



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Food and Drug Administration
Silver Spring, MD 20993

October 14, 2015

Joe Corby, Executive Director
Stan Stromberg, President
Association of Food and Drug Officials
2550 Kingston Road
Suite 311
York, Pennsylvania 17402

RE: AFDO 2015 Resolutions #2015-2, 2015-3 and 2015-4

Dear Messrs. Corby and Stromberg:

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) to advance public health through federal, state, and local collaborations and partnerships. We received your 2015 Resolutions issued on July 24, 2015, following the June 2015 AFDO 119th Annual Educational Conference. We apologize for the delay in responding. As a long-standing partner, we value your program input and are providing this interim response while we are working to provide a more detailed and comprehensive response to each of these resolutions.

Resolution #2015-2 provides support for a previous Food and Drug Administration (FDA) report regarding Date Labeling of Food. We appreciate your thoughts in this area. While the concept of date labeling may seem straight forward, its execution is quite complex. This is not only because of existing laws and regulations, but also due to industry and consumer needs and expectations. We would appreciate further discussion on this topic at the upcoming AFDO Fall Board meeting.

Resolution #2015-3 conveys support for further research on compliance assistance approaches to food safety inspections in order to enhance the Food Safety Modernization Act implementation. We have publicly committed to making sure we work to educate all of our stakeholders on our new regulations, and we have received broad support for this approach from industry, consumers, and state and local stakeholders. We agree that further research would allow us to fine-tune our collective efforts, and we look forward to discussing this with you during the upcoming AFDO Fall Board meeting to hear your specific suggestions.

Resolution #2015-4, related to a request for creation of a Retail Food Regulatory Program Alliance modeled after the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Alliance and moving the management of the Voluntary National Retail Foods Regulatory Program Standards (Retail Standards) from the Office of Foods' Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition to the Office of Regulatory Affairs, Office of Partnerships. It is recognized that both of these need considerable internal and external review, including engagement with other vested stakeholders

and significant deliberation, before a final response can be provided to you from the agency. In considering this change, our process will include the following:

- a) An internal review and evaluation of the current mechanism used to manage and revise the Retail Standards;
- b) A thoughtful discussion with key state program leaders who proposed this resolution to AFDO with the intent to better understand how such a change will improve the Retail Standards implementation. This discussion will begin with our meeting scheduled for October 20, 2015 in Rockville, MD;
- c) Solicitation of any additional input from other stakeholders engaged in the current Retail Standards' change process; and,
- d) Deliberation within the agency on the internal review and stakeholder feedback to draft a response to the resolution.

This collective input will help us carefully consider FDA's best course of action to meet the needs of all stakeholders involved and to continue to support and enhance the Retail Standards - a program intended to enhance the local retail program's quality and performance.

We anticipate having a response to you on Resolutions #2015-2 and #2015-3 by first quarter of calendar year 2016. We will keep you apprised of our progress on Resolution #2015-4 through our FDA representatives to the AFDO Board, Barbara Cassens and Jeff Farrar.

FDA recognizes AFDO as a key public health association working to advance food and medical product safety, and wishes to continue our collective public health efforts.

Thank you for working with us and providing the AFDO perspective on these important regulatory and public health issues.

Sincerely,



Susan T. Mayne, Ph.D., F.A.C.E
Director
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition



Melinda K. Plaisier, M.S.W.
Associate Commissioner for Regulatory Affairs