

Interaction of Federal Agencies with Food Safety Missions

Responsibility for food safety is shared by a number of federal, state and local agencies. The individual responsibilities of the key food safety agencies at the federal level have already been discussed in the background pieces on the Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Food	Regulator(s)*	Comments
Alcoholic beverages	ATF, FDA	ATF licenses and inspects breweries. FDA oversees wine coolers
Eggs	FDA, AMS, FSIS, APHIS	FDA has lead jurisdiction over shell eggs. FSIS continuously inspects egg products. AMS operates a voluntary grading program. APHIS monitors animal health
Fruits & vegetables (including GE varieties)	FDA, EPA, USDA	EPA and USDA share pesticide regulation responsibilities. FDA enforces standards for pesticide residues on processed food.
Grain	FDA, GIPSA, EPA	GIPSA establishes and enforces identity standards through inspection. FDA enforces standards for pesticide residues on processed food.
Meat & poultry	FSIS, FDA	FSIS inspects meat during processing. FDA holds regulatory authority once meat leaves the slaughtering or manufacturing plant.
Processed Foods	FDA	FDA is responsible for most non-meat products.
Seafood	FDA, NMFS	FDA oversees seafood safety generally. NMFS runs a voluntary inspection service.
Water	FDA, EPA	EPA regulates tap water, FDA bottled water.
*Acronyms include ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms); AMS (USDA Agricultural Marketing Service), FSIS (USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service), APHIS (Animal Plant Health Inspection Service), GIPSA (USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration), NMFS (National Marine Fisheries Service), ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms).		

Please refer to the LWVSTL or LWVUS webpage for the full background papers on Food Safety. If you do not have internet access please call the LWVSTL office and request copies of the papers.

Current Issues

Among the key issues of interest concerning food safety programs in the U.S. are (1) the current division of responsibilities among agencies, (2) agency differences in approaches to inspection and enforcement, and (3) the adequacy of funding for the different food safety missions.

Over the years there has been a great deal of discussion about reforming the structure and organization of the food safety system and whether consolidation of monitoring responsibilities into a single agency would improve performance; the two recommended readings present different points of view on how to reform the system.

Different approaches to inspection are illustrated by comparing USDA, which has statutory authority to conduct continuous inspections, with FDA, which has authority for periodic inspections. Another difference is that FDA has authority for on-farm inspection but not USDA. In terms of responsibilities, USDA has responsibility for a limited number of similar food products (which would be expected to facilitate inspections) while FDA has responsibility for a very diverse array of food and non-food products (which would complicate inspections and demand a greater range of expertise). Over time, there seems to be a general trend toward fewer facility inspections. Actual food safety budgets and personnel do not always appear to be well calibrated with responsibilities. USDA, for example, has 7800

inspectors for 6800 facilities while FDA has 2000 inspectors for more than 130,000 facilities. Part of the reason for this disparity is the USDA mandate to inspect virtually all meat products while FDA uses much smaller samples for products under its responsibility. In 1972 the FDA drug and food budgets were about equal, yet in 2011, the Drug Center staff was more than 3 times greater than that of the Food Center staff (3097 vs. 871 people). The latest challenge is the estimated cost for the FSMA of 1.4 billion over 5 years, coupled with a Congressional authorization of only a \$50 million boost in the 2012 FDA appropriation.