

October 10, 2024

Dear Members of Congress,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to convey our endorsement of the Expanded Food Safety Investigation Act (EFSIA) (S.2782/H.R.4110). This bill grants public health agencies the tools they need to investigate foodborne outbreaks on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), also known as factory farms.

Food in the United States is frequently unsafe. Each year, 1 in 6 Americans get sick from foodborne diseases, many of which are transmitted from animals raised in agriculture.¹ Over half of foodborne *Salmonella* cases have been estimated to come from consuming chicken, pork, and other animal products.² Furthermore, pathogens can spread from animal feeding operations into the environment, as likely occurred in 2018 when a large cattle feeding operation was the likely source of a nationwide *E. coli* outbreak.^{3,4} The deadly *E. coli* bacteria likely traveled from the cattle operation through irrigation canals and then contaminated nearby romaine lettuce.

Unfortunately, when outbreaks spread from farm animals, public health officials have a limited ability to respond. Unlike other food producers in the US, animal agricultural producers are allowed to bar the door to federal officials seeking to investigate foodborne outbreaks. The owners of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) have blocked investigators from collecting pathogen samples during outbreaks, making it difficult for public health agencies to determine the exact source of an outbreak, how to halt its spread, and how to prevent future occurrences.⁵

EFSIA would address this problem by enabling the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other federal agencies to detect the source of outbreaks that occur in CAFOs by conducting microbial sampling when there is an outbreak or other public health need. As a result, federal officials and farmers could better determine the source of foodborne illness, and new data could inform best practices to prevent future outbreaks.

¹ Estimates of foodborne illness in the United States. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Updated November 5, 2018. Accessed August 10, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/foodborneburden/2011-foodborne-estimates.html>

² Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration. Foodborne illness source attribution estimates for 2020 for *Salmonella*, *Escherichia coli* O157, *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Campylobacter* using multi-year outbreak surveillance data. Atlanta, GA and Washington D.C.: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Food and Drug Administration, Food Safety and Inspection Service; 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/ifsac/media/pdfs/P19-2021-report-TriAgency-508.pdf>

³ Schaffer E. FDA: Potential link between CAFO, contaminated lettuce. August 7, 2018. Accessed August 10, 2023. <https://www.meatpoultry.com/articles/19946-fda-potentiallink-between-cafo-contaminated-lettuce>

⁴ Environmental assessment of factors potentially contributing to the contamination of romaine lettuce implicated in a multi-state outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7. Food and Drug Administration. November 1, 2018. Accessed August 10, 2023. <https://www.fda.gov/food/outbreaks-foodborne-illness/environmental-assessment-factors-potentially-contributing-contamination-romaine-lettuce-implicated>

⁵ Richtel M. Tainted pork, ill consumers and an investigation thwarted. The New York Times. August 4, 2019. Accessed August 10, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/04/health/pork-antibiotic-resistance-salmonella.html>

EFSIA provides a vital tool to ensure that federal officials can identify and mitigate foodborne illness risks. Please cosponsor this bill to help keep our food supply safe.

Sincerely,

Antibiotic Resistance Action Center at The George Washington University
Center for Food Safety
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Consumer Federation of America
Consumer Reports
Earthjustice
Environmental Working Group
Food Animal Concerns Trust
Food and Water Watch
KWT Consulting
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
PIRG
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
STOP Foodborne Illness
Strategies for Ethical & Environmental Development (SEED)
World Animal Protection