

Meeting Notes: IAFPNA Career Talk Event

Date: February 25, 2025

Time: 12:00 – 1:00 PM CST

Organized by: Indian Association for Food Protection in North America (IAFPNA)

OPENING REMARKS

- **Moderator:** Vijay Krishna (President, IAFPNA; Lead, Quality & Regulatory Affairs, Glanbia)
- **Organizer:** Kavita Shripati Patil (Vice President, IAFPNA)
- **Format:**
 - Panel discussion (~40 - 45 minutes)
 - Audience Q&A (~10- 20 minutes)
 - Emphasis on engagement, interaction, and professional development.

Panelists and Their Roles

1. **Dr. Manreet Bhullar** – Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist, Kansas State University
2. **Dr. Deepti Salvi** – Associate Professor & Associate Department Head, North Carolina State University
3. **Dr. Manan Sharma** – Research Microbiologist & Lead Scientist, USDAARS
4. **Pranav Vashisht** – Continuous Improvement Specialist, Idaho Milk Products

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Career Roadmaps & Growth Strategies

- **Dr. Manreet Bhullar** shared his journey from India to academia in the U.S.
 - Emphasized the importance of mentorship, goal setting, and a backup plan.
 - Encouraged students to pursue leadership training and seek funding opportunities.
- **Dr. Manan Sharma** spoke about his transition into government research.
 - Initially focused on meat science, later transitioned to produce safety.
 - Highlighted the broad applicability of food science skills across different sectors.

2. Career Transitions & Job Mobility

- **Pranav Vashisht** discussed transitioning between roles in the dairy industry.
 - Stressed the importance of team environment, managerial support, and continuous learning.
 - International students should consider immigration support when choosing employers.

3. Networking & Communication

- **Dr. Deepti Salvi** emphasized active networking and professional branding.
 - Recommended LinkedIn engagement, mentorship programs, and leadership roles in professional organizations.
 - Suggested maintaining connections even during career gaps.
- **Dr. Manan Sharma** reinforced networking as a practical tool, not just a formality.
 - The food safety field is small—building relationships helps long-term career development.

4. Professional Branding & Visibility

- **Pranav Vashisht** highlighted volunteering and leadership roles in professional societies like IAFP, IFT, and ADS.
- **Dr. Manreet Bhullar** stressed the importance of high impact research and sharing achievements via LinkedIn.

5. Work Life Balance

- **Dr. Deepti Salvi & Dr. Manreet Bhullar** shared strategies:
 - Set realistic goals and prioritize tasks.
 - Use calendars to balance professional and personal commitments.
 - Avoid overcommitting and maintain efficiency in work hours.

AUDIENCE Q&A HIGHLIGHTS

- **Academia vs. Industry:**
 - Students should explore both through internships and networking before making a decision.
 - Experience in one sector can enhance opportunities in the other.
- **Postdoc Opportunities for Senior Researchers from India:**
 - No strict age limit for postdocs in the U.S.
 - Funding sources include universities, industry partnerships, and Indian government fellowships.

- **USDA & FDA Career Opportunities:**
 - Student internships and postdocs are common entry points.
 - Federal jobs require U.S. citizenship or green card status for permanent positions.
- **Impact of U.S. Funding & Immigration Policies on Career Prospects:**
 - No immediate impact, but long-term funding constraints may arise.
 - Industry and nonprofit funding remain viable alternatives.

CLOSING REMARKS

- **Vijay Krishna** encouraged continued engagement with IAFPNA and professional organizations.
- Upcoming **IAFPNA Immigration Session** in April to address visa and job market challenges for international professionals.
- **In-Person IAFPNA Meeting** planned for the **IAFP Annual Conference in Cleveland**—agenda to be shared soon.

ACTION ITEMS & FOLLOW-UPS

Attendees encouraged to:

- Connect with panelists via LinkedIn.
- Join professional groups like IAFP, IFT, and student mentorship programs.
- Attend the IAFPNA Immigration Session in April.
- Engage in leadership and volunteering opportunities.

Meeting Adjourned.