

Frank Yiannas, FDA's Deputy Commissioner for Food Policy and Response, came to the government in late 2018 from the corporate worlds of Disney and Walmart.

His official biography says Yiannas is “the principal advisor to the FDA Commissioner in the development and execution of policies related to food safety, including implementation of the landmark FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).”

But all summer, Yiannas has had to go about his work with the knowledge that his boss, Acting FDA Commissioner Janet Woodcock, is not going to be in that job much longer.

Woodcock, 72, has held senior leadership positions since she joined the Agency 35 years ago. As the Director of [the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research](#) (CDER) from 1994 to 2004 and from 2007–2021, Woodcock made history and enemies. The permanent FDA Commissioner will be somebody else, according to the White House.

The U.S. Senate must confirm anyone appointed as FDA Commissioner before they can take office. More so than food safety, new drug evaluations and medical devices are often FDA Commissioners' main areas of expertise.

Woodcock has gone on record with her promise not to neglect food safety at a time when FDA has so many priorities,

“My answer to you, and I tell you this very sincerely, is not on my watch,” she told a food safety audience earlier this year.

The job Yiannas has at FDA is to advise whoever is commissioner on “a broad spectrum of food safety priorities, such as outbreak response, traceback investigations, product recall activities, and supply chain innovation across FDA-regulated products.”

“Mr. Yiannas is, in effect, the agency's chief ambassador to reduce food safety risks and achieve high rates of compliance with FDA food safety standards, working to develop innovative collaborations with external partners and stakeholders and effective relationships with government and industry leaders, as well as consumer groups,” according to his official FDA biography.

Yiannas earned a bachelor's degree in microbiology from the University of Central Florida and a Master's of Public Health degree from South Florida. He's called a “renowned food safety expert and author.”

For insight into what he's been doing this summer, **Food Safety News** has turned to the public calendar issued by FDA. It lists significant meetings held by designated FDA policymakers with people outside the executive branch of government.

One observation about the FDA public calendar is that it often fails to name specific participants in these meetings but discloses their affiliation. Finally, Yiannas meetings — like many others — were almost entirely “virtual.”

Here’s what Yiannas has been up to this summer:

June 8 – Spoke at Hyperledger Global Forum 2021 “industry leaders in finance, banking, supply chains, manufacturing and technology” on “New Era of Smarter Food Safety Update.”

June 9 – Spoke with Senate Appropriations and Agriculture Sub-Committee staff about FY 2022 Food Safety Budget Initiatives and Priorities.

June 9 – Addressed Food Safety Summit South Africa on the Future of Food Safety before an audience of food safety and quality managers from South Africa and other countries.

June 10 – Spoke to Highfield’s Virtual Food Safety Conference on the “New Era of Smarter Food Safety” before an audience of “international food safety experts and organizations.”

June 10 – Participated in a Safe Food Coalition Meeting with “several executives from across the consumer associations and scientific and technical staff from industry.”

June 15 – Gave a Food Policy and Response Update to Annual Educational Conference of the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO), including government, consumer and manufacturing professionals.

June 16 – Participant in Alliance for a Stronger FDA Food Safety and Animal Webinar with others from industry, the public, researchers and patient advocates.

June 22 – Panelist on Blockchain Technology and Applications with Food for a group of food and technology executives

July 6 – Participant in Safe Food Coalition Meeting with executive, consumers, and scientific and technical interests.

July 14 – Emerging Applications on Blockchain Technology discussion with industry, academia, nonprofits, and government.

July 19 – Provided Food Safety Update for the International Association for Food Protection’s annual meeting.

July 22 – Discussed food safety issues of mutual interest with Rep. Jimmy Panetta, D-CA

July 27 – Gave New Era of Smarter Food Safety Update to Conference of Indian Industry’s Food Safety Quality and Regulatory Digital Summit for India’s food industry, government, CODEX and global development bodies, academia, and consumer groups.

July 28 – Food safety issues discussed with Alan Edwards, Erin Moffet, Matthew Curran, Matthew Van Names, Shelby Scarp from Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumers Services.

July 30 – Discussed sprout safety issues with International Sprout Growers Association and people from across the sprout industry.

Aug. 16 – Conference for Food Protection Biennial Meeting: Food Safety Success with industry, academia, and government participants.

Aug. 20 – Annual Joint Food Safety Partnership Meeting with Mexico with Mexico’s National Service for Agrifood Health, Safety and Quality and several members of the Federal Commission for Protection Against Sanitary Risk.

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Source: [Yiannas waits for new boss while putting in another busy but virtual summer](#)