

The Food Safety Research Consortium's

FSII Project

Harnessing Knowledge To Ensure Food Safety

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Context for the Report

- ◆ Widely shared vision of a more science- and risk-based food safety system -- in which the best available information is marshaled to understand and prevent risks
- ◆ New risk-based initiatives underway at FDA and USDA
- ◆ Food industry calls for more effective, science-based prevention
- ◆ Congressional consideration of reforms

Goals of the Report

- ◆ Outline the crucial role of information in ensuring food safety
- ◆ Analyze the current state of the nation's "food safety information infrastructure" (FSII)
- ◆ Report on recent progress
- ◆ Identify problems and constraints
- ◆ Recommend improvements

Definition of FSII

The “food safety information infrastructure” includes -

“All of the many public and private institutions, programs and processes through which data and other information are collected, made accessible, and actively shared to ensure food safety.”

Key Findings

- ◆ The FSII is vastly complex and thoroughly decentralized
- ◆ Information generation is expanding rapidly
- ◆ Much progress made on better collection and sharing of information
 - FoodNet
 - PulseNet
 - eLEXNET
- ◆ Much room remains for further progress
- ◆ There's wide interest in next steps

Key Findings (con't)

- ◆ Coordination of information collection remains limited
- ◆ Much information is not accessible in a timely and useful manner
 - Government
 - Industry
 - Academia
- ◆ Information sharing constrained by -
 - Institutional factors - law, policy, business, tradition
 - Technical considerations - lack of harmonized methods
 - Resources - in government and all sectors

The Epidemiology Example

- ◆ Food safety epidemiology data and analysis are crucial to ensuring food safety
- ◆ Data mostly generated by state and local agencies, with CDC playing repository and analyst roles
- ◆ Data needed by regulatory agencies, industry and consumers, who would like --
 - Greater role in planning data collection and analysis
 - More timely access to existing data
 - More flexible and deep access to existing data
- ◆ CDC data sharing is constrained by --
 - Limited resources
 - Privacy concerns and duty to states and localities
 - Publishing traditions
- ◆ CDC seeks improvement but lacks clear mandate and essential resources to focus on data sharing

Major Conclusions

- ◆ Decentralization is a reality and a strength to be preserved, but greater interconnectivity is needed
- ◆ The major obstacles to progress are institutional -
 - Understandable focus on the job at hand
 - Lack of incentives and means for addressing system needs
 - Lack of focal point for leadership
- ◆ Solutions must address institutional constraints

Broad Recommendations

- ◆ National policy and program to improve the FSII
 - Define FSII duties of federal agencies
 - Provide federal leadership to engage all stakeholders in any change process
 - Provide necessary resources
- ◆ Mechanisms for implementation
 - FSII Council
 - FSII Stakeholders Forum
- ◆ High priority on epidemiology and better sharing of federal information in general

Other Major Recommendations

- ◆ Food Safety Epidemiology User Group
- ◆ “Network of Networks” and Information Gateway
- ◆ Database for tracking research and data collection
- ◆ Targeted analyses to identify information gaps
- ◆ Dialogue to prioritize information needs
- ◆ Better access to information from publicly-funded research
- ◆ Access to industry-generated information

No Easy Solutions

- ◆ The status quo exists for reasons and is hard to change
- ◆ Progress requires both “top down” commitment and “bottom up” implementation
- ◆ Any measure must deliver results people value to be sustainable
- ◆ Most measures will require new resources

For further information....

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