

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

**Target Resources Effectively
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:

Andrew Maccabe, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Liaison to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for Food Safety

Phil Derfler, Assistant Administrator, Office of Policy and Program Development, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

Participants: Alexis Baden-Mayer, Organic Consumers Assoc.; James Blumenstock, Assoc. of State and Territorial Health Officials; Bill Freese, Center for Food Safety; Randy Gordon, National Grain and Feed Assoc.; Jill Hollingsworth, Food Marketing Institute; Jonathan James, Allen Family Foods, Inc.; Mary-Sumpter Johnson, U.S. Senate; Elena Leventhal, U.S. House of Representatives; Katherine Ozer, National Family Farm Coalition; Amanda Raziano, American Public Health Assoc.; Danielle Schor, International Food Information Council; Rachel Sher, U.S. House of Representatives; Carol Tucker Foreman, Consumer Federation of America; Omar Vargas, Pepsi-Cola North America; Ann Wright, U.S. Senate

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
- The principle is broad, overarching, and applies to the other principles
- There must be adequate resources to support the work in response to all the principles
- Research is an essential component – industry looks to the Federal Government to have world-class research capabilities
- Research into the root causes of problems and pathogens is the foundation of a risk-based system

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?

- The Federal Government should take a strategic, long-term approach to food safety with specific public health goals. It can't be seen as running from one crisis to another
- Need to improve coordination and collaboration between States and Federal Government

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- Third-party accreditation can play a role, but it needs to be fully transparent. Industry and consumers look to the Federal Government to take the lead and have the main responsibility for food safety
- Industry needs to step up and put resources in the right areas.

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

- Other approaches might need to be explored. For example, what should the structure of the agency be?
- If this is about a shift in resources, maybe we should consider a single food safety agency
- Need to fix underlying statutes, not just rearrange the boxes

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

- There is, in general, a lack of resources for an adequate food safety system
- Standards must be scale appropriate – what works for a large, multinational producer may not be appropriate for a small, local producer
- Need to consider appropriate technology to get more effective use of inspectors

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?

- Federal agencies need to work together, coordinate their efforts, and share their resources to enhance efficiency
- Training and support of State and local efforts is essential – states are the front line of food safety and are facing critical budget shortages
- The Federal agencies need to retain their workforce; appropriate pay and benefits necessary if they are do so
- We should consider helping foreign governments build the capacity to export to the U.S. and meet uniform U.S. equivalency standards applied at the various Federal agencies.

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

- Strategic approach that is risk-based, comprehensive (all hazards), and scale-appropriate will help to target resources effectively
- Research and science can help to move the focus on prevention upstream, earlier in the process, so we do not need to wait for people to become sick before we determine there is a problem
- Need to make maximum use of existing resources and do a better job of coordinating efforts; it's not necessarily all about more new resources