

## FDA Stakeholder Call 3/18/2020

The Food and Drug Administration provided a phone briefing for the food industry today on the agency's role in combating COVID-19 caused by the novel coronavirus. Briefers were Deputy Commissioner Frank Yiannis, Michael Rogers of the Office of Regulatory Affairs (in charge of inspections) and Susan Mayne of the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. Highlights of the briefing included the following:

- There is **no evidence of food or food packaging being involved in transmission** of the disease. This is not a foodborne illness and it is not known to be transmitted via food.
- Low stocks of some items **reflect demand, not supply**. There are no food shortages and manufacturers and retailers are working to replenish shelves.
- FDA is working to monitor the food supply chain and to ensure **food workers can get to and from their jobs** despite any local travel restrictions, since the agriculture and food industry is considered **critical infrastructure** under homeland security laws.
- **Inspection** resources are being prioritized. This means that –
  - **Foreign** facility inspections are postponed through April;
  - Domestically, **routine surveillance** inspections will be postponed; and
  - Only **for-cause or mission-critical** inspections will be carried out, e.g., inspections in connection with a foodborne illness outbreak, a Class I recall or COVID-19.
- FDA will look for ways to achieve its mission without normal **on-site** presence, and will **pre-announce** all inspections except in rare cases.
- The agency is halting enforcement of **supplier verification** on-site audit requirements under FSMA.
- New **FAQs** for the food industry are posted at [FDA's website](#).
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, companies should inform employees of possible exposure but respect confidentiality and **follow CDC guidance**, as well as consulting local health agencies and redoubling cleaning and sanitizing practices.
- If companies experience supply chain issues, they should contact FEMA's National Business Emergency Operations Center at [nbeoc@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:nbeoc@fema.dhs.gov).
- Food supply questions can be submitted to FDA at [www.fda.gov/fcic](http://www.fda.gov/fcic)
- The presence of a sick employee **does not require product to be either recalled or held**.
- FDA is aware of shortages of "**touchless thermometers**" (e.g., for use by restaurants in taking employee temperatures prior to entry to the workplace) and is trying to get more produced.