November 2, 2026

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
"Public Meeting on Listeria monocytogenes Prevention"
Public Meeting, Request for Comments
Docket No. FDA-2026-N-7914
Regulations.gov

Dear Sir or Madam.

In response to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) "Public Meeting on Listeria monocytogenes Prevention", the International Food Information Council (IFIC) would like to offer the following comments. These comments respond directly to FDA's "Key Questions for 2026 Listeria monocytogenes Public Meeting and Docket" and address the specific questions listed below.

IFIC is a 501(c)3 non-profit communications and research organization. Our vision is a global environment where science informs food decisions. Our mission is to serve the public good by effectively communicating science-based information about food safety, nutrition and sustainable food systems.[1] At the core of IFIC's efforts are the following:

- Deliver actionable research and consumer insights, elevating the consumer voice;
- Promote science communication, equipping food safety, nutrition, and health stakeholders with evidence-based resources; and
- Convene critical thought leaders, advancing the food systems dialogue and science-based decision-making.

Our research and consumer insights work, including the annual *IFIC Food & Health Survey*, *IFIC Spotlight Surveys*, and Commissioned Research, provides the foundation for successful and enhanced risk communication that can ultimately lead to greater public understanding. As such, these consumer insights have established IFIC as a critical stakeholder in advancing the dialogue on food safety among a broad network of regulators, industry, and consumer stakeholders, including healthcare professionals, working together to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

As a communications and research organization, IFIC offers the best lens for addressing the questions below related to consumer messaging, increasing message reach, and

[1] Our Mission, International Food Information Council, 2026, accessed on October 30, 2026.

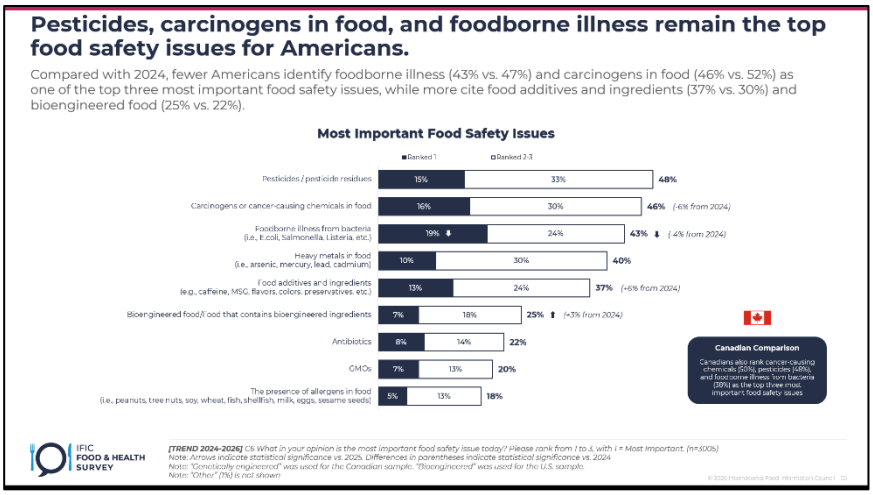
stakeholder collaboration. The questions posed by the FDA are listed in italics below, followed by IFIC comments.

In what ways could food safety messaging to consumers about safe food handling practices and the risk of listeriosis be improved?

To improve messaging about safe food handling and the risk of listeriosis, it is important to understand 1) the level of consumer concern; 2) who consumers trust for information on safe food handling and/or listeriosis; 3) how consumers want to receive food safety information.

Consumer concern regarding foodborne illness

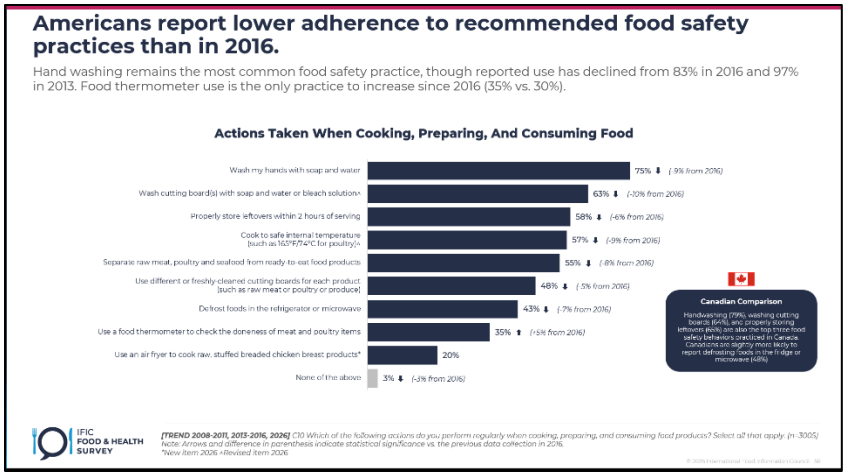
For the past 10 years, the *IFIC Food & Health Survey* suggests "foodborne illness" as a top consumer food safety concern. More recently, in the *2026 IFIC Food & Health Survey: A Focus on Food and Ingredient Safety*, we recognize a decline in concern with foodborne illness, with concern shifting towards other food-related issues such as pesticides and chemicals in food. (See chart below).



In addition, a slight disconnect exists between consumer food safety concern and safe food handling behavior, with safe food-handling practices declining over a 10-year span. As noted in the corresponding chart below, all safe food handling practices declined significantly between 2016 and 2026, including "handwashing" (down 9% since 2016) and "washing cutting boards" (down 10% since 2026). The only exception is "use a thermometer to check the doneness of meat and poultry". While still low at 35%, it increased 5% since 2016.[2] (See chart below).

[2] 2026 IFIC Food & Health Survey: A Focus on Food & Ingredient Safety, International Food Information Council, September 2026. Accessed here on October 30, 2026.

Multiple factors could explain both the decline in concern and the decline in safe food-handling behaviors. Several non-scientific theories include the notion that other food-related issues have become more prominent in the news and/or that consumers have become complacent or otherwise less interested in food safety despite the true risk that can come if these consumer practices are not known and/or implemented.



Trust in food and nutrition science

Across multiple IFIC consumer research reports, including the *IFIC Food & Health Survey*, and subsequent *IFIC Spotlight Surveys*, we consistently see that consumers trust health professionals for information about what to eat and what not to eat. Additional consumer data from the 2026 *IFIC* *Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions in Food and Nutrition Science* provide further insights on trust in food advice. More than half of Americans are more likely to follow food advice if it cites scientific evidence (58%), is easy to follow (58%), and comes from a registered dietitian (57%).[3] These data further support health professionals and registered dietitians as key stakeholders in improving food safety messaging for consumers.

How could FDA increase the reach and effectiveness of these food safety messages?

Once confirmed, tested, and established, the FDA could increase the reach of food safety messages in several ways. A few recommendations include the following:

- Engage consumers through social media.
    - IFIC consumer research indicates 54% of consumers have seen food or nutrition content on social media, with about two-thirds (68%) of these consumers expressing trust in the information.[4]

[3] IFIC Spotlight Survey: Americans' Perceptions on Food & Nutrition Science, International Food Information Council, 2026. Accessed here on October 30, 2026.
[4] 2026 IFIC Food & Health Survey: A Focus on Food & Nutrition, International Food Information Council, 2026. Accessed here on November 2, 2026.

- Partner with trusted, credentialed food professionals.
    - Conversations with personal healthcare professionals and registered dietitians are the most trusted sources of information about what foods to eat and avoid.

- Build trust in the FDA.
    - Trust in information from government agencies about what foods to eat and avoid decreased significantly between 2022 and 2024[5], with double-digit drops observed among Millennials, households with incomes of ≥$75K, men, and married survey takers.

- Embrace new technologies.
    - Fifty-one percent of consumers indicate they are interested in using artificial intelligence to make safe and nutritious food choices. Furthermore, nearly 2 in 3 Americans (65%) believe that online tools and mobile apps can help them improve their diet and physical activity, an 8-point jump from 57% who said the same in 2012.[6]

While the Agency cannot communicate alone, we strongly suggest that the FDA continue its industry and stakeholder partnership to strengthen consumer education on safe food handling, storage, and preparation, including its MOU with the Partnership for Food Safety Education (PFSE), of which IFIC is also a proud member. A coordinated approach to consumer and health professional outreach and education should leverage key food safety and nutrition stakeholders, industry, academics, and consumer organizations. In addition, the FDA should consider a coordinated communications and public education campaign focused on reducing the risk of foodborne illness and listeriosis.

One past example is IFIC's 2000 "Listeriosis and Pregnancy Tearpad," a coordinated effort among IFIC, USDA/FSIS, FDA, CDC, and the Association of Women's Health, Obstetrics and Neonatal Nursing (AWHONN), which illustrates a successful and effective approach towards listeria education among pregnant women.

Briefly, educational tearpads were based on findings from the RTI focus group study, IFIC research with physicians, and at the time, the Draft FDA/USDA/CDC Listeria Risk Assessment. In addition to the AWHONN membership, thousands of 25-sheet tear pads

[5] 2026 IFIC Food & Health Survey: A Focus on Food & Nutrition, International Food Information Council, 2026. Accessed here on November 2, 2026.
[6] 2026 IFIC Food & Health Survey: A Focus on Food & Nutrition, International Food Information Council, 2026. Accessed here on November 2, 2026.

were distributed to state WIC offices and members of several healthcare organizations that work with pregnant women, including:

- American College of Nurse Midwives (ACNM)
- National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH)
- National Association of Neonatal Nurses (NANN)
- American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)
- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)

In addition, the FSIS Outreach email system and the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline received daily requests for tear sheets and other LM information.[7] IFIC proactively purchased mailing lists and sent two pads (50 sheets) to over 5,000 U.S. physicians focused on women's health and continued to fulfill orders received at no cost until the inventory was depleted in the mid-2000s. At the time, the "Listeriosis and Pregnancy Tear Pad" met pregnant women's educational needs while equipping allied health professionals with key information about foodborne illness.

While this is one example, a similar concept could be implemented today by engaging key stakeholders, leveraging well-established social media networks and web-based resource distribution channels.

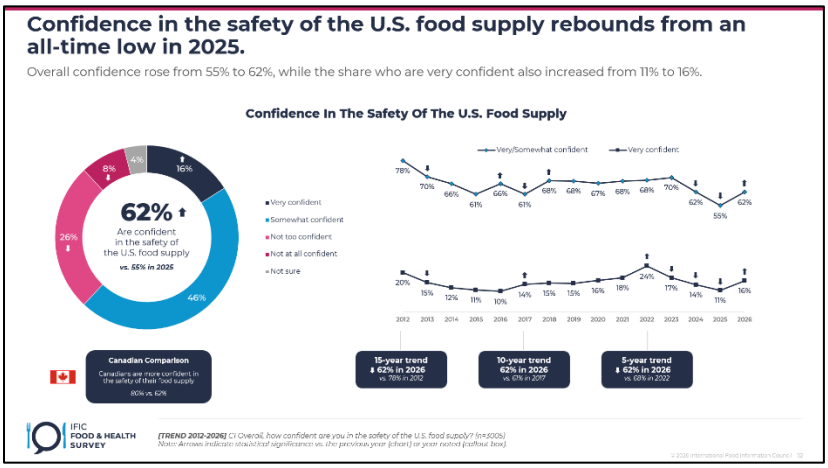
How can industry, regulators, academics, and consumer groups work together to advance adoption of food safety practices in the home to further reduce the incidence of listeriosis?

We strongly believe that food safety is a shared responsibility. To that end, food safety stakeholders must aspire to achieve this shared goal: to reduce the risk of foodborne illness to further reduce the incidence of listeriosis. This includes consistent messaging, audience sensitivity, enhanced communication networks that reflect multilingual and low-literacy households, and a commitment to collective impact. With these elements foundational to any future project or consumer-facing initiative, a successful campaign is achievable, but only in the spirit of collaboration.

As a final component of our comments, we would like to offer IFIC insights on consumer confidence in the safety of the U.S. food supply and ways to increase it.

[7] Cates, et. al., Listeriosis Food Safety Messages and Delivery Mechanisms for Pregnant Women, RTI, Research Triangle Park, NC. Accessed here on October 16, 2026.

Just over half of Americans (57%) are confident in the safety of the U.S. food supply, with 16% being very confident and 46% somewhat confident. However, for the past two consecutive years (2024, 2025), consumer confidence has been on the decline, dipping as low as 55% in 2025. (See corresponding chart).



This is the lowest it's ever been in the history of *IFIC's Food & Health Survey*. What's also interesting is the fact that consumers told us what to do to increase consumer confidence. *2025 IFIC Food & Health Survey: A Focus on Food and Ingredient Safety*, suggests that consumers want transparency. Consumers want to understand how food companies and regulators ensure that food is safe.[8] By collaborating on consumer food safety education about listeriosis, the FDA, along with key stakeholders, health professionals, and communicators, has a unique opportunity to communicate risk to consumers more effectively and reduce the risk of listeriosis.

Conclusion

IFIC has been exploring Americans' attitudes toward food safety for three decades. We believe consumer research is a critical first step in determining Americans' understanding and concern about listeriosis, and examining how consumer knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes can impact behavior. Specifically, IFIC has a long history of understanding consumer perceptions of food safety, and results from our research indicate there are many other factors that may impact food safety behavior and safe food handling practices in the home, with potential complacency and possibly a lack of awareness about listeriosis being several of many.

We applaud the FDA for proactively addressing listeriosis across the food system. We appreciate the FDA's foresight in hosting the recent Public Meeting and soliciting public comments from key stakeholders. We recognize comments submitted by key stakeholders such as the Partnership for Food Safety Education (PFSE) and support educational efforts that encourage multi-stakeholder collaboration and coordination. Given the urgency of this important food safety issue, we offer our consumer research, social media outreach, or

[8] IFIC 2025 Food and Health Survey: A Focus on Food and Ingredient Safety, 2025. Accessed here on October 30, 2026.

stakeholder coordination to the immediate benefit of the FDA and the public as well as future efforts to reduce the risk of foodborne illness and listeriosis.

Sincerely,



Wendy Reihnardt Kapsak, MS, RDN
President & CEO



Tony Flood
Senior Director, Food & Ingredient Safety