

Message Outline for Food Safety Event

- I. This week marks the fourth anniversary of a frightening outbreak of e.coli in undercooked hamburgers in the Pacific Northwest.
- II. This Administration understands that government can't do everything. But we also recognize that there are some things that *only* government can do – and one of them is taking the lead in ensuring the safety of our nation's food supply.
- III. The U.S. has one of the safest food supplies in the world. But there's still a lot more that needs to be done. By some estimates, as many as 9,000 deaths and 33 million illnesses in the U.S. each year are food-related. Hospital costs are estimated to be more than \$3 billion a year.
- IV. I want to review the progress we've made in the past four years and to announce some specific action steps to ensure that our food supply is the safest in the world.

A: Progress in past four years:

- ◆ New science-based approach for seafood inspection introduced in December, 1995.
- ◆ Similar new science-based requirements for meat and poultry inspection announced in July, 1996. These tough new prevention-oriented requirements go into effect this week.
- ◆ Safe Drinking Water Act signed in July 1996.
- ◆ CDC opened five sentinel sites to detect and study food-borne pathogens in 1995.
- ◆ Signed the Food Quality Protection Act in August, 1996, to protect all Americans, and especially children, from unsafe levels of pesticides in food.

B: New steps I am announcing today:

- New national early warning system for food-borne illnesses that will include three new sites, in addition to the five that are currently operating, and new systems for faster and more effective coordination and communication between federal health authorities and state and local governments. More disease detectives; and building of nationwide computerized DNA "fingerprint" library of food-borne pathogens to allow investigators to rapidly determine the source of a food-borne illness.

- To pay for these new measures, I will request \$42 million in addition investments for food-safety in the 1998 budget I will send to Congress on February 6.
- Finally, I am directing the Secretaries of HHS and Agriculture, and the Environmental Protection Administrator, to work with consumers groups and private industry and report back to me within 90 days on measures we can put in place to make the system even stronger.

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generated will help counteract existing foodborne illnesses and will assist in preventing future outbreaks.

Among the actions being taken to establish an early warning system are :

- Adding three additional food safety surveillance sites for tracking foodborne illness, significantly increasing the number of such sites that have been operating throughout the U.S. since July 1995.
- Creating new electronic and computer communication networks that will allow rapid dissemination of epidemiologic and laboratory data throughout the country -- among these sites, and to public health agencies.
- Introducing state-of-the-art laboratory capabilities like "DNA fingerprinting" to these sites so that type of disease and its source can be more readily identified.
- Increasing the number of "Disease Detectives" -- expert scientists who can investigate foodborne disease outbreaks and measures for combating them.

The surveillance system will use the resources of three federal agencies -- the Department of Health and Human Service's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and U.S. Department of Agriculture -- and the health departments of the states where the sites are located. The system is designed to track foodborne illnesses to their sources in order to learn how these pathogens are passed from food to humans. This information will then be rapidly provided to the public health agencies who are responsible for ensuring food safety.

This system will help meet emerging challenges to the food supply such as the appearance of novel pathogens and the growing

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resistance of some recognized pathogens to standard treatments. The greater diversity of the American food supply, including the larger role that imported foods play in the American diet, require strengthened systems of interagency coordination, surveillance, prevention, control, research and education to reduce the incidence.

The new national early warning system will help identify outbreaks earlier, preventing illnesses and possibly deaths. The 8 sentinel sites will also gather data that will advance scientific understanding of foodborne illness and further efforts to identify and prevent harmful contamination of the food supply.

To date, the first five sentinel sites have gathered data on more than 2,570 reported cases of foodborne illness, including physical samples which have been sent to CDC for further analyses. This data is broadening the base of scientific knowledge on such infectious bacteria as *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *Shigella* and *E. coli*.

This food safety initiative builds upon a series of actions that have been taken over the past few years to introduce state-of-the-art, science-based approaches toward protecting the food supply.

These actions include:

- Updating the requirements for seafood, meat and poultry by incorporating food hazard prevention mechanisms -- bringing on line science-based approaches to preventing food contamination.
- Strengthening the Safe Drinking Water Act.

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- Signing the Food Quality Protection Act which sets forth a new approach for streamlining the regulation of pesticides with an emphasis on public health protection for children.
- Providing an additional \$42 million in resources for on going food safety programs such as FDA's seafood HACCP program and USDA's consumer education efforts.

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CLINTON ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES NEW FOOD SAFETY MEASURES

The Clinton Administration today announced new measures to increase the safety of the nation's food supply. Stricter safety precautions for fruit and vegetable juices, improved seafood inspections, increased investment in research, risk assessment and surveillance, and a new national public education campaign top the list of initiatives included in the Administration report, "Food Safety From Farm to Table."

"Our families must be able to sit down at mealtime without any worries about the safety of their food," President Clinton said. "We can give them that peace of mind, but we have to work harder and smarter using new technologies and educating people to ensure that food travels safely from the farm to the table."

In his January 25 radio address, the President announced he was requesting \$43.2 million for food safety in his FY 1998 budget and requested a report detailing recommendations on ways to further improve food safety. The Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency, working with state and local officials, the food industry, scientists, consumer, and producer groups, developed the report, which calls for improved inspections, public education and greater use of the latest science to dramatically reduce foodborne illness.

"This Administration is using the most modern science and a common-sense approach to public health regulation to protect our families," said Vice President Al Gore. "Improving food safety has been a public health priority of the Clinton Administration from its beginning, and these recommendations will take our efforts to a whole new level."

A key element of the Administration's food safety efforts has been the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) approach that requires the food industry to use the most modern science to identify sources of potential contamination in food production and transportation and then put in place preventive measures. Already required by the Food and Drug Administration for seafood and by USDA for meat and poultry, FDA will propose preventive measures, including HACCP, for the manufacture of fruit and vegetable juice products, and USDA will propose HACCP and other appropriate regulatory and non-regulatory options for egg products.

In addition to moving toward a science-based, preventive approach to food safety, the Administration continues to improve the effectiveness of food safety inspections. Specifically, the additional funds requested for FY 1998 will allow the FDA to add

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inspectors to implement seafood HACCP and to expand its program to develop additional mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) with trading partners ensuring that imported foods are produced and manufactured under systems that offer comparable safety measures to those used in the United States. With the new funds, FDA will also be able to provide technical assistance to foreign countries on safe growing and handling practices.

The Administration is already taking steps to put in place the new National Early Warning System President Clinton announced in January to track and combat outbreaks of foodborne illness. This fiscal year, two new FoodNet sentinel sites were added in New York and Maryland. With funds requested for the upcoming fiscal year, an eighth site will open. This surveillance system is supported by the CDC, FDA and USDA, working with state authorities. New funds included in the FY 1998 budget will also allow these sites to update technology and build a "fingerprinting" database of bacterial DNA. This will enable food safety experts to clear any geographic hurdle to their work by having a national resource that can help them quickly identify contaminated foods that are the sources of foodborne illness.

Under the Administration's plan, work will start immediately on a national public education campaign on safe food handling. Today, an unprecedented public-private partnership was established among government agencies and industry and consumer groups to develop a food safety education campaign aimed at consumers. Partners in the campaign, which will kick-off later this year, include USDA, FDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Education, Food Marketing Institute, the American Meat Institute, National Restaurant Association, Grocery Manufacturers of America, Produce Marketing Association, the American Egg Board, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, Public Voice for Food and Health Policy, Safe Food Coalition, and Consumer Federation of America [verify against final MOU].

Research to develop quick, reliable scientific methods for detecting contamination -- like the Hepatitis A virus and cyclospora -- will ensure that public health agencies have the necessary tools to prevent and control outbreaks of foodborne illnesses. The latest research will also explore how pathogens become resistant to traditional food preservation techniques such as heat and refrigeration, and will support new pathogen control methods.

Also under the new initiative, EPA, FDA and the CDC will collaborate with state and local health departments on research to help health officials better predict and control outbreaks of waterborne microbial contaminants, such as cryptosporidium.

FDA

"We have built a solid foundation for the health of America's families. But clearly we must do more. No parent should have to think twice about the juice they pour their children at breakfast, or a hamburger ordered during dinner out."

- President Bill Clinton, Radio Address, January 25, 1997

Today, Vice President Al Gore accepted a major report -- "Food Safety From Farm to Table" -- on how to reduce the incidence of foodborne illnesses from Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala, Department of Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Carol M. Browner. The report, requested by President Clinton in January, sets forth new steps the Administration will take this year to strengthen food safety and details how we will use \$43.2 in new funds the President has requested in his 1998 budget.

Working with consumers, producers, industry, states, universities, and the public, the Administration has developed measures to reduce foodborne illness from microbial contaminants; the Administration will:

- o **Improve inspections and expand preventive safety measures:** FDA will use \$8.5 million of the new funds, in part, to hire additional Food and Drug Administration (FDA) inspectors for seafood plants and to expand the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) approach to the fruit and vegetable juice industries. USDA will propose preventive measures, including HACCP, this year for egg products. *Shell out*
- o **Increase research to develop new tests to detect foodborne pathogens and to assess risks in the food supply:** The agencies will target \$16.5 million to critical research needs, such as giving federal, state and local food safety officials new tools to detect these pathogens, some of which -- like the Hepatitis A virus and cyclospora -- cannot now be detected in many foods. *and Prevention (CDC)*
- o **Build a national Early Warning System to detect and respond to outbreaks of foodborne illness earlier, and to give us the data we need to prevent future outbreaks:** with \$13.7 million of the new funds, USDA, FDA, and Centers for Disease Control will increase the number of active "sentinel sites" across the country from 5 to 8 (current sites are in Northern California, Oregon, Minnesota, Georgia and Connecticut; new sites added this year are in New York and Maryland, and the eighth will open next year) and will equip these sites with new technology to identify the diseases and their sources and to communicate these findings nationwide rapidly.
- o **Establish a national education campaign that will improve food handling in homes and retail outlets.** FDA, USDA, CDC, and the Department of Education will launch a new public-private partnership with industry *and states* and consumer groups to raise public awareness of safe food practices. Using public and private funds, the partnership will develop, disseminate, and evaluate a single food-safety slogan and several standard messages. USDA and FDA will use \$4 million of the new 1998 funds to support this and other education activities.

- o **Strengthen coordination and improve efficiency:** USDA, CDC, FDA and EPA will form a new intergovernmental group to improve federal, state and local responses to outbreaks of foodborne illnesses. Working with all stakeholders, the agencies will develop a strategic plan to further improve coordination, use resources more efficiently, and measure progress toward our common goal of reducing foodborne.

Building on Our Accomplishments

Food safety is a major public health challenge: millions of foodborne illnesses and thousands of food-related deaths occur annually. From the beginning, the Clinton Administration has made improving the safety of the nation's food supply a top public health priority.

- o **Building on the recommendations of the Vice President's National Performance Review, the President put in place new science-based, hazard prevention systems for seafood, meat, and poultry.** In late 1995 the Administration issued new rules to ensure seafood safety. In July, 1996 President Clinton announced new regulations to modernize the nation's meat and poultry inspection system for the first time in 90 years. The new Early Warning System will gather critical scientific data to further improve these prevention systems
- o **[For the past x years, the Administration has increased funding to fight emerging infectious disease threats, some of which are foodborne.** The actions in this report build on those investments in federal and state technology and manpower]
- o **In August, 1996 President Clinton signed the Food Quality Protection Act -- a comprehensive overhaul of our laws that regulate pesticides in food** putting in place reforms that the Clinton Administration had urged since 1993. These reforms will ensure health and safety for American families through a more protective, more stringent health-based standard plus special new provisions to protect the health of infants and children from pesticide risks.
- o **Last August, President Clinton also signed a new safe drinking water law** that strengthens protections to ensure that American families have clean safe tap water -- improvements that the Clinton Administration has called for since September 1993.

FDA comments

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In his January 25 radio address, the President announced he was requesting \$43.2 million for food safety in his FY 1998 budget and requested a report detailing recommendations on ways to further improve food safety. The Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency, working with state and local officials, the food industry, scientists and consumer groups, developed the report, which calls for improved inspections, public education and greater use of the latest science

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A key element of the Administration's food safety efforts has been the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) approach that requires the food industry to use the most modern science to identify sources of potential contamination in food production and transportation and then put in place preventive measures. Already required by the Food and Drug Administration for seafood and by USDA for meat and poultry, FDA will propose preventive measures, including HACCP, for the manufacture of fruit and vegetable juice products, and USDA will propose HACCP and other appropriate regulatory and non-regulatory options for egg products. These proposals will be made this year, and will require additional funding in future years when implemented.

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As new ways of growing, processing, packaging, and transporting foods are used, other avenues of contamination and some new food pathogens are emerging. Research to develop quick, reliable scientific methods for detecting contamination -- like the Hepatitis A virus and cyclospora -- will ensure that public health agencies have the necessary tools to prevent and control outbreaks of foodborne illnesses. The latest research will also explore how pathogens become resistant to food-preservation techniques and antibiotics.

Also under the new initiative, EPA, FDA and the CDC will collaborate with state and local health departments on research to help health officials better predict and control outbreaks of waterborne microbial contaminants, such as cryptosporidium.

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NATIONAL
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