



FOOD SAFETY AND LABELING

Issue:

American consumers deserve to have confidence that their food is safe and that the best science is used to ensure that the most wholesome product possible is produced and offered.

America's farmers and ranchers are committed to producing safe and affordable food for consumers in the U.S. and around the world. There are several reasons for their strong support for food safety. They have the same desire as other consumers to have a safe, abundant and affordable food supply. They also have an economic interest because the demand for their products is determined by consumer confidence.

Numerous nationwide food recalls have increased consumer awareness of food safety. At issue is whether the current food safety system has the resources, authority and structural organization to safeguard the health of American consumers against foodborne illness. Also at issue is whether federal food safety laws have kept pace with significant changes in food production, processing and marketing, such as new food sources, advances in production, distribution methods and the growing volume of imports.

Background:

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has identified 15 federal agencies that administer at least 30 laws related to food safety. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), within the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), within the Department of Agriculture (USDA), handle most of the government's food and safety regulatory system.

FDA is responsible for ensuring that all domestic and imported food products—except for most meat and poultry derived from the major animal species—are safe, nutritious, wholesome and accurately labeled. FDA shares responsibility for the safety of eggs with FSIS.

FSIS regulates the safety, wholesomeness and proper labeling of most domestic and imported meat and poultry and their products sold for human consumption. FSIS inspects all cattle, sheep, swine, goats and horses before and after they are slaughtered. FSIS also maintains oversight during meat and poultry processing into food products.

Regulatory Status:

Beginning on Jan. 26, 2018 farms with more than \$500,000 in sales are expected to meet all produce safety requirements, except those related to agricultural water. Farm inspections will not begin until 2019 to assess compliance with the non-water requirements of the Produce Safety Rule for produce other than sprouts.

The FDA issued a notice of proposed rulemaking in September 2017 that would extend the compliance dates for the agricultural water requirements by an additional two to four years (for produce other than sprouts). AFBF supported the extension.

Additionally, the FDA will not enforce the agricultural water requirements for produce other than sprouts while the rulemaking to extend the compliance dates is underway. The proposed agricultural water requirements of the FSMA rule compliance dates are:

Farm Sales	Proposed Compliance Date (not including sprouts)
More than \$500,000	January 26, 2022
More than \$250,000 – Less than \$500,000	January 26, 2023
More than \$25,000 – Less than \$250,000	January 26, 2024
Less than \$25,000	Exempt from produce safety rule

The extension provides farmers an opportunity to continue their engagement with the FDA to consider the best approach for implementation.

AFBF Policy:

Farm Bureau believes that any action by Congress should be based on sound science and prudent risk assessment.

Farm Bureau believes that USDA should be designated as the lead agency in the development of food safety guidelines.

Farm Bureau supports the following changes to improve the food safety regulatory process for consumers and producers:

- Adequate funding of the government’s food and feed safety and protection functions;
- Increased education and training for inspectors;
- Additional science-based inspection, targeted according to risk;
- Research and development of scientifically based rapid testing procedures and tools;
- Increased funding for the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank;
- Accurate and timely responses to outbreaks that identify contaminated products, remove them from the market and minimize disruption to producers;
- Indemnification for producers who suffer marketing losses due to inaccurate government-advised recalls or warnings; and
- Point of entry inspections being in addition to ‘processing plant,’ ‘field’ or other required U.S. government inspections in countries of product origin that should be funded through user fees paid by the importer.

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