

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Rep. Sam Farr this summer championed efforts in the House of Representatives to significantly boost federal funding for food safety research and oversight efforts.

House versions of the farm bill and the annual agriculture appropriations bill include \$60 million in new money to support work in those areas. Funds would augment the Department of Agriculture's food safety research capacity, increase the federal government's commitment to fund university and other non-federal research and enhance the Food and Drug Administration's food safety oversight role.

“During last year's spinach recall, the nation felt the sting of what happens when our food safeguards fail,” said Rep. Farr (D-Carmel). “Federal, state and local officials are doing everything they can to prevent another outbreak, and these funds will help them in their efforts. The Central Coast, with its billions of dollars in farm sales, is Ground Zero in the work to keep our food safe, and I look forward to pursuing every opportunity to support our farmers and keep our nation healthy.”

The programs:

Farm Bill: \$25 million for fresh produce safety grants. At Rep. Farr's request and with support from Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-Atwater) and other California agriculture advocates, the House of Representatives on July 27 included these funds for food safety research in its version of the farm bill, which is reauthorized every five years.

These competitive grants will be managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and will be awarded to national laboratories, universities, state agricultural stations and other research organizations. This funding is an automatic \$5 million per year in new research funds and won't need to be approved through the annual funding process.

Agriculture Appropriations: \$35 million to overhaul FDA's food safety operations. The House approved funds in its annual appropriations process for the USDA and FDA to plan for and begin work on a comprehensive overhaul of FDA's food safety operations. The bill also

recommends implementation of enforceable safety standards such as the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point, known as HACCP, a food industry control system. In addition to domestic food safety, the FDA is also responsible for overseeing the safety of imported foods, lately a lightning rod for criticism.

"In the past several years, USDA researchers have pursued innovative research programs. Unfortunately, these programs lack funds to pursue research on the scale necessary," said Rep. Farr. "Produce industry leaders have told me again and again that food safety research should be a top federal priority. I'm glad the House has recognized this and I look forward to success in the Senate."

Both the farm bill and the Agriculture Appropriations bill must go through the Senate and be signed by the president. Increased attention to food safety suggests that any versions of these bills would include increased funding for oversight and research. Heightened attention to imports, especially from China, will also lend pressure for federal action.

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