

Promoting an Efficient, Effective, Transparent, and Collaborative FDA



Quick Facts

- CDC estimates 1 in 6 Americans suffer from foodborne illness annually.
- FDA regulates 78% of the U.S. food supply, including all fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Only 2% of FDA's proposed FY2023 budget increase would go toward food safety (including both human and animal food).

Background

Food, with the exception of meat, poultry, and a few other products, are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. FDA is led by a Commissioner who has historically been a medical doctor with more expertise on the 'drug' side of FDA than 'food'. Congress rarely questions the Commissioner on food related issues. From a budget perspective, funding for food and nutrition programs pales in comparison to other FDA programs. Despite having limited resources, FDA has not fully taken advantage of external partnerships. Only recently has the agency demonstrated a willingness to collaborate with industry to assess and encourage produce safety prevention strategies and partner on food safety training opportunities. Historically the agency has remained insular, resulting in a lack of trust by the produce industry.

Within the agency, there are several centers and offices that play major roles in setting policy and enforcing food safety regulations. There is no single person that has oversight for all major aspects of food within FDA. The ramifications, including delays in rule making, policy setting, and enforcement, have recently been highlighted by Politico. Issues are especially evident—and jeopardize public health—when foodborne illness outbreaks occur. There is a lack of coordination and communication within FDA, with states, and with the industry. Further, outbreaks traced to imported produce reveal weaknesses in FDA's ability to immediately engage with their foreign counterparts, potentially impacting domestic markets and consumer confidence in the safety of their fruits and vegetables.

Food Safety Regulatory Reform Today

The regulation of food is too important to be an afterthought within the FDA, behind pharmaceuticals, vaccines, tobacco, and medical devices. Consumers and industry alike deserve sensible, efficient, effective regulation of food and want the rapid resolution of issues when they occur. A safer food supply is possible by leveraging partnerships and working in the spirit of true partnership. We seek the following:

- Congressional support for the appointment of a Deputy Commissioner for Foods with accountability to the commissioner and direct line authority

over CFSAN, CVM, and the food-related components and operations of the Office of Regulatory Affairs

- Transparent accounting of FDA expenditures since 2015, within the food arena, which would help us assist the agency in bolstering its funding and identify opportunities to leverage partnerships and outside resources
- Consideration of foodborne illness outbreak evaluation models that are inclusive of FDA and CDC while also engaging stakeholders including industry experts, akin to the way transportation incidents are investigated