ENSURING A SAFE FOOD SUPPLY:
A CONCISE GUIDE TO THE U.S. FOOD REGULATORY SYSTEM

Compiled by: IFIC
Your source for reliable, science-based food safety and nutrition information and consumer insights
Questions? 202/296-6540 www.foodinsight.org

MAIN AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE FOR FOOD REGULATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE:
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE

Contact: phone 202/720-9113
http://www.fsis.usda.gov

Mission:
- Ensure that the nation’s commercial supply of meat, poultry, and processed egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled.

Food Regulatory Responsibilities:
- Enforces food safety laws governing domestic and imported raw and processed meat and poultry products, and processed egg products and establishes regulatory requirements to implement these laws.
- Inspects meat and poultry slaughter and processing plants and egg processing plants, and imports.
- Requires HACCP* systems at meat and poultry plants.
- Requires meat and poultry plants to conduct microbial testing and sets microbial criteria for certain foods.
- Develops labeling requirements for meat, poultry and processed egg products and verifies accuracy of labeling.
- Educates consumers about safe food handling, food labeling, and food defense. Operates meat and poultry hotline: 1-888-MPHotline
  www.askkaren.gov

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (DHHS):
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

Contact: phone 888/INFO-FDA (888/463-6332)
http://www.fda.gov

Food Safety Centers/Offices Missions:
- Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN): Ensures food supply is safe, sanitary, wholesome, and honestly labeled.
  http://www.foodsafety.gov/list.html (800/723-3366)
- Office of Regulatory Affairs: Protects consumers and enhances public health by maximizing compliance of FDA regulated products and minimizing risk associated with those products http://www.fda.gov/ora/

Food Regulatory Responsibilities:
- Enforces food safety laws governing domestic and imported food, except meat, poultry, and processed egg products.
- Regulates about 80 percent of U.S. food supply, including produce, dairy products, seafood, processed foods, shell eggs, and animal feed and pet food.
- Develops policies and regulations for nutrition labeling and standards for foods, dietary supplements, infant formula and medical foods.
- Approves food and animal feed additives and affirms their Generally Recognized As Safe status.
- Inspects food production establishments and food warehouses.
- Requires HACCP* systems at processing plants for seafood and juice.
- Sets microbial criteria for certain foods.
- Develops Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and other production standards.
- Educates consumers about safe food handling practices, cooking, food labeling and food defense systems.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE:
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE

Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances (OPPTS)
Contact: phone 703/305-7090 http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/

Mission: To protect human health and the environment.

Food Safety Responsibilities:
- Ensures that pesticides used in food production are safe.
- Establishes tolerances, the maximum amount of pesticide residue that may remain on or in treated crops, animals and animal products.
- Ensures proper use of pest management techniques used on crops.
- Establishes regulations and standards for safe drinking water.

*Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems identify, evaluate and control food safety hazards.
### Other Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Food Regulatory Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Department of Agriculture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Research Service (ARS)</td>
<td>202/720-3656 <a href="http://www.ars.usda.gov">www.ars.usda.gov</a></td>
<td>Conducts research to ensure high quality, safe food and other agricultural products, and to assess the nutritional needs of Americans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)</td>
<td>202/720-2511 <a href="http://www.aphis.usda.gov">www.aphis.usda.gov</a></td>
<td>Determines and implements standards for the care and treatment of animals. Safeguards agriculture and natural resources from risks associated with the entry, establishment, or spread of animal and plant pests and noxious weeds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP)</td>
<td>703/305-7600 <a href="http://www.cnpp.usda.gov">www.cnpp.usda.gov</a></td>
<td>Develops and promotes dietary guidance that links scientific research to the nutrition needs of consumers. Administers the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which include food safety recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)</td>
<td>703/305-2281 <a href="http://www.fns.usda.gov/">www.fns.usda.gov/</a> fns/</td>
<td>Provides children and needy families better access to food and a more healthful diet through food assistance programs and comprehensive nutrition education efforts. Administers National School Lunch Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Agricultural Library (NAL) USDA/FDA Food Safety Information Center</td>
<td>301/504-5719 <a href="http://www.nal.usda.gov/">www.nal.usda.gov/</a> fnic</td>
<td>Maintains a database of computer software, audiovisuals, posters, games, teachers’ guides and other educational materials on preventing foodborne illness. Helps educators, food service trainers, and consumers locate educational materials on preventing foodborne illness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Agencies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) DHHS</td>
<td>404/639-3534 (800/311-3435) <a href="http://www.cdc.gov">www.cdc.gov</a></td>
<td>Conducts surveillance of foodborne illness and investigates multi-state outbreaks in cooperation with FDA or USDA (depending on the product) and state agencies where the outbreaks have occurred. Conducts National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) on the health and nutrition of the U.S. population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) FDA / DHHS</td>
<td>240/276-9300 <a href="http://www.fda.gov/cvm/">www.fda.gov/cvm/</a></td>
<td>Regulates the manufacture and distribution of food additives and drugs that will be given to animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Homeland Security</td>
<td>202/282-8000 <a href="http://www.dhs.gov/">www.dhs.gov/</a> index.shtm</td>
<td>Coordinates partnerships among federal agencies, state and local leadership, and private industry to protect the nation's food and agriculture supply from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Trade Commission</td>
<td>202/326-2222 <a href="http://www.ftc.gov">www.ftc.gov</a></td>
<td>Enforces a variety of laws that protect consumers from unfair, deceptive, or fraudulent practices, including deceptive and unsubstantiated advertising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Department of Commerce</td>
<td>301/713-2334 <a href="http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov">www.nmfs.noaa.gov</a></td>
<td>Provides a voluntary Seafood Inspection Program that inspects and certifies fishing vessels, seafood processing plants, and retail facilities according to federal sanitation standards. Works cooperatively with FDA's Office of Seafood, and uses FDA criteria to evaluate seafood products and processes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### State Regulatory Agencies

These entities – including state departments of health and agriculture – work with FDA, USDA, and other federal agencies to implement food safety standards for all foods produced within state borders. The laws and standards they enforce are encouraged to coincide with either federal laws or uniform model codes such as those created by the Association of Food and Drug Officials. State agencies inspect restaurants, grocery stores and other retail food establishments, as well as dairy farms and milk processing plants, grain mills, and food manufacturing plants within local jurisdictions. In addition, they can halt the sale (embargo) of unsafe food products made or distributed within state borders. Food products that cross state lines (interstate shipment) are subject to federal jurisdiction.
**ISSUE RESPONSIBILITY BY FEDERAL AGENCY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal and plant diseases/pests</td>
<td>APHIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal feed additives</td>
<td>CVM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish and seafood products (except catfish)</td>
<td>CFSAN, NOAA/NMFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotechnology</td>
<td>APHIS, CFSAN, EPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs (processed): regulation and inspection</td>
<td>FSIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs (shell): regulation and inspection</td>
<td>CFSAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and color additives, ingredients</td>
<td>CFSAN, FSIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food labeling</td>
<td>CFSAN, FSIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food recalls</td>
<td>CFSAN, FSIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food security/protection/defense</td>
<td>USDA, CFSAN, DHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foodborne illness education</td>
<td>FSIS, CFSAN, CDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foodborne illness outbreaks/surveillance</td>
<td>CDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HACCP</td>
<td>CFSAN, FSIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imported food</td>
<td>CFSAN, FSIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspection of food animals</td>
<td>FSIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspection of food processing plants (non meat)</td>
<td>CFSAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspection of meat and poultry slaughter facilities and processing plants</td>
<td>FSIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irradiation</td>
<td>CFSAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microbial standards</td>
<td>FSIS, CFSAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Organic Program</td>
<td>AMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packaging requirements</td>
<td>CFSAN, FSIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticides (enforces tolerances established by EPA)</td>
<td>CFSAN, FSIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticides (establishes tolerances)</td>
<td>EPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticides (regulates development, distribution, promotion, handling, storage, use, disposal)</td>
<td>EPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe food handling practices</td>
<td>CFSAN, FSIS, CDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School meal programs</td>
<td>FNS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary (animal) drugs</td>
<td>CVM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

**CONTACT IFIC FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- **International Food Information Council Foundation**
  Phone: 202/296-6540

- **Gateway to Government Food Safety Information**

- **Partnership for Food Safety Education**
  Phone: 202/220-0651

- **Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST)**
  Phone: 515/292-2125

- **Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (Better Business Bureau)**

- **Congressional Resources**
  Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
  Phone: 202/224-2035

- **Senate Committee on Appropriations**
  Phone: 202/224-7363
  [http://appropriations.senate.gov](http://appropriations.senate.gov)

- **Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**
  Phone: 202/224-5375

**U.S. House of Representatives**

- **Committee on Agriculture**
  Phone: 202/225-2171

- **Committee on Appropriations**
  Phone: 202/225-2771

- **Committee on Energy & Commerce**
  Phone: 202/225-2927

**Industry Groups**

- **Food Marketing Institute (FMI)**
  Phone: 202/452-8444

- **Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA)**
  Phone: 202/639-5900

- **National Restaurant Association (NRA)**
  Phone: 202/331-5900

**Consumer Advocates**

- **Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)**
  Phone: 202/332-9110
  [http://www.cspinet.org/](http://www.cspinet.org/)

- **Consumer Federation of America**
  Phone: 202/387-6121
  [http://www.consumerfed.org](http://www.consumerfed.org)

- **National Consumers League**
  Phone: 202/835-3323

---

**ABOUT IFIC AND IFIC FOUNDATION**

Based in Washington, D.C., the International Food Information Council (IFIC) and its educational arm, the IFIC Foundation, communicate science-based information on food safety and nutrition to health and nutrition professionals, educators, journalists, government officials and others. Both are supported primarily by the broad-based food, beverage and agricultural industries. They have established partnerships with a wide range of professional organizations, academic institutions and government agencies to develop and disseminate science-based information. [www.foodinsight.org](http://www.foodinsight.org)