



March 31, 2020

Dr. Mindy Brashears  
Under Secretary, Food Safety  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Dr. Brashears:

We write to urge you to address a number of critical issues associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. As you know, there is pressure across the food supply chain to ensure the availability and affordability of food and there is a risk that the absence of an adequate level of personnel could impact safety and supply.

As you consider the best approaches to resolve issues that have arisen during the pandemic to ensure the safety and availability of products regulated by the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), we urge you to take the following actions:

- **Provide Transparency:** Report/publicize the number of FSIS inspection personnel testing positive and/or becoming ill with COVID-19 as they occur.
- **Ensure Food Inspectors and Workers are Safe:** Determine whether an establishment's Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP) is adequate to respond to the pandemic and protect the safety of inspectors and industry personnel. If the SSOP is determined to be inadequate, work with the establishment to implement corrective actions.
- **Emphasize Monitoring of Establishment Prevention Plans:** Closely monitor an establishment's Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plans to ensure compliance. If staffing levels at establishments become impacted by the pandemic, it becomes critical to ensure it does not impact compliance with SSOP and HACCP.
- **Dedicate New Resources to Food Safety:** Ensure that the additional funding FSIS receives by Congress for COVID-19 response is allocated toward inspection- and food safety-related tasks.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues. We appreciate the work FSIS personnel do on a daily basis to maintain the safety and availability of meat and poultry products; their work is even more appreciated during these challenging times. Let us know how Consumer Reports can be helpful with efforts to inform consumers of important COVID-19 developments.

Best wishes,

/s/

Brian Ronholm  
Director, Food Policy