

Getting to Know AACCI: Luis Sabillón

AACC International members each have their own story, and we want to highlight all of their amazing accomplishments—both in AACCI and in their careers. “Getting to Know AACCI” is a series of member interviews capturing the unique stories of our many volunteers and their journeys with AACCI.



Luis Sabillón
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
Member for 2 years

Q: What is your current position and what are you currently working on?

A: I am currently a Ph.D. student at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL). Since I started my journey at UNL, my work has been focused on improving the microbiological quality of wheat-based products through pre- and post-milling interventions. As a pre-milling intervention, a novel tempering approach has been developed to reduce the micro-

bial load of wheat grains prior to milling using water as a vehicle for delivery of antimicrobial agents. High-pressure processing is currently being evaluated as a post-milling intervention to improve the safety of cookie doughs and other wheat flour-based products.

I also am a member of the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for the Reduction of Post-Harvest Loss, which is part of the U.S. government Feed the Future initiative to reduce global hunger and improve food security. My work on this project focuses on assessing the mycotoxin activity in major staple crops, including corn, wheat, and nuts; improving post-harvest practices; and reducing post-harvest losses of staple crops produced by smallholder farmers in two focus countries: Guatemala and Afghanistan.

Q: When and why did you first decide you wanted to work in cereal grain science?

A: I fell in love with food science and technology and, in particular, with food safety when I was pursuing my undergraduate program at Zamorano University in Honduras. When I started my master’s program at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, I had the opportunity to direct my passion for food safety toward the cereal foods world, which is an area of food safety that has been poorly understood and vastly understudied because cereal products generally are perceived as safe. I soon realized that my work on cereal grain safety, specifically on the risk factors for contamination and potential interventions to mitigate that risk, could help improve the safety of products that constitute a large fraction of people’s diets worldwide—cereal grains.

Q: When did you first join AACCI and why?

A: I first joined AACCI in 2014 because the AACCI Annual Meeting is the perfect platform for presenting the results of my research on improving the safety of wheat-based foods to the scientific community, as well as to industry professionals

and consumers. I also joined AACCI to strengthen my leadership and social skills and to meet with graduate students and professionals in my field, hoping to build a network for my professional career as a microbiologist focusing on cereal safety.

Q: Why did you decide to volunteer with AACCI, and what committees/boards are you currently serving on?

A: After attending my first annual meeting in 2014, I decided to join the Food Safety and Microbiology Technical Committee with the intention of creating and developing cereal safety-focused engagement opportunities for the entire AACCI community. Not only participating in but also working toward the overall development of AACCI through the Food Safety and Microbiology Committee will be a great opportunity to gain leadership skills, teamwork experience, and create networking opportunities with scientists and industry professionals. Most importantly, I decided to volunteer with AACCI to give back and contribute to the success of an association that has given me many opportunities to grow professionally in the cereal foods world.

Q: What have been the most exciting moments of your career or membership experience so far?

A: There have been so many exciting moments throughout my membership experience with AACCI, but without any doubt, one of the most exciting moments I have experienced as an AACCI member was when I was awarded first place in the Best Student Research Paper Competition this year at the annual meeting in Savannah, GA. Other exciting moments have been experienced during Food Safety and Microbiology Committee meetings.

Q: What have you learned from your membership in AACCI?

A: Throughout my years as a member of AACCI, my experiences have been overwhelmingly positive. I have learned that the networking opportunities created during the annual meeting allow for an exchange of experience and knowledge, which is crucial for shaping the skills of students and young professionals, as well as for building lifelong relationships with peers. The AACCI Annual Meeting is the place where cereal scientists and industry professionals come together to create not only innovative research that advances cereal science, but also to create opportunities for the entire AACCI community.

Q: What’s next for you?

A: My teaching roles coupled with my undergraduate and current graduate research experiences have sparked in me a great enthusiasm to pursue a faculty position in the near future. I have great enthusiasm for cereal science, and I look forward to conveying my knowledge by teaching traditional courses in cereal processing and cereal microbiology and by developing more specialized courses devoted to the safety of low-moisture food products such as wheat flour. I certainly will continue to volunteer with AACCI and take a more active role in the AACCI Student Association in a way that contributes to the entire AACCI community by creating opportunities for the next generation of cereal scientists.

We will be conducting interviews with members to be featured in future issues of *Cereal Foods World*. If you know someone who has dedicated significant time to AACCI and the field of cereal grain science, let us know! Contact Lauren McGinty at lmcginty@scisoc.org.