

**President's Food Safety Working Group Listening Session
May 13, 2009**

**Strengthen Surveillance & Risk Analysis
Breakout Listening Session Notes**

Note: These meeting notes do not represent the views of the United States government, and are only intended to capture the various views of participants, including non-government participants, during the listening session. The points listed below describe these views and do not necessarily represent a consensus opinion of the group.

Moderators:

Lonnie King, Director of National Center for Zoonotic, Vector-Borne and Enteric Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Jane Roth, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Program Evaluation, Enforcement, and Review, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

Participants: Brent Baglien, ConAgra Foods; John Besser, Assoc. of Public Health Laboratories; Robert Brackett, Grocery Manufactures of America; Kate Coler, U.S. Senate; Steve Etko, National Organic Coalition; Nathan Fretz, U.S. House of Representatives; Jean Halloran, Food Policy Initiatives; Jaydee Hanson, Center for Food Safety; Jerry Kozak, National Milk Producers Federation; Tamar Magarik Haro, U.S. Senate; Jim O'Hara, Georgetown University, Health Policy Institute; Erika Orloff, U.S. House of Representatives; Robert Pestronk, National Assoc. of County and City Health Officials; Martha Wiberg, Gorton's of Gloucester; Megan Wilson, American Assoc. of Exporters and Importers

Question 1: Do you agree that this Principle should be a priority area of focus for the Obama Administration and that the Principle is framed properly?

- Yes, this should be a priority area of focus
- This principle complements the other principles
- There is a need to add more specificity to this principle to improve its understanding
- The State and local public health systems are critical to surveillance; they are understaffed and under-sourced to the point that they may not have the capacity to do this function well
- There should be a section embedded in this principle that focuses on global food safety
- Attribution and metrics are needed to help define this principle and determine success
- High quality data derived from surveillance activities is essential for risk analysis
- Integration of animal, human, and product surveillance and monitoring are critical components within this principle
- Data and analysis should be made public so that consumers can make appropriate decisions regarding potential contamination of particular foods

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Question 2: What should be the roles and responsibilities of the federal government, state and local governments, industry, and consumers, individually and in relation to each other?

- There is a noticeable absence of employees who work across the food chain and who are knowledgeable about the food safety system; their knowledge is an important resource for prevention of foodborne illnesses and the integrity of the food safety system
- The food safety workforce is neither prepared nor well-trained today, and certainly not when considering the major changes to the system needed in the future
- Some believed that other questions are embedded in this question that need close consideration in order to address this question properly. For example, what resources are truly needed? What is the optimal surveillance system to enhance data sharing? Is proper analysis currently being accomplished?
- The idea of placing all risk analyses into a single unit serving the entire system was raised which is similar to what some other national systems have done; e.g. European Union
- Federal role should emphasize coordination and the States/locals should focus on data collection
- Industry should play a more active and formal role especially with regard to data sharing as long as they have adequate protection of their information sources and potential proprietary information; there was acknowledgement that negative test results and diagnostic data are still valuable information in support of surveillance activities. There also needs to be a commitment of a mutual or two-way sharing so that industry can use the new information, as well

Question 3: What new or expanded authorities, if any, should the federal government have?

- A central database might have merit that would enhance access to data, reports, and analyses
- Several new or expanded authorities were recommended: greater access to records; mandatory recall authority; ability to seize and destroy unsafe imported foods; establishing a stronger food registry; and improving data sharing across the system
- There was support to build up FDA enforcement activities
- Discussions also included legislative solutions that might improve submissions of isolates and samples
- All Federal agencies that are involved in food safety (13) need to be at the table to adequately define and depict a 21st century, contemporary food safety system – not just FDA, USDA, and CDC; pesticides and chemical contaminants of food are important considerations
- The States end up with much of the surveillance activities but they are not adequately compensated for increased workloads. This is similar to an unfunded mandate
- A public health infrastructure should be built to address the immediate and emerging needs as a consequence of the growing number of imports

Question 4: What current federal government food safety activities should be expanded, scaled back, or stopped?

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- Whistleblower protection of workers and employees of food firms should be provided in order to improve compliance and best practices
- Expand research especially for new diagnostics such as non-culture; sequenced-based diagnostics and information technology and informatics to better accommodate both real time data transfer and sharing. Standardize data collection and reporting
- The concern over workforce capacity was stressed
- There is a need for clinicians and hospitals to encourage greater submission of isolates and cultures
- “One-up and one-back” tracing should be expanded

Question 5: What actions should be taken, alone or in collaboration with others, by a) the federal government, b) industry, c) state and local governments, d) foreign governments, and e) others?

- A “fusion-center” unit should be established to receive and disseminate information and data across the food safety system and to consumers
- There needs to be a strong training and research component for surveillance and risk analysis
- Research should be targeted at areas of greatest risk
- International surveillance activities should be better coordinated
- Trade activities involving food are not currently linked to nor support enhancements of food safety
- There should be greater consistency and standardization when implementing new or expanded surveillance systems and risk analysis activities

Question 6: What are the obstacles to and opportunities for success?

- Courage is essential to take this on
- Surveillance and risk analysis are both needed to improve prevention; cycles of learning, and continuous improvement can be included in these activities
- Workforce issues cannot be neglected and should include building capacity and expertise in science, risk analysis, epidemiology, risk communication, and public health education
- Turf protection is a barrier that must be overcome
- Standardization of methods for risk assessment and surveillance is necessary
- There must be a commitment to make the critical and strategic investment in the non-regulatory and regulatory sectors; in State/local and Federal partners and private-public collaborators