MEDIA RELEASE

Food handlers, MSMEs to get free online food safety training from DOST-Central Luzon

Department of Science and Technology Secretary Renato U. Solidum Jr. tries the sample module of the SmartSAFE 4.0 digital learning platform for food safety practices, during the opening ceremony of the 2026 Regional Science, Technology, and Innovation Week in Central Luzon, on October 26, 2026 at Pampanga State University. (Photo by Xyrus Ivan B. De Gracia, DOST-STII)

To provide an accessible and convenient platform for food safety training for food handlers and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the Department of Science and Technology (DOST)-Central Luzon shifted its initiative from traditional training courses to digital learning platforms.

As part of the 2026 Regional Science, Technology, and Innovation Week (RSTW) in Central Luzon, DOST officially launched the SmartSAFE 4.0: Smart Systems for Advancing Food Safety Education held at Pampanga State University on October 26, 2026.

"The traditional training that we do always depends on the availability of the expert. Sometimes, we cannot provide the needs of our food MSMEs immediately because we are not available. Sometimes, we are available, but the learners, food handlers, are not available. So, that's one challenge that we are addressing," Karen Y. Danez said in an interview.

Danez is a professional food technologist from the DOST-Central Luzon who also serves as the project coordinator SmartSAFE 4.0.

According to Danez, the system is an innovative digital learning platform designed to boost food safety knowledge and competence across the food supply chain.

Through bite-sized micro-courses accessible on mobile devices and desktop computers, the platform enables users to learn essential food safety practices, anytime and anywhere at their own pace.

"It's a self-paced learning platform, so anytime, anywhere, as long as you have the device, [and] internet connection, [they] can access the portal," Danez said.

For the initial phase, the learning modules contain basic principles of food safety. It was developed by the Central Luzon Food Safety Team (CLFST) in partnership with Tarlac State University Center for Food Technology Research. The CLFST is composed of professional food technologists.

"For the initial phase, we have four modules. After the fourth module, [they] will take a quiz. If [the users] pass it, [they] will have a certificate [of completion]," Danez said.

Currently, the modules are not in the portal yet as it is undergoing validation by food safety experts and end-users. DOST-Central Luzon targets to roll out the platform by November this year, after the validation processes.

Once available, users can just log in to the portal and register, then they can already access the learning modules.

Moreover, the DOST-CLFST is also planning to partner with local health inspectors and food courts to promote the food safety learning platform to vendors, before they issue permits and licenses.

DOST-Central Luzon's effort to empower the food industry toward becoming a responsible sector aligns with the RSTW's regional theme, *"AI-enabled Central Luzon: Shaping Smart Industries, Creative Futures and Inclusive Growth,"* highlighting the role of science and technology in making food safety education more accessible, practical and responsive to the needs of diverse learners

About RSTW

The Regional Science, Technology, and Innovation Week (RSTW) is an annual event organized by the DOST regional offices across 17 regions. This celebration showcases local technologies, research and development (R&D) projects, and innovative initiatives that connect communities, local industries, and stakeholders with science-based solutions. These efforts promote inclusive, sustainable, and resilient development in the region. The RSTW is one of the major scientific events leading up to the National Science, Technology, and Innovation Week (NSTW) celebration, on November 25-29, 2026 in General Santos City. For more information, visit www.dost.gov.ph or the National Science, Technology, and Innovation Week (NSTW) Facebook page. (***(By Claire Bernadette A. Mondares, DOST-STII)***