

# New US food safety agency proposed by Obama

Feb 03, 2015



U.S. President Barack Obama wants to create a new government agency dedicated to food safety. The potential food safety agency was introduced as part of the president's budget released February 2.

Currently, the USDA oversees the safety and inspections of meat and processed eggs and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversees safety of most other foods. USDA inspects meat daily as it is processed, while the FDA generally conducts inspections every few years. The two agencies share inspection duties at the border. And several other agencies have small pieces of food safety oversight — from the Commerce Department to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The split oversight is often complicated, and the Obama administration believes one single agency to handle food safety matters would be an improvement.

The budget proposes consolidating the Agriculture Department's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and all of FDA's food safety oversight into one new agency within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The new agency also would coordinate with state and local health departments, a job that is now mostly handled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In the budget proposal, the Obama administration says the current system's "fractured oversight and disparate regulatory approaches" cause confusion. Consolidation "is an essential step to reforming the federal food safety system overall," it says.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said the proposal is an attempt to persuade Congress to give the Obama administration authority to reorganize the agencies. Details — such as which of the 15 federal entities that have some food safety oversight would be transitioned to the new agency — could be worked out later.

"The purpose of this is to begin the discussion and begin the debate," Vilsack said. "It's not about tradition. It's not about turf. It's about food safety. We have a system that no one can contend is as effective or efficient as it needs to be."

The administration said the agency would be based at HHS, not USDA, because food safety and foodborne outbreaks are public health concerns consistent with the larger mission of the department.

The proposed agency has already received opposition from Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman [Pat Roberts](#), R-Kansas.

"In this tough economy, the last thing producers and consumers need is more red tape," Roberts said

[http://www.wattagnet.com/PT/New\\_US\\_food\\_safety\\_agency\\_proposed\\_by\\_Obama/](http://www.wattagnet.com/PT/New_US_food_safety_agency_proposed_by_Obama/)