



Consumer Federation of America

Deregulation and Food Safety

Federal food safety regulations protect public health and level the playing field for companies that operate responsibly and ethically. Each year in the United States, 48 million people are sickened by a foodborne disease, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die. The annual economic cost of these illnesses is estimated to be over [\\$77 billion](#). Yet food companies that make people sick are [seldom held accountable in a courtroom](#).

This is partly because victims of foodborne illness often cannot determine the source of their infection. Consider:

- Up to 28 days may pass between the time a consumer eats a contaminated food and develops listeriosis, an infection that [killed 33 people](#) who ate Jensen Farms cantaloupes in 2011.
- Up to six weeks may pass before feeling the effects of poisoning from *Salmonella typhimurium*, the pathogen that killed nine people and sickened 714 others who ate peanut butter paste manufactured at a Georgia plant [under then-Georgia governor Sonny Perdue's watch](#).

Most people have a tough time recalling everything they ate a day ago, much less a month ago. And most food safety lapses, thankfully, [do not result in high-profile outbreaks](#) that are ultimately traced back to their source. But that does not mean we can ignore them.

Regulations to prevent food safety threats cost less than reacting after people get sick. That is why large bipartisan majorities have supported laws like the Food Safety Modernization Act and appropriations for food inspectors, epidemiologists, microbiologists, and the rest of the people and infrastructure that make our food safe.

Unfortunately, the Trump Administration has already begun undermining the American food supply's protections in the name of "deregulation," with actions such as:

- [Nixing rules](#) to standardize how manufacturers and retailers alert consumers to recalls of contaminated products—rules that are required under the Food Safety Modernization Act.
- Proposing to [cut billions of dollars](#) of funding, including nearly the entire budget of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, and replace it with user fees.
- Moving to authorize [chicken imports from China](#), where overuse of antibiotics has bred "superbugs" resistant to drugs once thought of as a last resort, and scandal after scandal has exposed a deeply flawed food safety system. The move is widely viewed as a *quid pro quo* to allow more U.S. beef sales in China.
- Proposing [double-digit cuts](#) to funding for surveillance of foodborne illness outbreaks by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and its partners.
- Pushing to [expand](#) the disastrous "Hog HIMP" pilot inspection program at slaughterhouses despite evidence of disturbing [animal welfare and worker and food safety problems](#).

Trying to save money for American families by scrimping on food safety regulation is a penny-wise, pound-foolish strategy. American consumers spend roughly \$1.46 trillion on food and beverages each year. We should not have to wonder whether we are paying to get sick.