

MEMORANDUM

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Re: **FDA Provides Update on Forthcoming New Era of Smarter Food Safety Blueprint**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently provided an update from FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn M.D. and Deputy Commissioner for Food Policy and Response Frank Yiannas on the forthcoming New Era of Smarter Food Safety Blueprint (Blueprint), which will outline the agency's strategy to create "a more digital, traceable, and safer food system" over the next decade. ^{1/} In a statement published online, the Agency states the Blueprint will be released "in the coming weeks." FDA also explains that the Blueprint was days away from being released in March, but was delayed by the shift in focus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since then, FDA has revised the Blueprint in light of the lessons learned during the pandemic. In the statement, FDA explains that COVID-19 "has accelerated the need" for some measures addressed in the Blueprint. The statement highlights the following elements of the Blueprint that "are particularly meaningful now":

- **Enhanced Traceability Could Increase Supply Chain Visibility.** The agency originally intended traceability technologies, such as blockchain, to expedite traceback of a contaminated food to its source during foodborne outbreaks. FDA now suggests that enhanced traceability has the additional potential to "provide greater supply chain visibility and potentially help the FDA and industry anticipate the kind of marketplace imbalances that resulted in the temporary spot shortages of certain commodities" during the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, FDA believes "a digitized food system is likely to be a stronger, more agile, and resilient food system."
- **Smarter Tools for Prevention, Protections for Foods Ordered Online.** The forthcoming Blueprint will call for new and smarter tools to be used to conduct root cause analyses and anticipate likelihood of future contamination events. The Blueprint also calls for other new tools to be explored, such as virtual or remote inspections, which FDA says "would have

^{1/} Press Release, "Pandemic Challenges Highlight the Importance of the New Era of Smarter Food Safety" (June 2, 2020), <https://bit.ly/3gPNyyp>.

been invaluable in the current public health emergency.” Additionally, with more food being ordered online and delivered directly to consumers, the Blueprint will address the need for best practices to ensure that these foods are produced, packed, and transported safely directly to consumers.

- **Food Safety Culture on the Farms, in Food Facilities, and at Home.** The Blueprint will also address the establishment and support of food safety cultures on farms, in food facilities, and at home. In addition to addressing food safety culture on farms and in facilities, the agency acknowledges the importance of “educating consumers on the best food safety practices when cooking at home.” FDA explains that government, industry, and consumers “must all work together to keep each other safe.”

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We will continue to provide updates on the New Era of Smarter Food Safety initiative. Please contact us if you have any questions on this or any other matter.