at thenderson2@illinoistech.edu with any further questions or requests.*

SPONSORSHIPS

Take advantage of the sponsorship opportunities available at the 7th IFSH High-Throughput Sequencing (HTS) Symposium. Contact Behzad Imanian, bimanian@iit.edu for complete details.

DAY 1 SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

All Times in U.S. Central Daylight Time (CDT)

May 19, 2026, Day 1		
START	**END**	**SESSION**
1:00 PM	1:10 PM	***Welcome!*** Brian Schaneberg, Executive Director Institute for Food Safety and Health, Illinois Tech
1:10 PM	1:30 PM	***Artificial Intelligence: Promises and Perils*** Behzad Imanian, Research Assistant Professor, FDSN Dept. Leader of IFSH HTS Initiative, Illinois Tech
FDA, CDC, USDA FSIS		
1:30 PM	1:50 PM	***An Added Value for WGS: Precision Food Safety and the Role of WGS in Exploring Novel Mitigation Steps for Pathogen Control*** Eric Brown, Division of food safety genomics, Director, Office of applied microbiology and technology, Food and Drug Administration
1:50 PM	2:10 PM	***Coordination of Approaches to Characterize Foodborne Illness Bacteria: The Multiagency Genomics in Food and Feed Safety Work Group (GenFS)*** Heather Carleton, Chief, Enteric Diseases Laboratory Branch DFWED/NCEZID/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2:10 PM	2:30 PM	***Economic Impact of WGS*** Marc Allard, Human Foods Program (HFP), Office of Scientific Coordination and Computational Sciences (OSCCS), GenomeTrakr and Computational Science Staff (GTCSS)
2:30 PM	2:45 PM	**BREAK**
2:45 PM	3:05 PM	***Targeted metagenomics approaches for characterizing Salmonella directly from stool*** Amanda Jo Williams-Newkirk, Co-lead, Culture Independent and Metagenomic Subtyping, Enteric Diseases Laboratory Branch, DFWED/NCEZID/CDC
3:05 PM	3:25 PM	***FSIS Laboratory Innovations*** William Shaw, Executive Associate for Laboratory Services
3:25 PM	3:45 PM	***Whole Genome Sequencing: The Compliance Perspective*** Leslie Hintz, Compliance Officer, CFSAN, Food and Drug Administration
3:45 PM	4:05 PM	***From Concept to Practice: WGS Integration into FDA's LFFM Testing Programs*** Ruth Timme, Acting Director, GenomeTrakr & Computational Science Staff
4:05 PM	4:15 PM	**BREAK**

DAY 1 SYMPOSIUM AGENDA (CONT.)

All Times in U.S. Central Daylight Time (CDT)

May 19,2026, Day 1		
PANEL OF EXPERTS (GOVERNMENT AGENCIES) DISCUSSION & QA SESSION Perspectives from Governmental Agencies		
4:15 PM	5:30 PM	**FDA:** Marc Allard, Eric Brown, Errol Strain, Leslie Hintz, Ruth Timme **CDC:** Heather Carleton, Amanda Jo Williams **USDA/FSIS:** William Shaw
Reception		
5:30 PM	6:45 PM	**Reception**
ADJOURN		

DAY 2 SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

All Times in U.S. Central Daylight Time (CDT)

May 20, 2026, Day 2		
START	**END**	**SESSION**
8:30 AM	8:40 AM	***Agenda & Logistics*** Behzad Imanian, Research Assistant Professor, FDSN Dept. Leader of IFSH HTS Initiative, Illinois Tech
FDA and IIT		
8:40 AM	9:00 AM	***IOWarp: Intelligent Data Management to Accelerate Food Safety Genomic Research*** Anthony Kougkas, Research Assistant Professor, Computer Science Dept. IIT
9:00 AM	9:20 AM	***Exploring the Salmonella Mobilome for Source Attribution and Clustering*** Errol Strain, Senior Science Advisor for Bioinformatics at FDA's Human Foods Program
9:20 AM	9:40 AM	***From Colony to Clarity: Accelerated Salmonella and Escherichia coli ID Using Oxford Nanopore Sequencing*** Maria Hoffmann, Research Microbiologist, Food and Drug Administration
9:40 AM	10:00 AM	***The Research at High Throughput Sequencing Initiative (HTSI)*** Renmao Tian, Research Scientist, IFSH HTS Initiative, Illinois Tech
10:00 AM	10:15 AM	***BREAK***
IFSH HTS Symposium Rapid Talks		
10:15 AM	10:25 AM	***Evaluating the Microbiomes of Enoki Mushrooms*** Joelle Salazar, Research Microbiologist, FDA
10:25 AM	10:35 AM	***Cronobacter sakazakii Biofilms: Influence of Powdered Infant Formula Microbiomes and Water Activity*** Megan Fay, Research Microbiologist, FDA

DAY 2 SYMPOSIUM AGENDA (CONT.)

All Times in U.S. Central Daylight Time (CDT)

May 20, 2026, Day 2		
START	**END**	**SESSION**
10:35 AM	10:45 AM	***Influence of Enrichment Method on the Relative Abundance of Salmonella enterica and Native Microbiota on Peaches*** Bashayer Khouja, Research Microbiologist, FDA
10:45 AM	10:55 AM	***Enrichment Dynamics of Cronobacter sakazakii and Native Microbiota in Powdered Infant Formula*** Emily Smith, Research Microbiologist, FDA Jodie Ulaszek, Scientist, Microbiology, IIT
10:55 AM	11:05 AM	***Food-safe antimicrobial coating for reusable packaging to alleviate specialty crop export barriers to the European Union*** Catherine Wong, Senior Research Associate, IIT
Biotechnology & Analytical/Consulting Companies		
11:05 AM	11:25 AM	***Illumina Innovations: Introducing the MiSeq i100 Series*** Claire White, Executive Territory Account Manager
11:25 AM	11:45 AM	***Transforming food safety with a clearer picture of microbial DNA*** Aaron Pomerantz, Director, Global Segment Marketing – Non-Human and Applied Markets, Oxford Nanopore
11:45 AM	12:05 PM	***Changing the Game with PacBio HiFi long-read Sequencing*** Turner Duncan, Genomic Sequencing Specialist, Pac Bio
12:05 PM	1:05 PM	***Lunch***
Food Industry		
1:05 AM	1:25 AM	***Industry Perspective on HTS Application to Environmental Monitoring*** Matthew Henderson, Director of Food Safety, Land O'Frost
1:25 PM	1:45 PM	***WGS: Our "Ultimate" Tool*** Genevieve Sullivan, *Senior Specialist, Microbiology, Mars*
1:45 PM	2:05 PM	***Benchmarking Whole Genome Sequencing Pipelines*** Balasubramanian Ganesan, *Principal Scientist, Mars Global Food Safety Center,* Mars
The Law and Food Safety		
2:05 PM	2:55 PM	***Foodborne Illness Litigation and Q/A*** Bill Marler, Marler Clark Food Safety Law Firm
2:55 PM	3:00 AM	***BREAK***
PANEL OF EXPERTS (INDUSTRY) DISCUSSION & QA SESSION HTS/WGS, AI, Their Benefits, Challenges and Future		
3:00 PM	4:15 PM	**Land 'O Frost:** Matt Henderson **Nestlé:** Daniel Smieszek **Mars:** Bala Ganesan

4:15 PM	4:20 PM	***Closing Remarks*** Behzad Imanian, Research Assistant Professor, FDSN Dept. Leader of IFSH HTS Initiative, Illinois Tech