

## **Food Safety, and Oversight are Growing US Concerns**

### **Local News**

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SEATTLE - Just in the last three weeks, the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced recalls of some brands of beef bouillon, baby formula, cookies, parsley and imported dried plums and apricots. A new survey shows major concern about where Americans' food comes from and who makes sure it is safe.

Erik Olson is the director of food and consumer products safety for the *Pew Health Group*. His organization surveyed 1,000 people across the country. They said the government should have three major food safety priorities, he reports.

"Make sure our imported foods are safe; that we're testing food and any test results showing contamination are reported to the federal government; and have a good, strong system for tracing contamination."

The FDA recently started a "Reportable Food Registry." It requires companies to contact the agency within 24 hours of any report that a product may cause a health risk to humans or animals.

In 2009, 10 times more "Class One" recalls already have been issued than three years ago, although food safety experts say that is partly because they are able to trace problems more accurately now. A "Class One" recall is issued when the federal inspectors believe a product could have serious health consequences.

Olson says most people surveyed do not believe food facilities are inspected nearly often enough.

"FDA inspects food facilities, on average, only once every 10 years, and three out of four people thought there should be more frequent FDA inspections - every six to 12 months, at least."

Food safety advocates are encouraging the Senate to consider legislation giving the FDA new oversight and enforcement powers. In July, the House passed its version of the bill, which includes

stronger inspection authority for food facilities in the United States and in other countries. Some push-back has come from the food industry, which warns more testing could result in higher consumer prices.

Olson says 64 percent of the people surveyed voiced concerns about the safety of imported foods.

Results of the *Pew Health Group* poll are available at [www.pewtrusts.org](http://www.pewtrusts.org). The FDA posts all of its recalls online at [www.recalls.gov](http://www.recalls.gov).