

## FDA Stakeholder Call

Moderator: Kari Barrett

Speakers: Frank Yiannis, Michael Rogers, and Dr. Susan Mayne

March 18, 2020

### Opening remarks by speaker

Frank Yiannis - Deputy Commissioner Food Response and Policy:

- FDA's main priority is ensuring safety of food, food workers/employees, and FDA staff
  - Everyone working in food is important for this critical infrastructure
  - Ensuring safety of employees is essential to determining how FDA will conduct inspections
- There are no food supply issues
  - Consumers have noticed that certain products are not on shelves; however, this is a demand issue, not a food supply issue
  - Consumers should have confidence in the safety of food and access to the food supply
- Emphasized that there is no evidence of food or food packaging as the source of transmission of coronavirus
  - COVID-19 is not a gastrointestinal illness and not known to be caused by exposure to food
- It could be possible to get infected from touching food contact surfaces, if the employee touches a contaminated surface and then touches their face, nose, mouth, etc.; however, this is generally not the route of transmission
- FDA does NOT recommend recalls of products if an employee becomes ill with COVID-19
- FDA has been involved with the White House, USDA, CDC, Food Industry and State and local regulators to coordinate supply chain issues
  - Ensure that food workers can get to their jobs in areas where quarantines and curfews exist

Michael Rogers - Asst. Commissioner, Office of Regulatory Affairs:

- Reiterated the [guidance](#) that was released yesterday (March 17, 2020) to temporarily halt supplier verification activities (on-site audits)
  - FDA is also postponing foreign facility and routine domestic inspections and surveillance programs
- FDA will pre-announce any inspections; therefore, the agency will not conduct unannounced domestic inspections
- FDA will focus resources on mission critical activities
  - Mission critical: for cause, outbreaks, COVID19 related issues, and class I recalls
  - These inspections will occur as long as food employees and FDA inspectors are not put at risk

Susan Mayne - Director, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition:

- If you have a food safety question, submit them to FDA using this [link](#)
- FDA recently released (March 17, 2020) [FAQs](#) in regard to COVID-19 (updates occur frequently)
- FDA is aware of the hand sanitizer shortages and is working to make more available
- Recommend frequent sanitation of surfaces to combat spread of COVID-19
- Recommended discontinued use of salad bars and buffets (high contact)
- Reiterated that COVID-19 a respiratory disease and NOT spread through food
- DHS has coordinated public-private partnerships to support the food industry
- State and local governments are regulating food code and retail/food services
- Contact FEMA with issues related to the supply chain (getting supplies and/or transporting food into quarantined areas)

#### **Q&A:**

1. What is considered mission critical?

Mission critical inspections will be conducted in the event of for cause, outbreaks, COVID19 related issues, and class I recalls.

2. If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, should products be placed on hold?

No, products are not recommended to be put on hold or recalled.

3. Is food and ag considered critical infrastructure?

Yes, food and ag is a critical infrastructure. If problems arise, contact FEMA. FDA will continue to support DHS to ensure companies can continue to manufacturer food.

4. Some local health departments require employers to take employees temperature; however, there is a shortage of touch-free thermometers. Is there guidance for this issue?

FDA is aware of this shortage and is working this issue. Employers should continue to work with local health department in the meantime.