

## **FOOD SAFETY REGULATION**

### **Federal regulation**

Fifteen federal agencies collectively administer at least 30 laws related to food safety. The primary agencies that inspect and regulate food are the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

**FDA** is responsible for ensuring that all domestic and imported food products – except for most meats & poultry – are safe, nutritious, wholesome, and accurately labeled. Examples of FDA-regulated foods are produce, dairy products, seafood, and processed foods.

The **Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)** of **USDA** regulates the safety, wholesomeness, and proper labeling of most domestic and imported meat and poultry and their products sold for human consumption. (FDA shares the responsibility for egg safety with FSIS.)

### **Processing Plant Regulation**

Both FDA and USDA have developed Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) regulation for processing plants (meat/poultry – USDA; seafood and juice – FDA). HACCP is based on a system developed by NASA (National Aeronautic and Space Administration) to ensure safe food for astronauts. It is a science-based approach that requires processors to identify potential hazards that cause food to be unsafe to eat and to monitor targeted critical control points to minimize risks. For example, adequate heating might be a critical point.

### **Fresh Produce Regulation**

FDA initiated a Produce Safety Action Plan in 2004. It addresses microbial food safety hazards and good agricultural and management practices for growing, harvesting, washing, sorting, packing and transporting of most fruits and vegetables sold to consumers unprocessed or raw. FDA is now focusing on more commodity-specific guidance for produce that's been associated with foodborne illness outbreaks. They've provided technical assistance to help industry develop food safety guidance for cantaloupe, tomatoes, and lettuce/leafy greens. Work on guidances for herbs and green onions is ongoing.

### **Imported Food Regulation**

**FSIS/USDA** is responsible for certifying that foreign meat and poultry plants are operating under an inspection system equivalent to the U.S. system before they can export their product to the U.S. FSIS inspectors located at U.S. ports of entry carry out a statistical sampling program to verify the safety of imported meats and poultry before they are released into domestic commerce.

**FDA** conducts targeted inspection of food imports based on the past history of the product. For example, presence of filth, pesticide residues or bacterial contamination might be assessed in addition in accuracy of labeling.

FDA has developed a Food Protection Plan in conjunction with an Action Plan that has been proposed by an Interagency Working Group on Import Safety.

There is a FDA Public Affairs Officer in Beaverton, Oregon, who responds to both food and drug regulation issues in Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA) has a regional office in Denver, Colorado, that has jurisdiction over Oregon.

## **State Regulation**

The Food Safety division of the **Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)** is responsible for monitoring the safety of foods sold in grocery stores, convenience stores, domestic kitchens, bakeries, meat markets and food processing plants. ODA also has jurisdiction over dairy farms and milk processing plants as well as shellfish harvesting. Some of their inspections are done on behalf of FDA. They have a statewide network of food sanitarians that conduct inspections.

The Foodborne Illness Prevention Program of the **Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS)** is responsible for monitoring the safety of food sold in restaurants. They oversee a statewide network of Environmental Health Specialists that conduct inspections.

Both ODA and DHS use the FDA Food Code as their source of food regulations.

## **Foodborne illness outbreaks**

Outbreaks of foodborne illnesses are primarily investigated by state and local health departments. They sometimes call on the federal **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** to help investigate large or multi-state outbreaks. CDC is also responsible for nationwide surveillance of outbreaks and for tracking new and emerging pathogens.

In 1995, CDC launched FoodNet (Foodborne Diseases Activity Surveillance Network) in collaboration with FDA and USDA to detect, respond to, and prevent foodborne illness nationwide. Oregon is one of 10 national sites participating in FoodNet. When a physician diagnoses foodborne illness, this is reported to the Oregon Department of Health and Human Services. They, in turn, report this data to the CDC.

## **Reporting foodborne illness**

If you suspect that you have foodborne illness, take these steps:

- Consult your physician or healthcare provider to seek medical treatment as appropriate
- If a portion of the questionable food is available, put it in freezer packaging labeled with the word “danger” and freeze it.
- Save all of the packaging such as cans or cartons. Write down the type of food, date and time consumed, and when the onset of symptoms occurred. Save any identical unopened packages.
- Call your county health department if you believe you became ill from food you ate in a restaurant or other food establishment. Call, too, if you suspect that a food bought at a grocery store made you sick.

Source: Family Food Education Program