



Committee Examines FDA's Role in Ensuring Safe Food

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) tasked a National Academy of Science study committee with examining gaps in public health protection provided by the farm-to-table food safety system, and recommending ways to correct them.

The first meeting of the Study Committee is being held today and tomorrow in Washington, D.C., and is closed to the public except for the opening session. At that session, FDA Associate Commissioner of Foods Dr. David Acheson outlined the FDA's perspective on the work to be undertaken by the group.

Dr. Acheson listed several challenges to ensuring food safety, including the "just-in-time" and rapid nature of today's food distribution system. A rapid national distribution system can contribute to the quick occurrence of outbreaks in multiple states from a single source. He noted that transportation is one of the links in the chain. "Risks on a truck are not as great as on a farm but they are not zero," Dr. Acheson said. "Potential problems exist such as improper temperature control which can allow for growth of bacteria."

The study committee is chaired by Dr. Robert Wallace, Professor of Epidemiology and Internal Medicine at the University of Iowa, and is made up of representatives of universities, state public health agencies and private industry. The committee's report will be issued in about 20 months, and will include legislative, regulatory, and administrative recommendations and estimates of costs of such recommendations.

AFTC will continue to monitor food safety issues which could affect food transportation and ensure that the perspective of the industry is represented.