The title of the Keynote Symposium at the 2012 Poultry Science Association Meeting at the Georgia Center in Athens, Georgia, was “Tomorrow’s Poultry: Sustainability and Safety.” The purpose of the symposium was to provide members and guests of the Poultry Science Association an opportunity to be updated on the recent developments in enhancing the safety of poultry foods and also to interact with an internationally recognized group of speakers who are pursuing novel strategies for increasing the safety and sustainability of US poultry production. These are very exciting times in poultry science. The poultry industry is one of the fastest growing animal food industries globally. Over the past 50 yr, through a combination of improved breeding, nutrition, management, and advances in disease control, commercial poultry industry has made monumental gains in production efficiency. Success also comes with challenges. Modern birds have weakened immune systems, increased disease susceptibility, and dependence on in-feed antibiotics. Consumers have voiced a concern about the widespread use of in-feed antimicrobials. Such concerns have led to the tremendous increase in organic poultry production in recent years. However, such antibiotic-free production systems also face bacterial disease challenges such as necrotic enteritis resulting in reduced growth rate, poor feed efficiency, and increased contamination. It is imperative that today’s poultry industries be proactive in improving the safety of poultry foods. Addressing these challenges requires an increased input of knowledge about production systems and expertise to develop integrative systems that maximize animal health and product safety in a sustainable manner. Such measures include improvement of diet, use of biocontrol measures to enhance bird health, and novel processing and packaging strategies to enhance safety of food products. These measures must also be cost-effective for the continued viability of the industry. It is essential to understand these different strategies in order to successfully plan for the future of poultry production and food security in the United States. The objectives of 2012 Keynote Symposium were to provide a direct interaction and collaboration among food/feed scientists, nutritional immunologists, microbiologists, and veterinarians who are working in the areas of bird health, feed, and food safety. Such a dialogue will foster cross-fertilization of ideas and stimulate the development of innovative strategies to enhance food safety and the sustainability of US poultry food systems. To address these, the topics selected for the symposium covered a considerable spectrum of areas of emphasis in immune nutrition, gut ecology, plant-derived antimicrobials, antimicrobial peptides, processing, and packaging aspects. Health challenges from the perspective of a veterinarian related to organic production were also addressed.

Key words: poultry, safety, sustainability

2013 Poultry Science 92:492–492
http://dx.doi.org/10.3382/ps.2012.02725