

Food Safety

Why It Matters

Food safety is a top public health and economic priority for the fresh produce industry. Consumers depend on a system that protects the food supply, supports confidence in fresh fruits and vegetables, and relies on clear, science-based oversight at home and abroad.

Quick Facts

- The U.S. fresh produce industry moves millions of pounds of fruits and vegetables every day.
- The Food Safety Modernization Act shifted the federal system from reacting to outbreaks to preventing them.
- Fresh produce safety depends on effective inspection, strong state and federal coordination, and internationally aligned standards.
- Outbreaks can damage public health, disrupt markets, and undermine consumer trust.

Background

IFPA supports food safety systems that protect consumers and strengthen confidence in fresh produce. The association advocates for strong federal and state resources, prevention-based oversight, and science-driven engagement in international standard setting. Continued improvement is needed to ensure FDA programs, inspection systems, and implementation efforts are efficient, transparent, and effective.

IFPA Priorities

- **Support robust funding for state produce inspection and related FSMA implementation programs, while improving transparency in how FDA's Human Foods Program allocates resources.** Strong federal-state partnerships and clearer visibility into agency priorities are essential to efficient oversight, better public health outcomes, and industry confidence. Additional work is needed on full supply chain lot-level traceability, that fully leverages technology advances, accounts for production realities and includes flexibilities without compromising food safety outcomes.
- **Hold FDA and USDA leadership accountable for delivering measurable improvements and ensure a strengthening of food safety oversight.** Congress should ensure continued access to scientific expertise, sustained inspection capacity, and clear lines of responsibility (particularly where produce safety and FSIS-regulated operations intersect).
- **Strengthen multistate outbreak investigations through better interagency coordination, greater engagement with industry, and consistent use of gold-standard scientific methods.** FDA, CDC, and USDA should operate with clearly defined roles, share information in real time, and rely on epidemiology, robust traceback, whole genome sequencing, and product/environmental testing before drawing conclusions.



- **Promote clear evidence standards for public health communications and advance a more coordinated federal food safety structure.** Public statements should reflect defined evidence thresholds and clearly communicate uncertainty. At the same time, Congress should take a closer look at structural options - including greater consolidation of food safety functions through blue ribbon panel recommendations - to reduce fragmentation, improve decision-making, and ensure clear accountability to the public.

Why Congress Should Care

- Strong food safety oversight protects public health and strengthens trust in the food supply.
- Effective implementation helps avoid costly disruptions for producers, retailers, and consumers.
- Federal leadership in food safety supports market stability, supply chain resilience, and international credibility.