



# WHO'S MINDING THE FOOD SUPPLY?



The future of food safety depends on education. Education must occur from farm-to-table with government, industry and educators working together to teach consumers and food handlers how to prevent foodborne illness.



First, both government and industry must continue to play important roles in assuring the safety of our food supply. Second, we all must realize that food-associated risks can never be zero—even with the best efforts of inspectors and industry. Third, food handlers and consumers need to safely handle and prepare food.

Consumers should feel confident about the food supply of the United States, as it is the safest food supply in the world. *But who are the government watchdog organizations that oversee our food supply?*

Can you match each food item below with the organization responsible for monitoring it? Some organizations can be used more than once.

- ① \_\_\_\_\_ Healthy Choice Cacciatore Chicken Frozen Entree
- ② \_\_\_\_\_ Healthy Choice Vegetable Pasta Italiano Frozen Entree
- ③ \_\_\_\_\_ Television ad for frozen entree
- ④ \_\_\_\_\_ Plastic margarine tub
- ⑤ \_\_\_\_\_ Child-resistant packaging for vitamin pills
- ⑥ \_\_\_\_\_ Tamper-resistant packaging for vitamin pills
- ⑦ \_\_\_\_\_ Imported caviar
- ⑧ \_\_\_\_\_ Tap water
- ⑨ \_\_\_\_\_ Bottled water
- ⑩ \_\_\_\_\_ Fresh Fruit

## Watchdog Groups

- FTC = Federal Trade Commission
- CPSC = Consumer Product Safety Commission
- FDA = Food & Drug Administration
- USDA = U.S. Department of Agriculture
- EPA = Environmental Protection Agency



## References

- CPSC 800/638-2772.
- EPA 202/260-4454
- FDA Office of Consumer Affairs 301/443-3170
- FTC Correspondence Branch 202/326-2222
- USDA 202/720-2791.

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**Following is an explanation of the organizations and what part of the food supply they are minding.**

① **USDA** Meat- and poultry-containing frozen dinners come under the jurisdiction of the USDA, which also sets labeling requirements and inspection guidelines for fresh meat and poultry.

② **FDA** Foods that do not contain meat or poultry are monitored by the FDA.

③ **FTC** The mission of FTC is to ensure that firms do not take it upon themselves to distort the workings of the marketplace to line their own pockets. FTC oversees advertising claims for foods as well as tobacco, alcohol and over-the-counter drugs, among other products. However, ads for prescription drugs are covered by the FDA.

④ **FDA** Plastic margarine containers, candy wrappers and other types of food packages are subject to regulation by the FDA. Packages are not permitted to leach chemicals, which in the eyes of the law are considered indirect food additives. The FDA requires food processors to perform testing that ensures any packaging chemicals that may leach into food pose no health hazard.

⑤ **CPSC** The CPSC decides which products require child-resistant packaging. For example, in 1978 CPSC ruled that vitamin/mineral supplements containing large amounts of iron, which can be toxic to children, must be packaged in child-resistant containers.

⑥ **FDA** Tamper-resistant, or tamper-evident packaging as experts put it, are monitored by the FDA. Items that are mandated to be tamper-resistant include over-the-counter drugs taken by mouth, such as aspirin, and other specific drug-store items, including mouthwash and contact lens solution. To date, the FDA does not require manufacturers of vitamin/mineral supplements or other types of dietary supplements to seal their products in tamper-evident containers.

⑦ **FDA** Since 1991, imported caviar and other imported and domestic seafood is monitored by the FDA's Office of Seafood. The FDA also monitors other imported foods sold in the U.S.—except for imported meat and poultry, which are regulated by USDA.

⑧ **EPA** The EPA sets quality and safety standards for tap water.

⑨ **FDA** The FDA monitors bottled water. Usually the FDA follows the EPA's standards for the maximum amount of contaminants allowed in water. Thus, contrary to popular belief, bottled water is not necessarily purer or more healthful than tap water.

⑩ **FDA** The FDA has primary responsibility for inspection of fresh fruits and vegetables. The EPA regulates the use and tolerance levels of pesticides. Other agencies with an impact include the Food Quality Protection Act, the Agriculture Marketing Service and the Animal and Plant Inspection Service.

