

JOINT INTRODUCTION to the 2001 FOOD CODE

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are pleased to release the 2001 edition of the Food Code. As in the past, this edition of the Food Code provides practical, science-based guidance and manageable, enforceable provisions for mitigating risk factors known to cause foodborne illness. The Code is a reference document for regulatory agencies that oversee food safety in food service establishments, retail food stores, other food establishments at the retail level, and institutions, such as nursing homes and child care centers. Food safety is a top priority for DHHS and USDA, and we strongly endorse and encourage adoption of the Code.

First published in 1993, we have revised and updated the Food Code every two years. As of December 2000, thirty states and one territory have adopted one of the four editions of the Food Code. Fifteen additional states and one territory are in the process of adoption. Many Federal agencies and tribal governments have adopted the Code as well. We commend these jurisdictions and agencies and urge others to act. We also encourage all jurisdictions to examine the level of food safety protection their current rules and implementation strategies provide and take the steps necessary to increase that level in light of the 2001 Food Code. Food Code adoption and implementation in all jurisdictions is an important strategy for achieving uniform national food safety standards and for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of our nation's food safety system.

Ensuring safe food is an important public health priority for our nation. An estimated 76 million illnesses, 323,914 hospitalizations, and 5,194 deaths are attributable to foodborne illness in the United States each year. The estimated cost of foodborne illness is \$10 - \$83 billion annually. For some consumers, foodborne illness results only in mild, temporary discomfort or lost time from work or other daily activity. For others, especially pre-school age children, older adults, and those with impaired immune systems, foodborne illness may have serious or long-term consequences, and most seriously, may be life threatening. The risk of foodborne illness is of increasing concern due to changes in the global market, aging of our population, increasing numbers of immunocompromised and immunosuppressed individuals, and changes in food production practices.

In this context, DHHS and USDA are increasing efforts to educate food service workers about food safety principles. One example is our collaborative Foodborne Illness Education Information Center, which houses a database of videos, software, course books, posters, and brochures to teach restaurant food workers how to prepare and serve food safely in order to prevent foodborne illness.

Significantly, food safety is a priority action area of *Healthy People 2010*, the comprehensive, nationwide set of health promotion and disease prevention objectives

designed to serve as a 10-year strategy for improving health in the United States. *Healthy People 2010* objectives include reducing infections caused by foodborne pathogens, reducing outbreaks of foodborne illness, and improving food employee behaviors and food preparation practices that directly relate to foodborne illnesses in retail food establishments. We intend to measure progress through public health data collection systems and data collected on Food Code interventions.

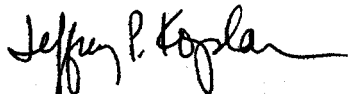
DHHS and USDA, along with state and local and other federal and tribal government agencies and the food industry, share responsibility for ensuring that our food supply is safe. DHHS and USDA, in partnership with numerous others, will continue to take progressive steps to strengthen our nation's food safety system. We look forward to achieving uniform and effective standards of food safety for food services, retail stores, and other retail-level establishments nationwide.



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