

Mich. State Joins Food Industry to Start Safety Center

EAST LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan State University is joining food and drink makers and sellers to create the Center for Research on Ingredient Safety, it was announced Monday.

The center "will serve as a reliable and unbiased source for information, research, training and analysis on the safe use of chemical ingredients in consumer packaged goods including foods, beverages, cosmetics and household consumer products," the East Lansing school and the Grocery Manufacturers Association said in a statement announcing the center's creation.

The University of Michigan's Risk Science Center in its School of Public Health is a partner in the project.

The ingredients safety center will look at the safety of foods, drinks, cosmetics and household consumer products, the announcement said.

"Ensuring the safety of our products - and maintaining the confidence of consumers - is the single most important goal of our industry," said Leon Bruner, the grocery industry group's chief scientist.

The center at Michigan State University "will serve as a reliable and unbiased source for information, research, training and analysis on the safe use of chemical ingredients in consumer packaged goods," the school said in a statement.

The public should be skeptical about the results of research coming out of an industry funded and sponsored institution, said Michael Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

"To be an independent center sponsored by the industry is an oxymoron," Jacobson told The Associated Press. "If they come out for the safety of any chemical ... they'll have no credibility."

Michigan State said the ingredient safety center is modeled on similar centers of expertise at other academic institutions that focus on allergen and microbiological safety. It will include an endowed chair in ingredient safety.

Among the ingredients safety center's goals are expanding basic and applied research on the safety and toxicology of ingredients in food, packaging, cosmetics and household care products. It also will seek to develop and validate testing methods and strategies for evaluating ingredient safety.

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