



Consumer Federation of America

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CFA Urges Congress to Act Quickly to Reform FDA

Consumer Federation of America today urged Congress to move quickly to provide the Food and Drug Administration with essential authorities to protect consumers from contaminated food. A hearing held today on the Salmonella outbreak linked to peanut butter and peanut butter products by the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations provided further evidence that the FDA does not have necessary tools to assure the safety of the foods it regulates.

“Congress has held numerous hearings on the inability of the FDA to protect the food supply,” said Chris Waldrop, Director of the Food Policy Institute at Consumer Federation of America. “These hearings have provided invaluable information about the problems facing FDA. But the time for talk is over. It’s now time to act.”

Consumer Federation of America has long advocated for specific changes that would require FDA to adopt a program that *prevents* foodborne illness, rather than just reacting to a problem after it has occurred. These changes include:

- **Preventive process controls**, which would require food processing plants to perform a hazard analysis and develop preventive controls to reduce the risk of contamination;
- **Mandatory performance standards** for pathogen reduction;
- **A minimum inspection frequency** for all plants;
- **A comprehensive traceability system** to trace food products from the farm to the table;
- **Mandatory recall authority**;
- **Enhanced access to plant records**; and
- **Increased civil penalties** against persons who break the law.

“These changes are critical for FDA to develop a modern, prevention-oriented food safety program,” Waldrop said. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 600 people have been sickened in 44 states by a *Salmonella Typhimurium* outbreak linked to peanut products produced by the Peanut Corporation of America in Blakely, Georgia. Eight people have died. “Had these changes already been in place, FDA may have been able to prevent this terrible outbreak from occurring in the first place,” Waldrop added.

Legislation already introduced in the House would provide the FDA with these essential authorities. One bill by Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro would go a step further to address the inadequate food safety structure at the Department of Health and Human Services and place a single person in charge of food safety.

“Congress must act quickly to pass legislation that will significantly enhance the FDA’s ability to protect the food supply,” Waldrop said. “Consumers cannot afford to wait until the next outbreak.”

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Consumer Federation of America is a non-profit association of over 300 organizations, with a combined membership of over 50 million Americans. CFA’s Food Policy Institute was created in 1999 and engages in research, education and advocacy on food and agricultural policy, agricultural biotechnology, food safety and nutrition.