



REMARKS

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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Remarks as Prepared for Administrator Dr. Gregory Parham Public Meeting on Pre-Harvest Pathogen Control Strategies

(RIVERDALE, MD, Nov. 9, 2011) I am pleased that you have all come together here today and had such productive discussions. The focus of this meeting has been near and dear to me since my days as an Epidemic Intelligence Service officer with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As you may know, I am also a veterinarian, as was my father.

I want to thank Under Secretary Hagen for her remarks, which so clearly framed the preharvest food safety issue and challenged us to take collective action do more to resolve this very serious problem.

And, I would like to thank all of you who are here today representing consumers, industry, and academia, as well as my government colleagues who collaborated on this important meeting. I know the perspectives and ideas gleaned from your discussions will prove invaluable.

This meeting marks a major advance in our efforts to collaborate on issues involving pre-harvest food safety. Bringing people from all of the agencies and interest groups involved together in one room...and to listen to concerns and discuss potential solutions together—face-to-face—represents a crucial step forward.

Did you happen to hear the news that a child born somewhere in the world last week supposedly tipped the world's population over the 7 billion mark?

Just imagine: the world's interlaced web of agricultural, medical and public health systems must now try to keep 7 billion people fed and healthy! And that figure is predicted to double by 2050!

It is critically important that people not only have sufficient, economical food but that they also can trust that the food produced from agricultural production practices is safe to eat.

Of course, no one in the food industry wants a consumer to get sick from eating their products. And certainly no one wants to face investigations, lawsuits, and consumer boycotts, either. I am encouraged that so many producers recognize the benefits of working with veterinary and medical experts to try to resolve pre-harvest pathogen issues.

The concept linking together human, animal, and environmental health is referred to as "One Health." USDA embraces this One Health concept.

We strongly support the idea that finding solutions to complex health problems involving humans and animals requires an interdisciplinary approach. One Health planning plays a very large role in the future vision for our Veterinary Services (VS) program.

I want to be clear, however, that APHIS does not seek to enact any new regulations pertaining to on-farm preharvest practices.

Instead, we are offering our extensive veterinary, technical, and scientific resources—within current fiscal restraints—to serve the industry and the public in helping to find simple, practical solutions and best practices to reduce preharvest pathogen loads in cattle.

VS has a long and successful history of working with industry to carry out animal disease programs. Ever since APHIS' inception in the early 1970s, VS veterinarians have been working to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases, such as TB and brucellosis.

VS began collecting data in the 1990s to determine the prevalence of pathogens such as *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, and *E-coli*. We are also working to determine the prevalence and antimicrobial resistance of emerging pathogens.

VS has the services, tools, laboratory networks, and interdisciplinary knowledge needed to effectively partner as a team with industry and academia to develop strategies to effectively address preharvest pathogen issues. Our staff includes highly trained experts in disciplines ranging from epidemiology to economics, from microbial diseases to molecular biology, and from pathology to population medicine.

That is why I am confident our Agency's veterinarians and scientists can play a useful role in working alongside industry to educate producers about effective and efficient pre-harvest interventions.

For example, third-party audits of compliance with voluntary standards for preharvest practices, based upon the beef quality assurance program, are becoming more accepted and commonplace in industry. With our VS field offices nationwide and our network of accredited veterinarians, this is just one potential role VS could take on to assist industry and assure consumers.

Again, thank you for participating today. We look forward to reviewing the comments received during today's sessions to see what all of you have proposed to tackle the issue of preharvest food safety.

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