

JOINT INTRODUCTION to the 2005 FOOD CODE

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are pleased to release the 2005 edition of the Food Code. This edition of the Food Code provides practical, science-based guidance and manageable, enforceable provisions for mitigating risk factors known to cause foodborne illness. The Code is a reference document for regulatory agencies that ensure food safety in food service establishments, retail food stores, other food establishments at the retail level, and institutions, such as nursing homes and child care centers. Food safety is a top priority for HHS and USDA, and we endorse and encourage the adoption of the Code.

After issuance of the 1993 Food Code, we have revised and updated the Food Code every 2 years through 2001. In 2001, FDA, in collaboration with USDA, CDC, and the Conference for Food Protection, decided to move to a 4-year interval between publications of complete Food Code revisions.

In 2003, FDA issued only a Supplement to the 2001 Food Code that updated the 2001 Food Code to address current science, and several recommendations made by the 2002 Conference for Food Protection with which the FDA, CDC, and USDA concurred. This edition, the 2005 Food Code, constitutes the first full edition of the Food Code published since 2001 and contains the Supplement updates, additional changes reflecting current science, emerging food safety issues, and the 2004 Conference for Food Protection recommendations.

Ensuring safe food remains an important public health priority for our nation. An estimated 76 million illnesses, 325,000 hospitalizations, and 5,000 deaths are attributable to foodborne illness in the United States each year. For some consumers, foodborne illness results only in mild, temporary discomfort or lost time from work or other daily activity. For others, especially pre-school age children, older adults, and those with impaired immune systems, foodborne illness may have serious or long-term consequences, and most seriously, may be life threatening. The risk of foodborne illness is of increasing concern due to changes in the global market, aging of our population, increasing numbers of immunocompromised and immunosuppressed individuals, changes in consumer eating habits, and changes in food production practices.

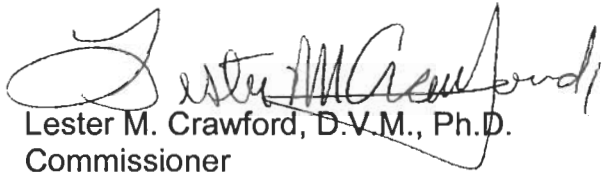
Significantly, food safety continues as a priority action area of *Healthy People 2010*, the comprehensive, nationwide set of health promotion and disease prevention objectives designed to serve as a 10-year strategy for improving health in the United States. *Healthy People 2010* objectives include reducing infections caused by foodborne pathogens, reducing outbreaks of foodborne illness, and improving food employee behaviors and food preparation practices that directly relate to foodborne illnesses in retail food establishments.

Since September 11, 2001, our attention has also been focused on food security. It is now essential to have food safety programs that are built upon sound science and address food security. We encourage all jurisdictions to examine the level of food protection their current implementation strategies provide, and take the steps necessary to increase that level in light of the 2005 Food Code.

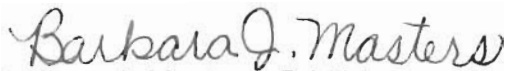
Food Code adoption and implementation in all jurisdictions is important for achieving uniform national food safety standards and for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of our nation's food safety system. As of September 2004, 45 states and one territory representing more than three-quarters of the population of the United States have adopted one of the five editions of the Food Code. Seven additional states and two territories are in the process of adoption. Many Federal agencies and tribal governments have adopted the Code as well. We commend these jurisdictions and agencies and urge others to either update their existing codes or, for those who have not yet begun this process, initiate rule-making activities.

HHS and USDA, along with state and local and other federal and tribal government agencies, and the food industry, share responsibility for ensuring that our food supply is safe. HHS and USDA, in partnership with numerous others, will continue to take progressive steps to strengthen our nation's food safety system. We look forward to achieving uniform and effective standards of food safety for food service, retail stores, institutions, schools, and other retail-level establishments nationwide.

Working together, we will rise to the challenge of making sure all consumers continue to enjoy a safe food supply.



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