Dear Senator/Representative,

We are writing to express our strong opposition to ongoing efforts to delay and undermine the implementation of critical food traceability rules established under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

We urge you to reject and oppose all of the following legislative and administrative attacks and any others that may arise:

* H.R 7563, standalone legislation misleadingly named the Food Traceability Enhancement Act (FTEA)
* Language from FTEA included as a rider in the FY25 House Agriculture Appropriations Bill (H.R. 9027, Section 768)
* Similar language in the report accompanying the Senate’s Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2025 (S. 4690), as well as any other efforts that may arise.
* Any deadline extension requests made directly to FDA that would delay implementation of the Food Traceability Final Rule.

At a time when public health demands stricter oversight, these measures threaten to undo years of progress towards ensuring food safety and transparency in our supply chains.

Key concerns with the bill and appropriations rider include:

1. **Undermining public health and safety** by impeding transparency and accountability in our food supply chain.
2. **Delaying the long-overdue implementation** of the final Food Traceability Rule.
3. **Jeopardizing the integrity** of the Food Safety Modernization Act.
4. **Increasing the risk of foodborne illness outbreaks** and their associated costs.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 in 6 Americans—48 million people—become ill from foodborne diseases annually, resulting in 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. Vulnerable populations—such as older adults, pregnant individuals, and children—are disproportionately affected. Adults over 65 are four times more likely to contract Listeria, and children under five account for one-third of global foodborne illnesses and deaths. This underscores the need for strong traceability systems to safeguard public health.

The Food Safety Modernization Act, enacted in 2010, represented a crucial overhaul of America's food safety laws. Among other provisions, the law required the FDA to designate high-risk foods and require enhanced recordkeeping requirements for those foods to protect public health. In 2020, the FDA published the proposed **Food Traceability Rule**, finalized in 2022, to improve the speed and accuracy of identifying and removing contaminated food from the market. The rule’s foundation is the **Food Traceability List** (FTL), which identifies high-risk foods requiring traceability records. Businesses handling these foods must maintain Key Data Elements (KDEs) linked to Critical Tracking Events (CTEs) throughout the supply chain to ensure traceability.

FTEA, the appropriations rider, and similar efforts would threaten these safeguards by delaying the rule's implementation until two years after additional pilot projects are completed—despite the fact that the FDA has already conducted multiple pilots. A 2013 FDA report detailed the pilot projects' outcomes, and in 2016, the agency presented its recommendations to Congress. The proposed multi-year delay for additional pilot projects is unnecessary given the FDA’s extensive prior work. With implementation of the FSMA scheduled for January 2026, further delays would needlessly endanger public health. ***The food industry has had nearly 15 years to prepare for these changes, making compliance with this deadline both feasible and essential***. Furthermore, the FTEA proposes sweeping exemptions for restaurants, retail food establishments, and warehouses that would seriously weaken the traceability framework.

The U.S. government recommends eating seafood twice a week as an integral part of a healthy diet. Seafood in general is highly sensitive to handling and refrigeration, and improper practices can result in severe illnesses. ***Each year in the U.S., approximately 260,000 people fall ill from eating contaminated fish***, and seafood is frequently implicated in foodborne outbreaks. The seafood supply chain is opaque, with seafood often traveling along a complex path from the fishing vessel to the end consumer.

Mislabeled seafood—such as fish with health advisories sold as safer alternatives, low-cost fish marketed as premium products, or imported fish presented as domestic—harms the U.S. seafood economy and poses risks to sensitive groups such as those who have food allergies or are pregnant. ***Fraudulent seafood labeling enables illegally sourced seafood and products of forced labor to enter the market, often from China and India***. In response to this problem, Louisiana recently enacted legislation targeting seafood mislabeling—especially with shrimp and crawfish—because these practices have damaged local fisheries. Effective federal traceability standards under the FSMA will complement and strengthen state-level efforts, ensuring better food safety and supporting American seafood producers.

We urge you to oppose the Food Traceability Enhancement Act, the appropriations rider, and any similar measures that would delay or weaken these critical food safety regulations. Instead, to protect public health and maintain trust in our food supply, we encourage you to support the full and timely implementation of the FSMA's traceability requirements,

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to your support in maintaining strong food safety standards for all Americans.

Sincerely,