

GAO's Work on Seafood Safety

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GAO's Role

- Help Congress ensure that the federal government is operating efficiently and effectively
- Audit agency operations to determine whether federal funds are being spent appropriately
- Report on how well government programs and policies are meeting their objectives
- Investigate allegations of illegal and improper government activities



Presentation Overview

- Seafood safety (GAO-11-286)
- Seafood fraud (GAO-09-258)
- Raw oysters (GAO-11-607)
- Ongoing work related to seafood
 - USDA's catfish inspection program
 - Third-party certification of seafood



Seafood Safety

Objectives:

- To what extent is FDA's program able to ensure the safety of seafood imports from residues of unapproved drugs?
- To what extent have FDA and NMFS implemented their 2009 memorandum of understanding to enhance federal oversight of seafood and leverage federal resources?



Seafood Safety

Key findings:

- FDA's program to ensure the safety of imported seafood from residues of unapproved drugs is limited, especially compared with the European Union's program.
- FDA and NMFS have made limited progress in implementing their 2009 memorandum of understanding.
- FDA's sampling program is not implemented effectively.



Seafood Safety

GAO recommended that FDA

- Study the feasibility of adopting practices used by other entities,
- Develop a more comprehensive import sampling program for seafood, and
- Develop a strategic approach with specific time frames for enhancing collaborative efforts with NMFS and better leveraging NMFS's inspection resources.



Seafood Fraud

Objectives:

- What actions are key federal agencies taking to help detect and prevent seafood fraud?
- To what extent do FDA, CBP, and NMFS collaborate with each other to help detect and prevent seafood fraud?



Seafood Fraud

Key findings:

- FDA told GAO that it focuses on food safety and therefore undertakes few fraud-related activities.
- FDA, CBP, and NMFS do not effectively collaborate with each other:
 - They have not identified a common goal, established joint strategies, or agreed on roles and responsibilities.
 - They do not share information that could benefit each agency's efforts to detect and prevent seafood fraud.
 - Each agency has its own laboratory capability for determining seafood species and uses different methodologies for creating standards for species identification.



Seafood Fraud

GAO recommended that FDA

- Propose amending its seafood HACCP regulations to require that covered facilities have control points for identifying and mitigating economic fraud risks,
- update the *Fish and Fisheries Products Hazards and Controls Guidance* to reflect the seafood labeling requirements of the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004,

GAO recommended that all three agencies

- develop goals, strategies, and mechanisms to share information and resources related to seafood fraud detection and prevention across agency boundaries, and
- create a governmentwide library of seafood species standards



Raw Oysters

Objectives:

- To what extent do FDA and the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) agree on a *V. vulnificus* illness reduction goal?
- To what extent do FDA and the ISSC use a credible approach to measure progress toward their *V. vulnificus* illness rate reduction goal?
- To what extent have FDA and the ISSC evaluated the effectiveness of consumer education programs and time and temperature controls in reducing *V. vulnificus*-related illnesses?
- To what extent does the Gulf Coast oyster industry have adequate capacity for post-harvesting processing on oysters harvested during warmer months?



Raw Oysters

Key findings:

- FDA and the ISSC do not agree on a common *V. vulnificus* illness reduction goal.
- The approach FDA and the ISSC have been using to measure progress toward the previously agreed upon *V. vulnificus* illness rate reduction goal established in 2001 has limitations that undermine its credibility.
- FDA and the ISSC have taken few steps to evaluate the effectiveness of their consumer education efforts since 2004.



Raw Oysters

GAO recommended that FDA work with the ISSC to

- agree on a nationwide goal for reducing the number of *V. vulnificus* illnesses caused by the consumption of Gulf Coast raw oysters and develop strategies to achieve that goal,
- correct the limitations in the current approach to measuring progress toward the goal of reducing *V. vulnificus* illness rate by 60 percent,
- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of *V. vulnificus* illness reduction strategies.



Ongoing work

USDA's catfish inspection program

- Objectives:

- How did USDA determine that *Salmonella* presented the primary food safety hazard in catfish?
- What is the anticipated impact of FSIS's proposed catfish inspection program on other federal food safety inspection programs?

- Release date: June 10, 2012



Ongoing work

Third-party certification of seafood

➤ Objectives:

- What are the major challenges FDA will have to address in implementing a third-party certification program?
- What are the major advantages and disadvantages of FDA's comparability assessment process?

➤ Release date: Fall 2012



Contact Information

- [www. GAO.gov](http://www.GAO.gov)
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