



CONGRESSIONAL FOOD SAFETY CAUCUS

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OVERVIEW: FOOD SAFETY IN THE UNITED STATES

- *Key Finding #1 — Federal Food Safety Oversight is Fragmented*

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has referred to federal oversight of the U.S. food supply as “fragmented” and a “patchwork.” Today, there are 15 federal agencies that administer at least 30 laws to regulate food safety. In recent years, GAO has identified flaws in this system, which has led the agency to name food safety to its “High Risk List” since 2007.

- *Key Finding #2 — Food Outbreaks & Foodborne Illnesses Increased*

Despite almost a decade since Congress passed the *Food Safety Modernization Act* (FSMA), data continues to show increases in the number of food outbreaks and the prevalence of foodborne illnesses. Recent analysis by U.S. Public Interest Research Group showed total food recalls rose from 2013 to 2018, including an 83 percent increase in Class I meat and poultry recalls that can cause serious illness and death. Additionally, according to CDC’s National Outbreak Reporting System (NORS), the number of foodborne illnesses per year were higher in 2017 than in 2011, the year FSMA was signed into law.

- *Key Finding #3 — FDA Decreased Inspections of Imported Food*

Over the last decades, an increasing share of the food supply is being imported. However, despite FSMA’s mandate to increase inspection of imported foods, data obtained from FDA show the agency only inspected 0.88% of food import lines last year. That percentage is less than half of the 1.9% of food import lines the agency inspected in 2012. Moreover, FDA’s foreign offices, which assist in inspections of foreign food facilities, have been reduced from 12 in 2012 to just 6 in 2018.

ADDRESSING THESE ISSUES: *The Safe Food Act of 2019*

The Safe Food Act of 2019, to be introduced by Rep. DeLauro and Sen. Durbin, would:

- Transfer and consolidate food safety authorities for inspections, enforcement and labeling into a single food safety agency;
- Require full food traceability to better identify sources of outbreaks;
- Authorize enforcement actions to strengthen contaminant performance standards; and,
- Strengthen oversight of foreign food facilities and improve food import inspections.

The legislation is supported by a broad coalition of food safety advocates and organizations, including Center for Science in the Public Interest and the Consumer Federation of America.

For more information or to cosponsor the bill, please contact Christian Lovell (christian.lovell@mail.house.gov) in Rep. DeLauro’s office.