

# Driving Food Safety Modernization

## 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.
- FDA also has primary regulatory responsibility for tobacco, vaccines, drugs, medical devices, etc. which are substantially better funded than food.

## Background

Except for USDA's regulation of meat, poultry, and some related products, food is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. FDA's leader, the Commissioner, is historically a medical doctor with more expertise on the drugs than food. From a budget perspective, funding for food and nutrition programs pales in comparison to other FDA programs. To make matters worse, FDA rarely takes full advantage of external partnership opportunities. Only in the last year has the agency demonstrated a willingness to collaborate with industry assess and promote produce safety prevention strategies and partner on food safety training. The produce sector lacks trust in FDA due

to its insular operation, which is especially evident—and jeopardizes public health—when foodborne illness outbreaks occur. Notably, FDA recently proposed consolidating many parts of the agency regulating food into a Human Foods Program. The aim – and, our hope – is this will address previous issues with delays in rule making, policy setting, and enforcement. This proposed structure, combined with more Congressional interest on both appropriations and oversight, presents an opportunity to help shape produce safety regulation for the future.

## 2023 Food Safety Regulatory Reform

The regulation of food is too important to be given less FDA time, attention and resources than pharmaceuticals, vaccines, tobacco, and medical devices. Consumers and regulated food industries deserve sensible, efficient, effective regulations and rapid resolution of issues when they occur.

To better leverage opportunities for partnerships that create a safer food supply, IFPA supports:

- FDA appointment of a Deputy Commissioner for Human Foods with accountability to the commissioner, direct authority over all food-related programs and resources, and to lead culture transformation that improves effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, and collaboration.
- Transparent accounting of FDA expenditures on food programs to guide industry support

for bolstering agency funding and help identify opportunities to leverage partnerships and outside resources.

- Engaging stakeholders and food industry experts when considering foodborne illness outbreak evaluation models compatible with FDA and CDC needs.
- Consistent, transparent policies and enforcement actions that balance public health concerns with fresh produce's critical role in the improving the health of the American diet.