



Dept of Health and Human Service  
Food and Drug Administration  
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition

Re: Western Growers Request that FDA and USDA sign a Food Safety Investigation MOU

Dear Director Mayne,

Each year the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that tens of millions of Americans become ill from food borne illnesses. This is a significant public health burden that is largely preventable, and Congress acted some years ago to engage on this topic by passing the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). FSMA was passed by Congress with the intent of helping to prevent foodborne illness which would result in an increase in both public health and in the economic well-being of the food system itself.

While FSMA is not administered by USDA, the Department has been heavily involved over the years in helping FDA better understand the agricultural sector and the producers over which the law gives them new jurisdiction. More recently, USDA along with FDA and CDC have joined efforts under the One Health Initiative to try and better understand the origins of human food borne illnesses from produce. Working collaboratively with stakeholders, this work has resulted in identifying that one likely origin for such illness is from wild or domesticated animals such as livestock. In particular, *E.coli* 0157:H7 and leafy greens is the notable pathogen and produce pairing that is attributed to animals, most likely from livestock cattle.

Western Growers has a long history of engagement with FDA in these efforts. We have been involved in outbreak investigations, we have been involved in securing voluntary data collection on pathogen hazards and a number of other steps to help the FDA undertake investigations to better understand sources of pathogen outbreaks. We would however ask the FDA to undertake an additional step in that regard.

**Specifically, we ask that FDA sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the USDA.** This MOU would be modeled upon the April 2014 MOU between FSIS and USDA APHIS Veterinary Services (attached). The 2014 MOU allows FSIS and APHIS to work collaboratively to help conduct root cause analysis for food borne illness outbreaks. Under the MOU if FSIS needs assistance investigating an outbreak of Salmonella in poultry they can request assistance from APHIS to work down the supply chain to do so. We think there is value in having a similar MOU in the context of food borne illness' under the FDA's jurisdiction so that a root cause analysis could be conducted on downstream operations just as they would be if for a food borne illness conducted under FSIS' jurisdiction.

We would like to discuss this request at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

*De Ann Davis, PhD*

Senior Vice President, Science  
Western Growers  
[ddavis@wga.com](mailto:ddavis@wga.com)  
949.591.7171

CC: Deputy Commissioner Frank Yiannas