



January 14, 2011

Dear Colleague:

Foodborne diseases affect tens of millions of people and kill thousands in the United States each year. They also cause billions of dollars in healthcare-related and industry costs annually. In 2010, just one foodborne outbreak sickened thousands of people throughout the country and led to the recall of approximately a half-billion eggs.

We need to ensure that all Americans have access to foods that are both healthy and safe. Reducing the adverse health and economic consequences of foodborne illnesses is a key goal of the new Food Safety Modernization Act, the first major change to food safety laws in the United States since 1938. The legislation lays the foundation for a prevention-based, 21st-century food safety system that makes everyone in the global food chain responsible for safety. The act requires CDC to strengthen the capacity of state and local health departments to respond to foodborne outbreaks and improve the coordination and integration of surveillance systems and laboratory networks. In addition to developing a national strategy for food safety, CDC will support the Food and Drug Administration as it implements new hazard analysis, prevention, performance, and training activities required by the law.

CDC has had a successful history of tracking, rapidly detecting, and investigating foodborne diseases and outbreaks through national networks such as FoodNet and PulseNet. As a result, several foodborne diseases have declined since 1998. Most notably, by 2010, *E. coli* O157 infections were reduced by almost 50%, reaching the *Healthy People 2010* objective one year ahead of schedule. *Salmonella* infections, however, had not declined at all, confirming that much more needs to be done to reduce foodborne illnesses.

Our two primary food safety goals are to decrease the number of *Salmonella* and other food-related illnesses, and to accelerate the public health response to foodborne illness at the local, national, and global levels. CDC is taking action to achieve these goals in the following ways:

- Developing new methods in epidemiology, laboratory science, and environmental health;
- Supporting local, state, federal, and global partners;
- Improving communications with the public health community, industry, and consumers; and
- Targeting information to guide food safety policy.

Through effective leadership and innovation, support from our partners, and targeted information to drive public health policies, we can substantially decrease foodborne diseases.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention