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Editorial Matters

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ACTING

administrator
FSIS

FSIS: Where Food Safety and Public Health Meet

(David Goldman, M.D., M.P.H., was appointed Acting Administrator for the Food Safety and Inspection Service on January 19, 2007. Dr. Goldman is also a Captain in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service.)

As a practicing physician, I see many patients who suffer from debilitating illnesses. I have seen it in the United States and the tsunami-ravaged areas of Indonesia. The causes of disease are varied and complex. However, many diseases can be prevented, and these are my focus. As a public health agency, FSIS' aim is to prevent illness, injury or death that might be caused by food, one of life's essentials.

In the United States, safe food is often taken for granted, but we know it is only through the collaborative efforts of all of our public health stakeholders that we are able to keep our food supply the safest in the world. Safe food is essential, and FSIS is uniquely suited to ensure this by employing both a strong inspection component, as well as an equally strong public health orientation.

Five years ago when I came to FSIS, it was an eye-opening experience for me to see how thousands of inspection personnel throughout this country could make a difference in the lives of so many by ensuring that safe product is produced from every federally regulated plant every day.

I also became very well acquainted with the agency's specific public health and scientific activities when I directed the Office of Public Health Science. Here we identified solid, scientific data from outside our agency showing an overall sustained decline in foodborne illnesses from all food sources, especially meat and poultry products. We continue to routinely work with our public health partners sifting through data, which are really clues, to find the cause of any outbreaks of illnesses stemming from food and then use lessons learned to prevent further illnesses.

It's my goal to continue leading FSIS' evolution into a public health regulatory agency. I want to ensure we account for unseen hazards and prevent them from adversely affecting the foods we regulate. I also want to continue to strengthen FSIS' inspection component by continually using what we learn to adjust our training. Furthermore, I want to see our inspection and outreach efforts targeted to where risks to the public are highest. Finally, I want to improve our data collection and analysis system so we can make the most effective decisions to protect consumers.

Our mission is much like the regular check-ups you receive from your doctor, only much more frequent. Any abnormalities your doctor identifies should be dealt with immediately so you can lead a healthier life. Through daily inspections and identification of high-risk areas, we're doing much the same, so you won't get sick from one of life's basic essentials. That's public health — the FSIS way.

David P. Goldman
 DAVID GOLDMAN, M.D., M.P.H.
 FSIS Acting Administrator