

FDA NEWS RELEASE

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Media Inquiries: Doug Karas, 301-796-2805, douglas.karas@fda.hhs.gov

Consumer Inquiries: 1-888-INFO-FDA

FDA: Pilot projects to explore ways to trace sources of foodborne illness

Required under Food Safety Modernization Act

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today said that two new pilot projects will enhance the agency' s and industry' s ability to trace products responsible for foodborne illness outbreaks.

The Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), a nonprofit scientific society consisting of professionals engaged in food science, food technology, and related professions, will carry out the pilots at the direction of FDA, under an existing FDA contract.

The Food Safety Modernization Act requires the FDA to establish at least two pilot projects: one involving produce and one involving processed foods. Signed into law in January, the act also directs the FDA to establish recordkeeping requirements for high-risk foods to help in tracing products.

“ We can prevent illnesses and reduce the economic impact to the food industry if we can more quickly determine what foods may be causing an outbreak and what foods can be eliminated from consideration,” said Michael R. Taylor, FDA deputy commissioner for foods. “ We recognize the importance of engaging stakeholders throughout the process and will consider what is practical for facilities of varying sizes and capabilities.”

The pilots will evaluate methods and technologies for rapid and effective tracing of foods, including types of data that are useful for tracing, ways to connect the various points in the supply chain, and how quickly the data are made available to the FDA.

Key stakeholder groups, including industry, government, and consumers, will have input into the pilots, and efforts will be made to include those representing the food supply chain – from farms to restaurants and grocery stores.

After the pilots are completed and additional data is gathered, the FDA will initiate rulemaking on recordkeeping requirements for high-risk foods to facilitate tracing. The FDA must define high-risk foods, considering such factors as the known risks of a food based on

foodborne illness data, the likelihood that a particular food has a high potential risk for contamination, and the likely severity of an illness attributed to a particular food. The FDA will hold three public meetings during the comment period on the proposed rule.

For more information:

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