

May 9, 2007

The Honorable Herb Kohl
Chairman
Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Bennett
Ranking Member
Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kohl and Senator Bennett:

We are writing to express our support for increased funding in response to the recent pet food contamination, which has exposed serious gaps in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) ability to protect our food supply. As you are well aware, what began as a recall of pet food has expanded dramatically and may have entered or come close to entering the human food supply.

Shortfalls in FDA's funding keep it from successfully fulfilling its mission. FDA's resources have not kept pace with its responsibilities and increasing quantities of imported food products will continue to stress FDA's capabilities. For this reason, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee provides a substantial increase in the Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08) Agriculture Appropriations Bill for the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN) and related activities at the Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA), which house the FDA's food safety inspection program.

The FDA's mission is one of the broadest jurisdictions in the federal government. It is responsible for ensuring the safety, efficacy, and security of human and veterinary drugs, biological products, medical devices, our nation's food supply, cosmetics, products that emit radiation, and much more. Overall, it is estimated that the FDA is responsible for regulating a range of products that accounts for 25 percent of consumer spending.

However, FDA's budgets have not adequately reflected the critical role it plays in our nation's food safety system or its increasing responsibilities. This reality becomes particularly clear when you compare FDA's budget to the budgets of other public health agencies, the budget and inspection staff of U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), and the remarkable increase in food imports over the past two decades.

Compared to other public health agencies, FDA's budget has not kept pace. From 1986 to 2006, FDA's budget increased by about three and a half times from \$416.7 million to \$1.5 billion. At the same time, the budget for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) increased more than twelve times from \$429.4 million to \$5.2 billion and the budget for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) increased by about five times from \$5.1 billion to \$27.7 billion.

The USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service is responsible for approximately 20 percent of the food supply by value. The other 80 percent is inspected and regulated by the FDA. However, in the FY08 Budget, the Administration proposes allocating about \$930 million to FSIS, of which \$840 million is for inspections, while the Administration proposes only \$467 million for the entire Foods Program (Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition and related field activities in the Office of Regulatory Affairs), of which \$312 million is for inspections. In fact, the number of Program Level Full-Time Employees (FTEs) in FDA's Foods Program has actually declined from 3,082 in FY2004 to 2,613 in FY07. Although the Administration proposed a \$10.6 million increase in the FDA Foods Program, this increase didn't match the proposed \$100 million increase for USDA FSIS.

Last, we are concerned by limitations on FDA's budget in light of the increasing quantity of food the United States is importing each year. While FDA's budget has remained nearly flat and the number of FTEs in the Foods Program has actually decreased, the value of agricultural imports has increased dramatically from \$45.6 billion in FY03 to \$64 billion in FY06. Agricultural imports from China increased from \$1.2 billion to \$2.1 billion during this time period. Significant increases also occurred in our volume of agricultural imports from Indonesia, India, Thailand, and Guatemala.

While we recognize the fiscal constraints faced by the Subcommittee, we believe that you share our concerns about the safety of our food supply and FDA's ability to meet its expanding food safety responsibilities. We appreciate the Subcommittee's willingness to consider this request to provide a significant increase in the FY08 Agriculture Appropriations Bill for CFSAN and related activities at the ORA.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with you on this request.

Sincerely,
