



Consumer Federation of America

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FSIS Policy on Traceback a Step Forward

Today's announcement by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service on new traceback measures is a good step forward. For several years, Consumer Federation of America and other consumer groups have been urging the agency to fully trace ground beef that tests positive for *E. coli* O157:H7 back to the originating source. CFA has also urged FSIS to then trace product forward through the supply chain to identify potentially contaminated product from that same source that may have been sold to additional establishments.

Previous FSIS policy meant that the agency would conduct a thorough traceback and trace forward investigation only after contaminated product in the marketplace had resulted in a foodborne illness outbreak and sickened consumers. Consumer groups had urged the agency to take a more preventive approach and conduct these same tracing activities whenever the agency identified a positive test result for *E. coli* O157:H7 in its testing program. Quickly tracing contaminated product through the supply chain and back to the original source of contamination is essential to limiting the risk to consumers of contaminated food.

"Tracing contaminated food through the food supply chain quickly and effectively is essential to protect consumers from foodborne illness," said Chris Waldrop, Director of the Food Policy Institute at Consumer Federation of America. "By conducting traceback activities early, following a presumptive positive test result for *E. coli* O157:H7, FSIS could potentially prevent foodborne illness outbreaks from occurring in the first place."

Traceback activities are particularly important for ground beef because small grinding facilities may purchase and re-grind a small portion of a given slaughterhouse's product lot of beef while the rest is purchased by other facilities. If FSIS testing reveals adulteration at one grinding facility, traceback is essential to determine the source of that contamination and to identify other facilities that may have purchased beef from that contaminated lot to prevent that product from entering commerce.

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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.