

FDA Strategy for the Safety of Imported Food

American consumers seek a safe, diverse, and abundant food supply that is simultaneously affordable and available throughout the year. To help meet these consumer demands, the United States imports about 15 percent of its overall food supply. Today more than 200 countries or territories and roughly 125,000 food facilities plus farms supply approximately 32 percent of the fresh vegetables, 55 percent of the fresh fruit, and 94 percent of the seafood that Americans consume annually. But this increasingly globalized and complex marketplace has also placed new challenges on our food safety system.

In 2011, Congress passed the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), shifting the focus of federal regulators from responding to contamination to preventing it. Over the last several years, the agency has developed prevention-based standards applicable to foreign and domestic food growers, manufacturers, processors, packers, and holders. In addition to establishing new food safety standards, FSMA has granted FDA new and supplementary oversight and enforcement authorities to ensure industry is meeting these standards. While inspectional oversight remains the primary tool for domestic food producers and is an important tool for foreign producers, Congress determined that more was needed to control the food safety risks associated with imported foods. Through FSMA the FDA was provided with new tools and authorities to meet this need and the agency was charged with creating an oversight system designed primarily to prevent food safety problems from occurring, preferably before the food arrives at our border or reaches the plates of U.S. consumers.

Determining the best way to use the full range of available tools across the different segments of the international food-supply chain — in ways that decrease public health risks while maintaining a level playing field for domestic and foreign producers — requires both dexterity and pragmatism. This strategy document describes how FDA is integrating the new import oversight tools with existing tools as part of a comprehensive approach to imported food safety.

The strategy is guided by four goals:

- **Goal 1: Food Offered for Import Meets U.S. Food Safety Requirements**
- **Goal 2: FDA Border Surveillance Prevents Entry of Unsafe Foods**
- **Goal 3: Rapid and Effective Response to Unsafe Imported Food**
- **Goal 4: Effective and Efficient Food Import Program**

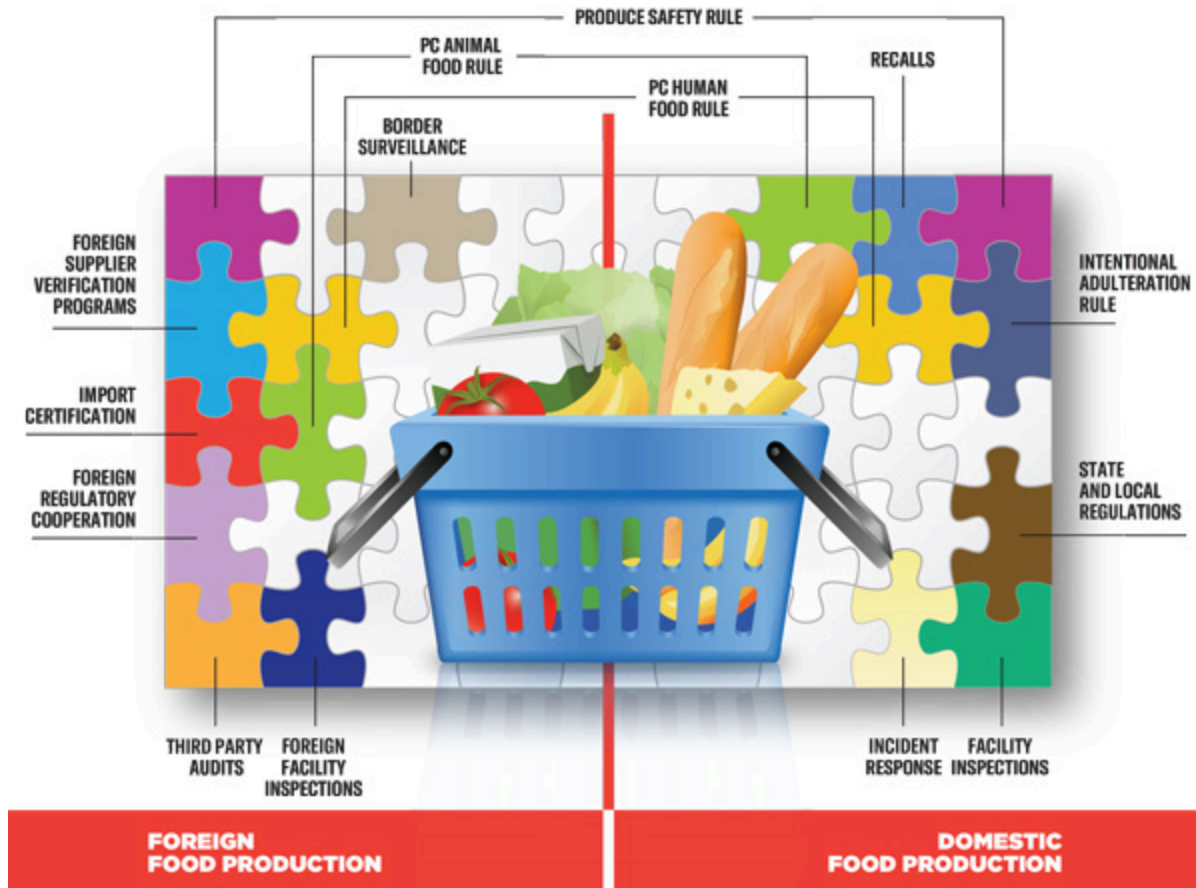
This strategy document outlines several methods the agency is using to accomplish these goals including strategies for objectives.

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PIECING TOGETHER THE PUZZLE OF IMPORTED FOOD SAFETY

The FDA oversees the safety of most of the human and animal food consumed in the United States. An overarching goal of the agency is to ensure that Americans can be confident that food imported from other countries is held to the same safety standard as food produced domestically. To that end, the agency brings together many elements to help ensure that our food is safe to eat, no matter where in the world it is produced. You'll see in the graphic below that despite some differences, many of the same regulations and tools impact both foreign and domestically produced foods.



For More Information

- [Activities for the Safety of Imported Seafood \(/media/165447/download?attachment\)](/media/165447/download?attachment) (PDF)
- [Imported Seafood Safety Program \(/food/importing-food-products-united-states/imported-seafood-safety-program\)](/food/importing-food-products-united-states/imported-seafood-safety-program)
- [Activities for the Safety of Imported Produce \(/food/food-imports-exports/activities-safety-imported-produce\)](/food/food-imports-exports/activities-safety-imported-produce)
- [FDA Food Safety Prevention Strategies \(/food/new-era-smarter-food-safety/prevention-strategies-enhance-food-safety\)](/food/new-era-smarter-food-safety/prevention-strategies-enhance-food-safety)

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Yes

No