



Fact Sheet on Food Safety and the Egg Recall

Prepared by the Alliance for a Stronger FDA

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This month's massive *Salmonella* contamination and recall of a half-billion eggs highlights the impact of inadequate funding of food safety programs at the Food and Drug Administration. The Alliance for a Stronger FDA is providing some critical facts related to food safety and that underscore the need for increasing FDA's funding.

Overall FDA Funding

- Staffing levels at FDA, paid by appropriations, were 9,167 in 1994. After three years of increased budgets in 2008, 2009 and 2010, those staffing levels only now have reached 9,100 once more. The serious erosion in staffing after 1994 resulted from the no-growth budget situation the agency suffered for many years.
- Over the past 20 years, Congress has enacted 125 new laws that gave FDA additional responsibilities, most of which came with no additional funding for implementation.

Enormity of FDA's Food Safety Responsibilities

- FDA's food safety program has been especially vulnerable. In the 1970's, there were 70,000 food manufacturing facilities in the U.S. and FDA conducted 35,000 inspections annually. On average, every facility was inspected every 2 years. Today, the number of food manufacturing facilities has doubled to about 150,000, yet FDA is funded to conduct only 8,000 food inspections each year.
- Shipments of imported food have more than tripled in recent years, to over 10 million import lines. Less than 2% are inspected at the border.

Consequences of Foodborne Illness

- Over 75 million Americans are sickened each year by contaminated food, 325,000 of those will be hospitalized, and 5,000 will die. *Salmonella* alone is estimated to kill 500 Americans each year and sicken almost 2 million.
- The economic costs of foodborne disease grow larger each year. The 2006 *E. Coli* in spinach outbreak cost farmers and producers more than \$100 million in lost sales. The

Salmonella Saint Paul outbreak in tomatoes/peppers in 2008 cost about \$450 million. Last year's *Salmonella* in peanut butter outbreak cost peanut growers at least \$1 billion in lost income.

Estimates of the overall costs of foodborne disease in the United States range from \$35 billion to \$80 billion each year. It is believed that an effective FDA food safety program could reduce this by 60% or more. The reduction in illness and human suffering is likely to be comparable. Yet, the President's request for FDA's FY 11 appropriations barely keeps up with rising agency costs and will provide funding for very little new programming.

Unless FDA's food programs receive steady and significant budget increases for several years:

- new standards for food safety prevention will not be established,
- inspections of food facilities will not increase, and
- the annual toll of foodborne illness will continue unabated.

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