The Obstacles of Outsourcing Imported Food Safety to China

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Introduction

Approximately 60% of fresh fruits and vegetables\(^1\) and 80% of seafood\(^2\) consumed in the United States are imported. On average, 15% of the overall U.S. food supply by volume comes from foreign countries.\(^3\) In 2007, the United States imported $85.4 billion worth of agricultural and seafood products.\(^4\) China was the third largest food exporter to the United States, after Canada and Mexico.\(^5\) China is also the largest exporter of

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3. See FDA FOOD PROTECTION PLAN, supra note 1, at 8.
5. Id.
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seafood to the United States, and made up 21% of the total imported seafood coming into the United States in 2007. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates approximately 80% of the nation's food supply, yet it inspects only 1% of imported foods. The threat of increasing food imports and an inadequate inspection rate has portended a serious and growing risk for food-borne illness outbreaks in the United States.

In early 2007, the recall of melamine tainted pet foods imported from China brought significant public attention to the efficacy of the U.S. food safety regulatory system. Critics asserted that the current system was broken and incapable of protecting American consumers. Growing public concern about food safety, particularly over foodstuffs made in or sourced from China, has prompted several legislative proposals to overhaul the U.S. food safety system. Under this pressure, the FDA has pursued various measures aimed at better protecting America’s food supply, one of which is the Action Plan for Import Safety.

The U.S. government concedes that the FDA cannot afford to adequately inspect food imports at the over 300 U.S. ports of entry. In

6. Id. at 5–6.
13. See infra Part III, 3.1 of this article.
searching for alternatives to physical inspections, the FDA calls for “capacity building” of foreign food safety regulatory regimes. That is, through bilateral agreements with China and other nations that contribute to the bulk of food imports to the United States, the FDA intends to shift the burden of securing the U.S. food supply onto the regulatory systems in exporting countries. In essence, these measures propose to outsource the food safety regulatory power from the United States to China and other foreign governments.

This article argues that outsourcing regulatory power through a bilateral agreement with China is unlikely to ensure the safety of imported food for two primary reasons. First, shifting the regulatory burden does not present a feasible alternative to the traditional enforcement tools of outcome-based and production-based inspections and sanctions. With the extensive evolution of food safety law in the United States over the past one hundred years, these traditional tools have, for the most part, proven effective in safeguarding the American food supply. Moving away from physical inspections in the United States, therefore, will not only eliminate a proven method for ensuring food safety but will also send the wrong message to both importers and foreign manufacturers.

Second, China’s burgeoning food safety regime, based on an entirely different culture and legal system, provides little incentive for Chinese food manufacturers to increase production costs to comply with U.S. standards. A mere bilateral agreement will not alter existing Chinese production practices in the absence of heightened scrutiny from the United States. Despite the Chinese government’s genuine efforts, many factors hamper its capacity to secure food safety, such as corruption, lack of a developed regulatory framework, environmental degradation, and the zealous pursuit of economic miracles.

Part I of the article examines the regulatory framework for the safety of U.S. made food, particularly the development of the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act), the FDA, and the traditional enforcement tools. Part II addresses the weakened U.S. enforcement of food safety measures in the context of food imports. Part III considers the proposed outsourcing of food safety regulatory power to the Chinese government. Part IV analyzes the inherent problems of China’s evolving food safety regime. The article concludes that outsourcing regulatory power to China is unwise and will be ineffective in protecting U.S. consumers.


16. See infra Part III of this article.

17. Critics of the current food safety regulatory framework mainly focus on institutional flaws that hinder the efficiency of enforcement tools. See Part I, 1.3 of this article.
I. Regulatory Framework for the Safety of U.S. Made Food

A. The Development of the Regulatory Framework

1. The Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906

In the late 19th Century, scandals involving food contamination plagued the American food industry. The transition from a predominantly agricultural society to an industrial nation led to a newly urbanized population with an insatiable appetite for cheap processed foods. Facing growing demand, big business took advantage of new technologies to adulterate food products. Food manufacturers invented various ways of deceiving consumers by adding chemicals to make deleterious foods appear fresh and desirable. For years, legislators deliberated over federal regulation of the food industry until scenes of appalling and grossly unsanitary working conditions in meat packing factories, depicted in Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, shocked the public’s conscience. In response, lawmakers enacted the Pure Food and Drug Act (PFDA) and the Meat Inspection Act (MIA) in 1906. The current U.S. food safety regulatory framework can be traced to these two laws.

The PFDA prohibited the use in food of “any added poisonous or other added deleterious ingredient which may render such article injurious to health.” To enforce the law, the PFDA granted the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) the authority to inspect foods and report violations to the proper U.S. District Attorney. The PFDA also provided criminal penalties for introducing adulterated or misbranded foods and drugs into interstate commerce. Similarly, the MIA granted the USDA authority to inspect meat consumed in the U.S.

Although Sinclair’s exposé sparked outrage that was instrumental to the passage of the MIA, commentators widely credited passage of the PFDA to the much publicized experiment of Dr. Harvey Wiley. Wiley’s group of volunteers—called the “poison squad”—consumed doses of chemicals identical to those found in food preservatives. Dr. Wiley’s work raised
public awareness of the harm in adulterated and misbranded foodstuffs.\(^ {32} \) As a result, the PFDA was also commonly referred to as the Wiley Act.\(^ {33} \) In 1907, Dr. Wiley became the head of the Bureau of Chemistry of the USDA,\(^ {34} \) which became the Food and Drug Administration.\(^ {35} \)


Even though proponents hailed the PFDA as an important breakthrough, many doubted its effectiveness due to its vague language on key requirements.\(^ {36} \) In 1938, Congress passed the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act) which overhauled the regulatory framework created under the PFDA.\(^ {37} \) The passage of the 1938 Act resulted from the
reported deaths of over one hundred people who had taken an untested elixir drug, which appeared to be harmless but was in fact contaminated with fatal substances.38 To avoid similar occurrences, the FD&C Act required drug manufacturers to prove the safety of any new drug and to receive FDA approval before placing it in interstate commerce.39 It also expanded the FDA’s power to regulate food safety, by authorizing FDA inspections of food manufacturing facilities and products,40 establishing safety tolerances for unavoidable contaminants, and creating labeling standards.41 Most importantly, the FD&C Act required courts to focus on the character of added substances and the conditions under which a product was manufactured.42 Thus, the Act greatly enhanced the FDA’s enforcement power by eliminating the government’s burden to prove in food safety cases the causal link between added substances and injuries to human health.

Since its passage, Congress has amended the FD&C Act numerous times.43 Many of the updates attempted to strike a balance between food safety and the food industry’s pursuit of economic efficiency.44 For example, with growing public concern over the use of pesticides in agricultural production, the 1954 Pesticide Chemicals Amendment to the Act set tolerance levels for their use instead of completely prohibiting the use of pesticides.45 Similarly, the 1938 Act prohibited even trace levels of chemicals, which were deleterious in the absolute sense but relatively harmless when in the proper amount.46 The Amendment of 1958 rolled back the 1938 Act’s harsh treatment of food additives and made way for advancements in food preservation.47

38. SCHUMANN, ET AL., Food Safety Law 7 (1997); see Merrill & Francer, supra note 23, at 81; Merrill & Francer, supra note 38, at 7; Merrill & Francer, supra note 23, at 81–82.
39. SCHUMANN, ET AL., supra note 38, at 7; Merrill & Francer, supra note 23, at 81–82.
40. Merrill & Francer, supra note 23, at 81–82.
41. Id. at 82.
42. See, e.g., U.S. v. Ewig Bros. Co., 502 F.2d 715 (7th Cir. 1974). The government sought an injunction against the distributors of smoked fish containing the residues of dichloro diphenyl trichloroethane (DDT), a synthetic pesticide. See id. The defending distributors argued that the government could not prevail unless it proved that the DDT residues in its smoked fish made their product unfit for human consumption or otherwise injurious to health. See id. at 724 & n.29. The court held that DDT residues in the smoked fish were a “food additive” and that because the fish were not protected by any established tolerance for the inclusion of DDT, the fish were adulterated as a matter of law. See id. at 723–24. On appeal, the Court affirmed the order granting a permanent injunction in favor of the government. See id. at 726.
43. JAMES T. O’REILLY, 1 FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION § 3:5 (3d ed. 2007).
44. See id. § 3:5, at 3-19 (“Whether this supposition is true, the presence of the detail suggests anxiety about arbitrary administrative practice on the part of the FDA, a lingering suspicion growing out of the 1938 Act’s encounter with the apple-growing industry.”).
45. Id.
46. Id.
47. See Food Additives Amendment, Pub. L. No. 85-929, 72 Stat. 1784, 21 U.S.C. § 348 (1958); O’REILLY, supra note 43, § 3:6, at 3-20 (“After extensive hearings revealed a need to improve the regulatory process in the food-additive area, preapproval testing before marketing additives was the means selected.”).
3. **Other Laws and Agencies that Regulate Food Safety**

This article primarily focuses on the FDA because it is the main U.S. party to the food safety agreement with the Chinese government. The FDA “is responsible for ensuring the safety of roughly 80 percent of the U.S. food supply, including $417 billion worth of domestic food and $49 billion in imported food annually.” In addition to the FDA, fifteen other federal agencies are responsible for different aspects of food safety mandated by thirty principal laws. The following three agencies are worth mentioning:

a) The United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regulates the nation’s commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products.

b) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) “leads federal efforts to gather data on foodborne illnesses, investigate foodborne illnesses and outbreaks, and monitor the effectiveness of prevention and control efforts in reducing foodborne illnesses. CDC also plays a key role in building state and local health department epidemiology, laboratory, and environmental health capacity to support foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response.”

c) The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates the use of pesticides. It is responsible both for pre-market registration of new pesticides and for “re-registration of older pesticides to ensure that they meet current scientific standards.” Authorized by the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996, the EPA has undertaken “a comprehensive review of tolerances for pesticide residues in food, with an emphasis on increasing protection for infants and children as well as other vulnerable groups.”

B. The Enforcement Tools that Keep U.S. Made Food Safe

In practice, the enforcement of the FD&C Act consists of two general approaches: the outcome-based approach and the production-based approach. 

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48. See infra Part III of this paper.
49. SHAMES, supra note 8, at 1.
52. Id.
54. Id.
55. Id.
approach.\textsuperscript{56} When feasible, the FDA uses the outcome-based approach to screen the end results of production. Primarily under this approach, all end products that pass FDA inspection would be safe for consumption, assuming that the FDA could adequately inspect all end products and also effectively test for all major safety problems. Outcome-based enforcement tools also include the use of criminal prosecutions, disbarment, seizures, injunctions, voluntary recalls, warning letters, and negative publicity. In addition, the FDA applies the production-based approach to focus on key steps in a product’s manufacturing process. This approach depends on a presumption that end products will be safe if producers follow FDA designated and proven-safe procedures. Production-based enforcement tools consist of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP).

1. Factory Inspections

In the context of regulating U.S. made food, most remedial measures are taken following FDA inspection of food factories.\textsuperscript{57} Therefore, the FDA's power to conduct factory inspections is crucial to securing food safety. The FD&C Act authorizes FDA personnel to enter and conduct an inspection of a food manufacturer's warehouse, factory, or other location.\textsuperscript{58} The FDA has wide discretion to decide when and how to conduct inspections.\textsuperscript{59} In fact, courts rarely interfere with the FDA's inspection power unless the inspected firm can demonstrate unreasonableness.\textsuperscript{60}

The coverage of an FDA inspection may vary to suit its particular purpose.\textsuperscript{61} If the FDA has reason to believe that an article of food is adulter-
ated and presents a serious health threat to humans or animals, an inspection can extend to all records related to the manufacturing, processing, packing, distribution, receipt, holding, or importation of the article, in any format (including hardcopy and electronic), and at any location.62

The FDA usually does not have to present a warrant and normally conducts an inspection with the consent of the inspected firm.63 Refusal of entry, however, can result in serious consequences.64 Upon refusal, an FDA official would certainly obtain a warrant to complete the inspection.65 If the owner then refuses a warranted search, the U.S. Marshals can arrest him on the scene.66 According to § 374(a), refusing a legitimate inspection request is a criminal violation of the FD&C Act punishable with up to one year of imprisonment and a fine of up to $1,000.67 In addition, the FDA can use the refusal as the basis for a civil action against the owner, which may result in seizure or an injunction.68 Forcible actions against inspectors can also lead to criminal punishment.69

2. Criminal Sanctions

Criminal enforcement of the FD&C Act is the least utilized sanction.70 The threat of imposing criminal sanctions, however, can provide a level of deterrence and thus secure food quality and safety.71 Given the complexity of modern food making processes, imposing criminal liability depends on the underlying theory that consumers cannot protect themselves even by exercising the utmost of care. Thus, public interest in the purity of food justifies the idea that food manufacturers must be held to the highest standards of care.72 Hence, in theory, criminal liability can force food makers to conform to the FD&C Act even when they are not under constant FDA oversight. This idea is consistent with the notion of industry self-regulation.73 With limited resources, the FDA cannot realistically monitor the increasingly massive and sophisticated food industry; therefore, the possi-

63. See O'Reilly, supra note 43, § 20:1, at 20-3.
64. See id.
65. Id. § 20:12, at 20-32.
66. Id. § 20:1, at 20-4.
67. See 21 U.S.C. §§ 331(f), 333(a)(1), 374(a); O'Reilly, supra note 43, § 20:14, at 20-34.
68. See O'Reilly, supra note 43, § 20:1, at 20-3.
69. Id. § 20:12, at 20-32.
70. Id. § 8:1, at 8-2.
71. See, e.g., Sam D. Fine, The Philosophy of Enforcement, 31 Food Drug. Cosmol. J. 324, 325–26 (1976) (illustrating how after criminally prosecuting two pecan shellers, an independent sheller approached Mr. Fine saying, “Tell me what I have to do, Mr. Fine—I don’t want to go to jail.”).
72. U.S. v. Park, 421 U.S. 658, 671 (1975) (“The public interest in the purity of its food is so great as to warrant the imposition of the highest standard of care on distributors.”) (quoting Smith v. California, 361 U.S. 147, 152 (1959)).
bility of imposing criminal liability remains an indispensable means of enforcement.

“Most violations of the FD&C Act potentially carry criminal penalties.” \(^74\) Not every such violation, however, actually requires criminal liability. The FDA has discretion to decide whether to prosecute a particular violation. \(^75\) In deciding whether to pursue criminal charges, the FDA usually considers the following factors: “continuing violations of law (e.g., continuing insanitary conditions in a food plant); violations of an obvious and flagrant nature (e.g., food warehouse overrun with rodents, birds and insects, which contains plainly contaminated products); and intentionally false or fraudulent violations.” \(^76\)

One distinctive feature of criminal liability under the FD&C Act is its standard of “strict liability.” \(^77\) That is, a person in charge of a food manufacturer that violates certain provisions of the Act can be held criminally liable without the government proving the \textit{mens rea} “typically required in Anglo-American criminal law.” \(^78\) In this context, strict liability applies where the person in charge had a “responsible relation” to a violation of the FD&C Act. \(^79\) In \textit{U.S. v. Park}, \(^80\) the Court explained the reason why individuals who had a “responsible relationship” to the regulated products should be held to the highest standard of care:

The requirements of foresight and vigilance imposed on responsible corporate agents are beyond question demanding, and perhaps onerous, but they are no more stringent than the public has a right to expect of those who voluntarily assume positions of authority in business enterprises whose services and products affect the health and well-being of the public that supports them. \(^81\)

\(^74\) \textit{Hutt, Merrill & Grossman}, \textit{supra} note 37, at 1310.

\(^75\) \textit{Id.} at 1319.

\(^76\) \textit{Id.}

\(^77\) See \textit{Joseph E. Cole, Environmental Criminal Liability: What Federal Officials Know (or Should Know) Can Hurt Them}, 94 \textit{A.F.L. Rev.} 1, 6–7 (2004) (“For statutes concerned with public health, safety, and welfare, however, courts have taken a different view. Generally, a public welfare statute without a standard for culpability will require the government to only prove the defendant had the responsibility and had either the authority to prevent or the ability to remedy a violation; the government does not have to show that the individual had the intent to violate the law or even any knowledge of the violation.”).

\(^78\) \textit{Hutt, Merrill & Grossman}, \textit{supra} note 37, at 1310.

\(^79\) \textit{Id.}

\(^80\) See \textit{U.S. v. Park}, 421 U.S. 658, 671 (1975). In this case, the FDA inspections revealed that Acme Markets had persistent problems with rat infestations in food storage areas. The FDA repeatedly urged the company’s CEO, Mr. John R. Park, to correct the violations. Mr. Park directed his subordinates to address the issues, which they did, but the infestations continued. At trial, Mr. Park was criminally fined $250. Mr. Park appealed the decision asserting that he could not have done anything more than what his subordinates had done. Affirming the trial court’s decision, the Court concluded that “[Mr. Park] had, by reason of his position in the corporation, responsibility and authority either to prevent in the first instance, or promptly to correct, the violation complained of, and that he failed to do so.” \textit{Id.} at 673–74.

\(^81\) \textit{Id.} at 672.
Like the Sword of Damocles, the criminal “responsible relationship” test—albeit rarely used—exists as “a formidable tool” for FDA enforcement. The criminal penalties for a single offense under the FD&C Act may consist of a year in jail and a $100,000 fine. If the violation caused death, the fine may reach $250,000. If the defendant is also convicted of wire fraud, mail fraud, or conspiracy, additional sanctions may apply. In fact, the maximum fine for multiple counts from a single event may reach $500,000. Additionally, the court may order the offender to cover the FDA’s investigation expenses.

3. Seizures

Another FDA enforcement tool is government seizure of adulterated or misbranded food products. Like criminal sanctions, seizure provides leverage for the FDA to pressure a firm to take appropriate actions to eliminate or prevent foodborne harm to the public. To avoid seizure proceedings, firms usually opt for voluntary recalls of their potentially harmful products.

During an FDA site inspection, the FDA may seize products because the FDA believes that the manufacturer’s products possess an immediate injury potential. To initiate a seizure, the FDA works with a local U.S. attorney to file a complaint against the suspect products in federal district court. After a court clerk signs the complaint, the FDA can then send U.S. Marshals to seize the property.

A seizure action is more drastic than a regular civil action because it is executed according to admiralty procedures rather than standard civil procedures. As a result, a seizure action may be conducted in rem against the defective products themselves and not against the owner of the prod-

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82. O’REILLY, supra note 43, § 8:5, at 8-16.
83. See 21 U.S.C. § 333; Id. § 8:25, at 8-42.
84. O’REILLY, supra note 43, § 8:25, at 8-42.
85. Id.
86. Id. § 8:26, at 8-44.
88. Ewing v. Mytinger & Casselberry, Inc., 339 U.S. 594, 601 (1950) (“Congress weighed the potential injury to the public from misbranded articles against the injury to the purveyor of the article from a temporary interference with its distribution and decided in favor of the speedy, preventive device of multiple seizures.”).
89. See Eugene I. Lambert, Recalls, Regulatory Letters and Publicity, 31 FOOD DRUG COSM. L.J. 360, 360 (1976) (“Recalls perhaps can be characterized as do-it-yourself seizure actions.”).
90. See O’REILLY, supra note 43, § 7:4, at 7-15–16 (recognizing that another possible reason for seizure is dispute over nomenclature for ingredients).
91. Id.
92. Id. § 7:4, at 7-16.
93. See Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act § 304(b), 21 U.S.C. § 334 (2006); § 334(b) Procedure; multiplicity of pending proceedings: The article, equipment, or other thing proceeded against shall be liable to seizure by process pursuant to the libel, and the procedure in cases under this section shall conform, as nearly as may be, to the procedure in admiralty; except
ucts. Accordingly, a seizure action involves no party in opposition to the FDA. Additionally, procedures for these cases require no pre-seizure hearing, nor do they entitle the owner to any prior judicial finding of probable cause. Instead, cases have held that a post-seizure hearing is sufficient. Courts tend to accord the FDA great deference and often resolve challenges of seizures in the FDA’s favor.

4. Voluntary Recalls

A recall is a means of removing consumer products from the market that violate the FD&C Act. However, the FD&C Act does not explicitly authorize the FDA to conduct recalls of food products, except baby formula. In practice, the FDA acquired the power to facilitate recalls by threatening to use other statutorily authorized enforcement methods, such as seizures and injunctions, to force manufacturers and distributors to remove their harmful food products from the market. Thus, voluntary recalls are essentially “do-it-yourself seizure actions.”

that on demand of either party any issue of fact joined in any such case shall be tried by jury.

94. See O’REILLY, supra note 43, § 7:5, at 7-22 (“Once the claimant [the owner of the seized goods] files the claim, the legal jurisdiction of the court changes from in rem jurisdiction over the product into in personam jurisdiction over the person or company who made the claim.”).

95. Id. § 7:3, at 7-9.

96. Id.

97. Id.

98. 21 C.F.R. § 7.40(a) (2009):
Recall is an effective method of removing or correcting consumer products that are in violation of laws administered by the Food and Drug Administration. Recall is a voluntary action that takes place because manufacturers and distributors carry out their responsibility to protect the public health and well-being from products that present a risk of injury or gross deception or are otherwise defective.

See also O’REILLY, supra note 43, § 21:1; Lambert, supra note 89, at 360.

99. Through later amendments, the FDA acquired authority to conduct mandatory recalls in certain areas. FD&C Act § 535(f) gives the FDA power to mandate the repurchase, repair, or replacement of radiation-emitting electronic products. 21 U.S.C. § 360ll(f) (2006). FD&C Act § 315(d) gives the FDA the power to order recall of a biological product that presents an imminent or substantial hazard to public health. 21 U.S.C. § 362(d) (2006). The Infant Formula Act of 1980 added current FD&C Act § 412(f), directing the FDA to prescribe the scope and extent of recalls of infant formulas. 21 U.S.C. § 350a(f) (2006). FD&C Act § 518(c) requires the FDA to order cessation of the distribution of medical devices in situations where there is a “reasonable probability that a device intended for human use would cause serious, adverse health consequences or death.” 21 U.S.C. § 360(h)(6) (2006); see also HUTT, MERRILL & GRASSMAN, supra note 37, at 1304 (describing in detail the FDA’s statutory power to conduct recalls).

100. See O’REILLY, supra note 43, § 21:1 at 21-3 (An FDA commissioner described the development of food recall this way: “There were some episodes of poisoning. We put out a public warning about them, and the next question was to the company: Are you going to get it off the market or shall we seize it? And from that beginning the recall system grew.”) (quoting Recall Procedures of the Food and Drug Administration: Hearings Before Subcomm. on Intergovernmental Relations, House Governmental Operations Comm., 91st Cong. (2d Sess. 1971)).
In 1978, the FDA issued guidelines on recall policy, procedures and industry responsibility. Under the current guidelines, recalls take two forms: firm initiated or FDA initiated recalls. A firm initiated recall occurs any time a firm voluntarily removes its product from the market on its own initiative or upon FDA request. The FDA does not consider such an action a recall, however, if a firm merely retrieves its products for reasons other than violating the FD&C Act, or if the recall is due to a "minor or technical violation of the laws which the FDA administers." This distinction is important because the FDA issues public alerts for most recalls, which can negatively impact a firm’s reputation. Alternatively, an FDA initiated recall occurs only in urgent situations or when a firm refuses to initiate a recall upon FDA request. In either type of recall, the FDA assumes the supervisory role and the recalling firm assumes primary responsibility for removing the unsafe products.

During the consideration or administration of a recall, the FDA evaluates the product’s potential health hazard. According to the seriousness

102. See 21 C.F.R. §§ 7.41–7.59 (2009) (incorporating the guidelines with the most recent updates and amendments).
103. 21 C.F.R. § 7.40(b) (2009).
104. Id. § 7.40(a).
106. See 21 C.F.R. § 7.50 (2009) (also stating that under certain circumstances, the FDA ‘will intentionally delay public notification of recalls of certain drugs and devices where the agency determines that public notification may cause unnecessary and harmful anxiety in patients and that initial consultation between patients and their physicians is essential.’); see also O’REILLY, supra note 43, § 21:2, at 21-7 (discussing the potential implications of the term ‘recall’).
108. Id. § 7.46(b).
109. See O’REILLY, supra note 43, § 21:2, at 21-6 (“A recall is the removal or correction of a marketed product by a responsible firm.”).
110. 21 C.F.R. § 741(a) (2009):
An evaluation of the health hazard presented by a product being recalled or considered for recall . . . will take into account, but need not be limited to, the following factors:

(1) Whether any disease or injuries have already occurred from the use of the product.
(2) Whether any existing conditions could contribute to a clinical situation that could expose humans or animals to a health hazard. Any conclusion shall be supported as completely as possible by scientific documentation and/or statements that the conclusion is the opinion of the individual(s) making the health hazard determination.
(3) Assessment of hazard to various segments of the population, e.g., children, surgical patients, pets, livestock, etc., who are expected to be exposed to the product being considered, with particular attention paid to the hazard to those individuals who may be at greatest risk.
(4) Assessment of the degree of seriousness of the health hazard to which the populations at risk would be exposed.
(5) Assessment of the likelihood of occurrence of the hazard.
(6) Assessment of the consequences (immediate or long-range) of occurrence of the hazard.
of the health hazard posed to the public, the FDA “assign[s] the recall a classification, i.e., Class I, Class II, or Class III, to indicate the relative degree of health hazard.” Additionally, either the agency in an FDA initiated recall, or the recalling firm in a firm initiated recall, must develop a detailed strategy and submit it for FDA approval. Along with a general assessment of the violation and the approaches the firm will take to resolve the food-borne threat, the strategy must specify how the firm will relay important information to the public and how it will conduct checks on the recall’s effectiveness. Moreover, recalling firms must keep the FDA informed regarding the recall’s status. Because public awareness is essential in preventing further harm, the FDA will ordinarily issue public warnings to alert consumers about the health hazard. The FDA will also post public notifications of recalls in its weekly FDA Enforcement Report on the FDA website, providing a descriptive listing of each new recall according to its classification.

5. Good Manufacturing Practices Regulation (GMP)

Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) provide operational guidance to FDA regulated industries through the dissemination of systems-oriented requirements information for quality control and compliance. GMP represents a shift from a system of discovering unsafe products after production to a system of monitoring the production process proactively to prevent violations and ensure safe results. In the 1960s, the FDA began to standardize production procedures in certain industries. To institute GMP—much like it instituted facilitated recalls—the FDA leverages statutorily authorized tools to effectively induce industries to self-regulate.

The FDA’s rule making authority made it possible for a broad interpretation of the FD&C Act regarding the prohibition of “insanitary conditions.” Section 402(a) states: “A food shall be deemed to be adulterated . . . (4) if it has been prepared, packed, or held under insanitary conditions whereby it may have become contaminated with filth, or whereby it may have been rendered injurious to health . . . .” 21 U.S.C. § 371(a) (2009) (“The authority to promulgate regulations for the efficient enforcement of this Act, except as otherwise provided in this section, is vested in the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS).”); 21 U.S.C. § 342(a) (2006) (“A food shall be deemed to be adulterated . . . (4) if it has been prepared, packed, or held under insanitary conditions whereby it may have become contaminated with filth, or whereby it may have been rendered injurious to health . . . .”).
have been rendered injurious to health . . . ”121 Congress, however, fell short of defining within the Act what exactly “insanitary condition” meant.122 Construing the provision in its favor, the FDA seized the opportunity to define the term “insanitary conditions” by promulgating detailed GMP regulations.123 As codified in 21 C.F.R. Part 110, the GMP regulations standardize production procedures in certain industries.124 Essentially, any given GMP provides an FDA inspection benchmark to measure for an insanitary condition. From an enforcement point of view, GMP benefits both the FDA and the regulated industries. By checking production processes, GMP enables the FDA to find violations at an early stage and thus prevent the public from being injured in the first place. From an industry perspective, GMP provides certainty by specifying what to expect from an FDA inspection.

Although the FD&C Act does not specifically authorize GMP, courts have generally supported the FDA’s interpretation of “insanitary conditions” in light of the compelling interest in public safety. In United States v. Nova Scotia Food Products Corp.,125 the defendant challenged the FDA’s authority to enforce GMP. The court held that “[t]he public interest will not permit invalidation simply on the basis of a lack of delegated statutory authority in this case.”126

6. Tort Litigation

No provisions in the FD&C Act expressly authorize a private cause of action, and “the Supreme Court declared that only the federal government may enforce the FD&C Act.”127 Thus, a citizen cannot function as a private attorney general to supplement enforcement of the FD&C Act.128 A private party injured by unsafe food, however, can bring a common law tort claim against the manufacturer.129 As a result, tort litigation provides another important tool to compel industries to ensure food safety.130 The threat of tort litigation is akin to an outcome-based enforcement approach because tort liability can only be imposed after the harm has occurred.

124. Id.
126. Id. at 248.
127. Hutt, Merrill & Grossman, supra note 37, at 1467.
128. Id. at 1464.
130. See James T. O’Reilly, Are We Cutting the GRAS? Food Safety Perceptions are Diminished by Dysfunctional Bureaucratic Silos, 59 Food & Drug L.J. 417, 421 (2004) (“Liability litigation avoidance is an important, disciplining factor in the safety decisions made by food processors.”).
II. Reforming the Food Safety System

A. The Scope of the Problem

Each year, there are approximately seventy-six million cases of foodborne illnesses resulting in 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths in the United States. As a result, the FDA has been under constant criticism for its failure to reduce outbreaks. Some commentators, however, point out that the blame is largely misplaced because the FDA is substantially underfunded. While the FDA’s responsibility continues to expand, its budget actually decreases in relevant terms. An FDA analysis indicated that, “‘[a]s long as the resources available to FDA do not keep up with the realities of increasing costs . . . it is increasingly difficult for FDA to perform in a way that meets public expectations.’” Due to this lack of funding, the number of inspections of domestic food processing facilities has dropped from 50,000 in 1972 to less than 10,000 in 2006, a drop of more than 80%. Even with the assistance of states, the FDA can only inspect 9% of the 210,000 food establishments each year. With decreasing inspection rates, outbreaks of food-borne illnesses have increased rapidly.

B. The Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009

In response to recent food poisoning epidemics, the legislature has proposed several bills to improve food safety. On July 30, 2009, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Food Safety Enhancement Act (FSEA), which is currently pending in the U.S. Senate. The FSEA proposes major amendments to the FD&C Act.


132. See, e.g., DeWaal & Plunkett, supra note 11 (criticizing the FDA and calling for reform).


134. See CDC, supra note 131, at 2; Hubbard, supra note 133.

135. Id.

136. See Waxman, supra note 131, at 2; Hubbard, supra note 133.

137. See Waxman, supra note 131, at 3.

138. See DeWaal & Plunkett, supra note 11.


1. Enhancing Production-based Enforcement Tools

The FSEA emphasizes production-based supervision. First, the FSEA would require that food facilities register with the FDA and pay a $500 annual registration fee. In addition, the FSEA would obligate food facilities to provide contact information, the primary purpose of their establishments, and all the trade names under which their facilities conduct business. It would authorize the FDA to suspend registration if a food manufacturer has violated the law in a way that is likely to cause a serious health hazard or death. Second, the FSEA would require food facilities to develop and implement a food safety plan. Food facilities would be required to conduct a hazard analysis and take preventative measures to ensure food safety. The law would require the FDA to identify and publish the “most significant food-borne contaminants and the most significant resulting hazards” every two years. Third, the FSEA would set a risk-based inspection schedule and authorize the FDA to gain access to food facility records. It would mandate that the FDA randomly inspect high-risk (category 1) facilities every six to twelve months; low risk (category 2) facilities every eighteen to thirty-six months; and facilities that hold food (category 3) every five years. The FDA would be required to make an annual report to Congress on the inspections of food facilities. Furthermore, the FSEA would require the FDA to establish a tracing system that would keep track of the origin and distribution history of every food product it regulates. In the context of imports, the FSEA would mandate that imported foods be accompanied by a valid certificate verifying that the foods comply with the FD&C Act.

2. Enhancing Outcome-based Enforcement Tools

Additionally, the FSEA addresses outcome-based enhancements. First, it would authorize the FDA to conduct mandatory recalls of adulterated or misbranded products. In addition, the FSEA would increase detention of foods suspected of being adulterated or misbranded from thirty days to sixty days. Second, the FSEA would increase prison terms from one to ten years for knowing violations of the FD&C Act’s provisions concerning misbranded or adulterated food.

142. Id. at 3.
144. Id. §§ 101(b)(4)–101(b)(5).
145. Id. § 102.
146. Id. § 103(b).
147. Id. § 106.
148. Id. § 105(a).
149. Id. § 105(b).
150. Id. § 107.
151. Id. § 109.
152. Id. § 111(b).
153. See 21 U.S.C. § 334(h) (2006); Id. § 132.
While it is unclear whether the U.S. Senate will pass the FSEA, or other proposed bills on food safety, these efforts show that lawmakers are concerned with the effect inadequate funding is having on the application of traditional outcome-based and production-based enforcement tools. With over a hundred years of practice, the two enforcement tools, when properly funded, have proven relatively effective in ensuring food safety.

III. The FDA’s Weakened Enforcement in the Context of Food Imports

Although the public is frustrated with the enforcement of the FD&C Act in the domestic food context, it is even more enraged that enforcement for imported foods is even weaker.155 The following section explores the hurdles that have prevented both outcome-based and production-based enforcement from producing a deterrent effect on foreign food manufacturers.

A. FDA’s Refusal of Entry

Theoretically, the FDA “has broad power to inspect, detain, and refuse entry to imported products”156 within its jurisdiction.157 Since the FDA need not prove that goods are actually adulterated, only that they appear to be adulterated, the standard to justify refusal is low.158 The FDA may set terms for the relabeling or reconditioning of goods and may even order owners to destroy their goods.159 Legal challenges to FDA refusals of entry are difficult and courts usually “decline to intrude on [the FDA’s] discretion.”160

B. Weakened Enforcement

Ironically, the FDA’s broad power to regulate foreign products does not result in safe imports.161 In practice, the FDA is unable to fully utilize either the outcome-based or production-based tools to regulate imported food due to lack of resources.162

1. Weakened Outcome-based Tools

Over the last decade, the United States experienced a rapid increase in the import of agricultural and seafood products. From 1997 to 2007, the import value of these products increased by 94%, growing in overall value

155. See DeWaal & Plunkett, supra note 11, at 3.
156. O’Reilly, supra note 43, § 28:1, at 28-1
158. See Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act § 801(a); O’Reilly, supra note 43, § 28:3, at 28-3.
159. See O’Reilly, supra note 43, § 28:2, at 28-3.
160. Id. § 28:3, at 28-3.
162. See generally Waxman, supra note 131.
from $43 billion to $83.6 billion. By volume, the increase was 35% during the same period. Despite the dramatic increase of imported agricultural and seafood products, the FDA’s budget has not increased proportionally. In 2007, the FDA had only 450 inspectors scattered over 300 ports of entry. As a result, the FDA was only able to conduct physical inspections of just over 1% of food imports. A Congressional study revealed that FDA inspectors in San Francisco have an average of only thirty seconds to decide whether they should subject a particular shipment from abroad to further intensive investigation. Without adequate inspections, the outcome-based tools, such as seizure and injunction, simply cannot be relied on to deter foreign producers from sending harmful food to the United States.

2. Weakened Production-based Tools

Production-based tools are even further weakened in the context of imports. Without regular periodic audits, foreign factories are not likely to take the GMP or the HACCP processes seriously because compliance with these procedures requires additional costs. The appallingly low inspection rate at ports of entry has further emboldened foreign firms to cut corners without worrying about detection. Even if the FDA acquires the right, mainly through bilateral agreements with foreign governments, to inspect foreign food manufacturers, it cannot realistically afford to inspect them as frequently as it inspects U.S. firms due to limited resources. In addition, cultural and linguistic barriers add to the difficulties the FDA faces in conducting efficient inspections of foreign manufacturers. In 2008, in response to deaths caused by Heparin, a blood thinner, the FDA inspected a plant in China that they believed produced the faulty products. It later turned out that the FDA had inspected the wrong plant,
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which bore a name similar to that of the real perpetrator.173

Furthermore, unannounced audits or inspections of foreign facilities are almost impossible to conduct because the FDA can only access the facilities with the “permission of the foreign government.”174 During the pet food scandal of 2007, the FDA intended to inspect the suspected factories in China.175 The Chinese government deliberately delayed the FDA inspectors’ visas.176 One report stated that when the inspectors finally reached the two suspected plants in southern China, one plant had already been bulldozed and the other one was deserted.177 According to another report, the owner of the factory not only bulldozed the building, but also deeply plowed the ground to ensure that U.S. inspectors would not find any trace of melamine.178

C. Challenges of Suing Chinese Manufacturers in the United States

U.S. tort litigation does not provide effective deterrence to Chinese food manufacturers for several reasons. First, it is difficult to identify the manufacturer that produced the faulty food products.179 The Chinese food industry is highly fragmented, with numerous small firms scattered around the country.180 Market transactions in China are often conducted on a cash basis, which makes it impossible to trace the origin of products.181 Many imports coming into the United States bear only “Made in China” labels without specifying the name of the manufacturer.182 Identifying a Chinese manufacturer can be a time consuming and expensive undertaking, especially for a private party.183

Second, even if the plaintiff is able to identify the Chinese food manufacturer, he may find that obtaining evidence in China is a daunting task. Rule 28(b) of the U.S. Federal Rules of Civil Procedure spells out a number

174. See, e.g., BECKER, supra note 9, at 5.
175. See Michael Rogers, Answers at FDA Press Conference on the Pet Food Recall (Apr. 19, 2007), at 5-6 (discussing the FDA’s intention to inspect factories in China and the attendant difficulties).
177. Id.
180. See infra Part IV 4.4 of this article.
183. Id.
of ways to take depositions in a foreign country.\textsuperscript{184} China, however, has greatly restricted the ability of foreign parties to take depositions.\textsuperscript{185} Currently, China allows only foreign diplomatic personnel to conduct depositions in China under limited circumstances.\textsuperscript{186} Even though China and the United States are both parties to the Hague Convention on Taking Evidence Abroad,\textsuperscript{187} China has an official reservation to adopting Articles Sixteen through Twenty-two of the Convention.\textsuperscript{188} As a result, “[t]aking evidence in China for use in foreign courts is problematic.”\textsuperscript{189} Any violation may result in the arrest or detention of the U.S. citizen participating in the deposition.\textsuperscript{190}

Third, even if the plaintiff overcomes these procedural hurdles and wins damages, he may find it difficult to enforce a U.S. judgment in China, particularly because the defendant will likely lack attachable assets in the United States.\textsuperscript{191} In order to enforce a foreign judgment in China, Article 265 of the Chinese Civil Procedure Law\textsuperscript{192} requires the existence of a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[184.] \textsc{Fed. R. Civ. P. 28(b)}: In a Foreign Country.
\begin{enumerate}
\item[(1)] In General. A deposition may be taken in a foreign country:
\begin{enumerate}
\item[(A)] under an applicable treaty or convention;
\item[(B)] under a letter of request, whether or not captioned a “letter rogatory”;
\item[(C)] on notice, before a person authorized to administer oaths either by federal law or by the law in the place of examination; or
\item[(D)] before a person commissioned by the court to administer any necessary oath and take testimony.
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[(2)] Issuing a Letter of Request or a Commission. A letter of request, a commission, or both may be issued:
\begin{enumerate}
\item[(A)] on appropriate terms after an application and notice of it; and
\item[(B)] without a showing that taking the deposition in another manner is impracticable or inconvenient.
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[(3)] Form of a Request, Notice, or Commission. When a letter of request or any other device is used according to a treaty or convention, it must be captioned in the form prescribed by that treaty or convention. A letter of request may be addressed “To the Appropriate Authority in [name of country].” A deposition notice or a commission must designate by name or descriptive title the person before whom the deposition is to be taken.
\end{enumerate}
\item[185.] See \textsc{U.S. Dep’t of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, China Judicial Assistance} (2010), \url{http://travel.state.gov/law/info/judicial/judicial_694.html} [hereinafter \textsc{China Judicial Assistance}].
\item[186.] See id.
\item[188.] See \textsc{China Judicial Assistance}, supra note 185.
\item[189.] Id.
\item[190.] See id.
\item[191.] Greve & Chung, supra note 179.
\item[192.] Zhonghua Renmin Gonghe Guo Min Shi Susong Fa (2007 Xouzheng) [The Law of Civil Litigation Procedure of the People’s Republic of China (as amended in 2007)] (promulgated by the Standing Comm. Nat’l People’s Cong., Apr. 9, 1991) (P.R.C.) [hereinafter \textsc{Chinese Civil Procedure Law}], \url{translated at http://www.lawinfochina.com/}. Article 265: If a legally effective judgment or ruling made by a foreign court seeks the recognition and enforcement of a people’s court of the People’s Repub-
treaty of reciprocity. Currently there is no bilateral or multilateral treaty between the United States and China that obligates China to recognize and enforce U.S. judgments.193

D. Challenges of Suing U.S. Retailers

Given the difficulties associated with suing Chinese manufacturers, consumers might naturally assume they will be able to sue the U.S. retailers of Chinese-made products. Unfortunately, they will be disappointed to find that a growing number of states have enacted statutes, with some complicated exceptions, that shield such retailers from strict liability.194


194. See, e.g., TEX. CIV. PRAC. & REM. CODE ANN. § 82.003(a)(6) (Vernon 2009): Liability of Nonmanufacturing Sellers:
(a) A seller that did not manufacture a product is not liable for harm caused to the claimant by that product unless the claimant proves: [the manufacturer of the product is insolvent; not subject to jurisdiction of the court; or the seller actually knew of the defect to the product at the time the seller supplied the product, etc.].

Innocent Seller:
(1) No product liability action shall be commenced or maintained against any seller of a product unless said seller is also the manufacturer of said product or the manufacturer of the part thereof giving rise to the product liability action. . . .

(2) If jurisdiction cannot be obtained over a particular manufacturer of a product or a part of a product alleged to be defective, then that manufacturer’s principal distributor or seller over whom jurisdiction can be obtained shall be deemed, for the purposes of this section, the manufacturer of the product.

IND. CODE ANN. § 34-20-2-3 (LexisNexis 2004):
Actions against sellers limited:
A product liability action based on the doctrine of strict liability in tort may not be commenced or maintained against a seller of a product that is
There used to be a bright-line rule stating that retailers were strictly liable for the defective products they sold. This strict liability doctrine originated in *Vandermark v. Ford Motor Co.* In *Vandermark*, the plaintiff, who was injured in an automobile accident caused by defective brakes, sued both the manufacturer and the automobile dealer. The court held that both were strictly liable for the plaintiff’s injuries. Writing for the court, Judge Traynor gave two primary reasons why retailers were subject to strict liability. First, retailers are “an integral part of the overall producing and marketing enterprise.” Therefore, they are in a position to pressure the manufacturer and assure maximum protection for consumers. Since the manufacturer and the retailer are involved in an on-going course of business, they are able to calculate the costs of accidents and allocate them accordingly. Second, retailers are often the only party the plaintiff can identify, and if the retailer is not held liable, the plaintiff could be left without a remedy. “Strict liability on the manufacturer and retailer alike affords maximum protection to the injured plaintiff and works no injustice to the defendants, for they can adjust the costs of such protection between them in the course of their continuing business relationship.” Many state courts subsequently followed *Vandermark*. The Restatement (Second) of Torts also embraced this idea in § 402A.

With the publication of the Model Uniform Products Liability Act in 1979, some states began a trend of moving away from *Vandermark*. Opponents of *Vandermark* proffered pro-business arguments that retailers are not in control of the production process and so are not in the position

alleged to contain or possess a defective condition unreasonably dangerous to the user or consumer unless the seller is a manufacturer of the product or of the part of the product alleged to be defective.


No product liability action, except an action for breach of express warranty, shall be commenced or maintained against any seller when the product was acquired and sold by the seller in a sealed container or when the product was acquired and sold by the seller under circumstances in which the seller was afforded no reasonable opportunity to inspect the product in such a manner that would have or should have, in the exercise of reasonable care, revealed the existence of the condition complained of, unless the seller damaged or mishandled the product while in his possession; provided, that the provisions of this section shall not apply if the manufacturer of the product is not subject to the jurisdiction of the courts of this State or if such manufacturer has been judicially declared insolvent.

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196. See *Vandermark*, 391 P.2d at 169.

197. *Id.* at 172.

198. See *id.* at 171–72.

199. *Id.* at 171.

200. See *id.*

201. See *id.* at 171–72.

202. *Id.* at 172.

203. See *Owen*, supra note 129, at 959.

204. See *id.*

to prevent the production of defective products. Retailers lack sufficient information and thus are ill-equipped to defend themselves. In addition, because Vandermark gave courts greater ability to assert personal jurisdiction over nonresident manufacturers, it became inefficient for retailers to waste resources on indemnity lawsuits against manufacturers instead of simply requiring plaintiffs to sue the manufacturers directly in the first place.

Despite the fact that the Restatement (Third) of Torts reaffirmed Vandermark, a number of state statutes followed the Model Uniform Product Liability Act, which significantly limits strict liability for retailers. These statutes typically create two major exceptions: retailers are strictly liable (1) if the manufacturer of a defective product “is not subject to the jurisdiction of the court;” or (2) if the manufacturer is insolvent.

Unfortunately, these two exceptions generally will not provide U.S. consumers of Chinese imports with an adequate remedy. First, although the indirect and tenuous role a large number of small Chinese manufacturers play in distribution will not meet the minimum contacts test, many Chinese manufacturers set up U.S. branch offices to promote their products, which may be sufficient to subject them to state court jurisdiction. Thus, in many cases, a consumer will not be able to invoke the first exception to the retailer’s strict liability protection. The second exception—manufacturer insolvency—is more complicated in the context of Chinese imports. The Chinese bankruptcy law is still in its infancy, thus Chinese courts are reluctant to deal with bankruptcy cases. When a Chinese manufacturer’s defective products cause injuries in the United States, the Chinese government tends to respond by revoking the manufacturer’s license and shutting it down rather than declaring it bankrupt. As a result, the consumer will find it difficult to argue that the retailer should be held strictly liable because the Chinese manufacturer is not insolvent but merely shut down by the government. Therefore, a consumer’s only feasible course of action, when injured by a Chinese-made product, will likely be to sue the Chinese manufacturer in a U.S. court. However, given that Chinese manufacturers predominately do not maintain attachable assets in the United States, a consumer who can otherwise successfully establish jurisdiction and obtain a favorable judgment will not be able to collect

207. See id.
208. See id.
209. See Owen, supra note 129, at 960.
210. Id.
212. But cf. id.
213. See Feeney, supra note 206, at 581.
214. Id.
215. See id.
domestically. Consequently, the consumer will have to confront the legal hurdle of enforcing a U.S. judgment in China.

Finally, it’s noteworthy that Georgia statutes “exempt non-manufacturers unconditionally from strict products liability in tort.” Therefore, Georgia consumers of Chinese-made products will have no way to sue U.S. retailers, even if they were somehow able to meet the above noted exceptions. The statutory limitation on retailers’ strict liability is based on the assumption that consumers can always bring a tort action against manufacturers. This assumption is true in the context of U.S.-made products, but not imports.

In sum, although the FDA has wide discretion to refuse entry of defective imports, the agency is unable to conduct adequate inspections at every port of entry to detect defective products. Thus, the traditional outcome-based enforcement tools provide ineffective deterrence to Chinese manufacturers. Furthermore, with insurmountable legal hurdles, consumers are discouraged from resorting to litigation against Chinese manufacturers in U.S. courts.

IV. Outsourcing Regulatory Power to China

In response to the pet food scandal in 2007 and other high profile recalls of Chinese-made products, the Bush Administration created an Interagency Working Group (IWG) to tackle the issue of imported food safety. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) also proposed its own plans to improve food safety. Among other measures, these action plans invariably call for “capacity building” of foreign food safety regulatory regimes. Through bilateral agreements with China and other nations, the objective of these proposals is to shift the burden of securing food safety to those countries exporting food products into the

216. See Huang, supra note 211, at 151.
217. Owen, supra note 129, at 960.
   (b) For purposes of a product liability action based in whole or in part on the doctrine of strict liability in tort, a product seller is not a manufacturer as provided in Code Section 51-1-11 and is not liable as such.
   (c) Nothing contained in this Code section shall be construed to grant a cause of action in strict liability in tort or any other legal theory or to affect the right of any person to seek and obtain indemnity or contribution.
221. There are major reports on import safety to the President: (1) INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON IMP. SAFETY, IMPORT SAFETY - ACTION PLAN UPDATE: A PROGRESS SUMMARY (July 2008) [hereinafter ACTION PLAN UPDATE]; (2) ACTION PLAN FOR IMPORT SAFETY, supra note 15; (3) INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON IMP. SAFETY, PROTECTING AMERICAN CONSUMERS EVERY STEP OF THE WAY: A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN IMPORT SAFETY (Sept. 10, 2007) [hereinafter PROTECTING AMERICAN CONSUMERS]. All three reports are available at http://www.importsafety.gov/.
222. See ACTION PLAN FOR IMPORT SAFETY, supra note 15, at 24.
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Unites States.223  In essence, the proposed measures seek to outsource food safety regulatory power from the United States to China and other foreign governments. This section examines the United States’ action plans and legislative proposals, as well as the U.S.-China agreement on import safety.

A. U.S. Government’s Action Plans on Import Safety

There were several government action plans on import safety under the Bush Administration. These plans have thus far continued to be in force under the Obama administration. Experts predict that the Obama Administration is unlikely to take a different approach from the previous administration.224

1. Promoting Import Safety within Existing Resources

On July 18, 2007, President Bush issued Executive Order 13439 establishing the Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Import Safety, consisting of members from 13 federal agencies.225 The stated mission of the IWG was to “identify actions and appropriate steps that can be pursued, within existing resources, to promote the safety of imported products . . . .”226

The President assigned the IWG three tasks. First, the IWG had to review current procedures used for ensuring imported product safety. The President emphasized that the IWG should review “existing cooperation with foreign governments . . .” and verify inspections and certifications of those manufacturers that export products into the United States.227 Second, the IWG had to identify best importer practices, including processes for making the right selection of foreign manufacturers, inspecting their facilities, and ensuring the traceability of imported products.228 Third, the IWG had to find ways to enhance cooperation on import safety among federal agencies as well as state and local governments.229

2. The Ultimate Goal: Reduction of Physical Inspections

In September 2007, the IWG produced its first report, in which Mr. Michael O. Leavitt, Secretary of HHS, set the basic tone of the government’s approach to import safety.230 He stated in the cover letter to the President that the sharp increase of imports into the United States had made it impossible for the federal government to physically inspect every imported product.231 He emphasized that inspections at ports of entry would not only hinder trade flow, but also “distract limited resources from those

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223. See id.
225. See Exec. Order No. 13439, supra note 220, at 40,053.
226. See id. (emphasis added).
227. Id. at 40,053–54.
228. Id. at 40,054.
229. See id.
230. See Protecting American Consumers, supra note 221, cover letter.
231. Id.
imported goods that pose the greatest risk."232 As a general principle, the Secretary proclaimed that "we have to be smarter about what we do."233

The Secretary characterized the physical inspections at ports of entry as "snapshots" that were inadequate to ensure import safety.234 He proposed moving towards a "prevention-focused ‘video’ model," where imports would be screened at critical points in the import life-cycle before entering the U.S. market.235 In other words, foreign governments and private-sector companies should shoulder the responsibility for safeguarding the production process in foreign countries.

The "smarter" strategy that the Secretary called for encompasses three steps: prevention, intervention, and response.236 As outlined, the Plan emphasizes collaboration with foreign governments at the prevention phase.237 The Plan has a rather ambitious goal: through capacity building, the U.S. government helps developing nations by strengthening "their legal systems and public health infrastructure . . . “ to ensure the safety of imports coming into the U.S. market.238 It recommends making "product safety an important principle of our diplomatic relationships with foreign countries."239 More specifically, it requires the federal government to negotiate cooperative arrangements with foreign governments on product safety240 to include measures for (1) conducting inspections in foreign countries; (2) collaborating with foreign governments to conduct joint investigations; and (3) expanding information sharing channels on product safety.241

B. U.S.-China Agreement on Import Safety

The U.S.-China agreement on food safety is the direct result of the IWG Action Plan. The Agreement is also a culmination of multiple forces, including high-level negotiations, finger pointing, China’s vigorous defense of its product safety record and lobbying efforts by U.S. retailers to reduce inspections at U.S. ports of entry.

I. The Blame Game

In the midst of the pet food scandal and toy recalls, U.S. Treasury Secretary, Henry M. Paulson Jr., put aside his tenacious push for Chinese currency appreciation, which had been a hallmark of his tenure.242 He vowed...
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to pressure China to reform its food safety system.\textsuperscript{243} He claimed that “right now product and food safety is at the No. 1 issue.”\textsuperscript{244} Facing a rapid decline in exports as a result of negative news reports on Chinemade products, the Chinese government quickly fought back. It blamed the United States for lax inspections of Chinese-made products and for refusing to recognize Chinese government certifications on exports.\textsuperscript{245} In retaliation, the Chinese government imposed restrictions on U.S. products exported into China.\textsuperscript{246} China also accused the United States and world media of deliberately vilifying “Made in China” products. Vice Premier Wu Yi reacted strongly to the unfavorable news reports: “We disagree with biased, incomplete media reports and pure condemnation that are blind to the facts; and we are opposed to trade barriers set for food safety issues and politicizing the issues.”\textsuperscript{247}

In preparation for the Beijing Olympics, the Chinese government published a “White Paper” on food safety, in which it declared that “more than 99 percent of Chinese food to the United States met the U.S. safety and quality standards.”\textsuperscript{248} Chinese President Hu Jintao once told President Bush, “quality and safety questions are something that every country has to deal with.”\textsuperscript{249} Apparently, President Hu was referring to safety concerns over U.S.-made products entering China.

2. Scope of the Agreement

Under the foregoing backdrop, the United States and China signed an agreement on food safety on December 14, 2007, entitled \textit{Agreement Between the Department of Health and Human Services of the United States of America and the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People’s Republic of China on the Safety of Food and Feed} (the Agreement).\textsuperscript{250} The Agreement is not merely, as some have perceived it, a demand that China improve its food safety regulatory framework. Rather, it is a mutual agreement in which the United States and China have agreed to assist each other in ensuring import safety. A major goal of the Agreement is to improve understanding and gain greater confidence in each other’s regulatory system.\textsuperscript{251}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}[\textsuperscript{243}.]
\item See \textit{id}.
\item See \textit{id}.
\item See \textit{SUBCOMM. ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS, supra note 176, at 5–6.}
\item \textit{STEVE SUPPAN, INST. FOR AGRIC. AND TRADE POLICY, U.S. CHINA AGREEMENT ON FOOD SAFETY: TERMS AND ENFORCEMENT CAPACITY} 3 (May 2008), \textit{available at http://www.iatp.org/iatp/publications.cfm?accountID=451&refID=102837.}
\item \textit{Id.} at 3–4.
\item \textit{Id.} at 4.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The Agreement covers four types of products in the initial phase: “(a) Low-acid canned products or acidified food; (b) Pet food/pet treats of plant origin or animal origin; (c) Ingredients of food and feed, i.e., wheat gluten and rice protein; and (d) all aquaculture farming products other than molluscan shellfish.” The Agreement allows for expansion to additional products upon future negotiation. The Agreement’s scope seems limited, but the covered products account for a large portion of Chinese food exports to the United States. For example, China is the largest aquaculture producer in the world, accounting for 70% of total production, and the third largest exporter to the United States.


Most controversially, Article VI of the Agreement requires both China and the United States to work towards mutual reliance on each other’s registration and certification of covered products. Essentially, the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People’s Republic of China (AQSIQ) will act as the FDA’s surrogate by inspecting exports in China before they enter U.S. ports. If AQSIQ determines that a shipment of Chinese exports meets U.S. requirements, it will issue a certificate and electronically transmit the certificate to the FDA. In return, China will do the same. Even though the Agreement specifically states that neither party is obligated to solely rely on each other’s registration and certification, the FDA is unlikely to resort to its traditional border inspection of Chinese imports having the Chinese registration and certification. According to FDA officials, the goal of the Agreement is to create a “system to ultimately reduce U.S. border inspections . . . .” The U.S. Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) has lobbied hard for this goal because border inspections raise regulatory costs.

252. Id. Annex § I(B)(1).
253. Id. Annex § I(B)(2).
254. BECKER, supra note 4, at 17 (noting that the United States relies heavily for its seafood on imports; “approximately 80% of U.S. seafood consumption is from imports and that over 40% of these imports come from aquaculture operations.”).
255. The Agreement, supra note 250, art. VI(1):
For the purpose of using AQSIQ/CNCA [China’s quality and certification agency] registration and/or certification to inform decision-making regarding the admissibility of Covered Products for entry into the United States, both Parties shall endeavor to agree on all criteria and procedures that AQSIQ/CNCA uses to implement the registration and certification provisions of this Agreement.
256. See id. Annex § II(C)(1–3).
257. See id. art. VI(1).
258. Id. art. VI(1).
259. Id.
260. Id. art. VI(3).
and thereby decrease profits. Ultimately, the Agreement embodies the GMA’s wishes. In Annex § II(2), AQSIQ essentially assumes the task of ensuring U.S. import safety:

Based on the success of the registration and certification programs . . . [U.S.] HHS/FDA will use registration and certification information provided to it by [China] AQSIQ to inform [U.S.] HHS/FDA import entry decisions, which may include a reduction in the rate of examination of Designated Covered Products that are part of the registration and/or certification program.

4. Addressing U.S. Concerns

Some provisions of the Agreement do address the FDA’s concerns for transparency. Section IV provides that the United States and China will exchange their respective laws and regulations on food and feed safety. Each party is required to inform the other within two calendar days of significant risks to public health posed by products and gross deceptions against consumers by Covered Products. Apparently, the Agreement reflects the FDA’s great frustration over the length of time it took to figure out that melamine was the culprit causing the deaths of pets in the United States. In China, however, it was well known that Chinese pet food, and even human food, had boosted protein counts resulting from the adding of melamine. In addition, the two parties must promptly provide detailed contact information of covered establishments when so requested by the other. The main purpose of this clause is to aid the United States in locating Chinese producers. In several instances the FDA has had great difficulties in identifying perpetrators among 170,000 Chinese food manufacturers.

Additionally, the Agreement requires regulatory cooperation on food safety between the United States and China. Through training and scientific cooperation, the two parties will develop strategies to prevent harmful products from shipping to each other’s country. The two countries will focus on identifying differences in food standards, such as maximum resi-

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262. See GROCERY MFRS. ASS’N, A COMMITMENT TO CONSUMER’S TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF IMPORTED FOODS: FOUR Pillars OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP 3 (“Moreover, it would be misguided to focus additional resources exclusively on activities at the border in a fruitless effort to ‘catch’ products that do not meet US standards.”).

263. The Agreement, supra note 250, Annex § II(2).

264. See id.; id. art. III.

265. Id. art. IV.

266. Id.

267. See SUPPAN, supra note 247, at 3.


269. The Agreement, supra note 250, art. IV(3).


271. See The Agreement, supra note 250, art. V(1).
due levels (MRLs). Furthermore, the two parties will work on plans to identify incidental or intentional additions of chemical, radiologic or microbiological substances to foodstuffs. The Agreement also requires cooperation on the preventing food adulteration for illegal gains.

5. Benchmarks for Measuring Success

The U.S. government intends to evaluate the performance of the Agreement based on two primary factors: (1) HHS/FDA’s rate of refusal of covered products from China; and (2) the frequency of recalls of covered Chinese products posing significant health hazards to U.S. consumers. The first performance evaluation factor is inherently unreliable. Since the ultimate goal is to reduce inspections at ports of entry, the FDA will heavily rely on AQSIQ’s electronically transmitted certifications in deciding whether to admit imports. Without adequate physical inspections, FDA refusal will most likely be due to insufficient paperwork rather than concerns for quality and safety. The only concrete factor evaluating the Agreement’s performance is the frequency of recalls of hazardous imports. This criterion, however, is contrary to the FDA’s prevention-focused approach. This approach is also unfair to consumers because the government will take action to reevaluate the Agreement only after injuries prompt product recalls.

6. Winners and Losers

Overall, China is the unequivocal winner of the Agreement. The Chinese government gains control of the standards for exports to the United States. The GMA is another big winner. Like other industries that have shifted business overseas to cut costs, the GMA will greatly benefit from outsourcing regulatory power to the Chinese government. To some extent, the FDA perceives itself as a winner because the Agreement allows the FDA to stay “within existing resources” by reducing its “unbearable” burden of securing imported food.

Yet, by no means has the Agreement purely created a win-win situation. The Agreement’s terms on mutual recognition of certification conceded rights to China far superior to those in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a surprise to both Canada and Mexico, the closest trade allies with the United States. For years, Canada and Mex-

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272. Id. art. V(2)(b).
273. Id. art. V(2)(d).
274. See id. art. V(2)(e).
275. See id. art. VIII(2)(b) (revealing the third factor—the overall percentage of covered products from non-AQSIQ registered establishments to the U.S.—a vague factor that may need further clarification).
276. See id. art. VIII(2)(a); Suppan, supra note 247, at 8.
277. See Suppan, supra note 247, at 8.
278. See Exec. Order No. 13439; supra note 220, at 40,053.
280. See Nelson, supra note 261.
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ico have unsuccessfully urged the U.S. government to relax border inspections on their exports. The Agreement is likely to open the door for trade conflicts between the United States and its two close neighbors. The Agreement could also lead other nations to seek the same preferential treatment under the Most Favored Nations Clause of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Most importantly, while U.S. consumers will benefit from the reduced regulatory costs, and thus lower food costs, resulting from the Agreement, they are potentially at greater risk of being exposed to adulterated and deleterious imports from China. Going forward, U.S. consumers' faith in imported food rests with the Chinese government, far away in Beijing. What remains unseen is whether the Chinese government will live up to the U.S. government's expectations.

V. Food Safety in China

China's Food Safety Law provides that export quality and safety are subject to the same standards and controls as domestic food products. Therefore, to answer the question whether China can secure exported food safety, examining China's domestic food safety challenges, relevant laws, and enforcement mechanisms, is necessary. The most recent Food Safety Law became effective on June 1, 2009. The next section will analyze the new law and its implications for the safety of China’s food exports.

A. Development of Food Safety Law

Compared with the FD&C Act, China’s food safety law has a much shorter history. The development of Chinese food safety law can be traced back to the 1950s during the Korean War, otherwise known in China as the War Resisting America and Aiding Korea. During that

281. See id.
282. See id.
285. Id. art. 104.
time, a number of soldiers died of botulism after eating contaminated canned meat.\footnote{288} Mao ordered the immediate execution of Mr. Wang and Mr. Tian, the owners of the food factories that sold the tainted food to the troops.\footnote{289} Even though there were no officially promulgated regulations on food safety, the executions sent a powerful message to other private food manufacturers.\footnote{290} With the development of socialization, the state gradually took over privately owned food factories and transformed them into state-owned-enterprises (SOE).\footnote{291} The SOEs were notorious for their low productivity, but food safety was under the government's tight control. As a result, except for sanitation problems, food adulteration was not a major issue until the economic reforms in the 1980s.

In 1965, the State Council issued the first food regulation.\footnote{292} The regulation mainly dealt with the unsanitary conditions in which food products were stored, manufactured and transported.\footnote{293} It did not set forth requirements for food content because China was still recovering from a catastrophic famine, in which an estimated thirty million people died of malnutrition between 1960 and 1962.\footnote{294} The government's primary concern was how to maintain an adequate food supply.\footnote{295} In the promulgation circular, the State Council stressed that the government should be flexible in enforcing the regulation.\footnote{296} If food manufacturers were unable to comply with the regulation because of high costs, the government should help them overcome those economic difficulties.\footnote{297}

In 1983, China enacted a trial implementation of the Food Sanitation Law, in an attempt to regulate the growing number of privately owned food manufacturers and vendors emerging from the economic reforms.\footnote{298} Unlike the 1965 regulation, the Food Sanitation Law had greater coverage. It set forth standards for food content, additives, containers, manufacturing conditions and equipment.\footnote{299} The Food Sanitation Law required food ven-
dors to register with local industrial and commercial administrations.300 The law also prescribed penalties for violations of the Food Sanitation Law, ranging from fines to criminal prosecution.301

The People’s Congress completely revamped the Food Sanitation Law (FSL) in 1995.302 The updated FSL designated the Ministry of Health as the primary enforcement agency.303 To provide detailed guidance for the food industry, the State Council and provincial governments issued over 500 regulations and rules interpreting the FSL.304 Despite the improvement of the legal framework, the FSL’s enforcement was rather weak. Scandals involving food adulteration repeatedly claimed lives.305 As a result, the public lost confidence in the government’s ability to ensure food safety.306

B. The Food Safety Law of 2009
1. Government Structure and Legislative Background

On February 28, 2009, the National People’s Congress passed the latest version of the FSL, which took effect on June 1, 2009.307 Undoubtedly, the 2008 milk scandal hastened its passage.308 To fully appreciate the new FSL and its enforcement mechanisms, understanding China’s government structure and legislative process is essential.

Unlike the U.S. federal structure, China has a centralized system, which consists of the central government in Beijing and local governments across the country.309 According to the Constitution, local governments are subordinate to the central government.310 At the central level, the National People’s Congress (NPC) is the legislature, which is at the peak of the state structure.311 Below the NPC is the State Council, which is the central administration of China.312 In the State Council, the Premier is the head of the cabinet, which consists of Ministries, Commissions, and

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300. See id. art. 26.
301. See id. arts. 37-41.
303. See id. art. 3.
304. See Zhang, supra note 286, at 19.
305. See id.
306. See id.
307. See Food Safety Law, supra note 284, art. 104.
310. See id. art. 100.
311. See id. arts. 2, 57-58.
312. See id. arts. 85, 92. Along with the State Council, three other institutions are under the NPC: the Central Military Commission (CMC), the Supreme People’s Court, and the Supreme People’s Procuratorate. See id. art. 62, §§ 6–8. The President is the head of the state. See id. arts. 79-80. The President nominates the State Council’s Premier as well as all other Ministers. See id. art. 62, § 5. The State Council is China’s...
Administrations.313 The State Council and other institutions are subject to the NPC’s supervision.314 The NPC approves all legislative proposals the State Council submits.315 The State Council proposed the new FSL in 2004, after a series of well-publicized food poisoning incidents.316 Experts often claim that it took the NPC five years to pass the new FSL.317 In fact, the delay resulted from the State Council’s reluctance to subject the food industry to strict food safety laws until further food and drug scandals occurred.318

At the local level, there exists a hierarchy of four levels of government (in descending order): provinces, counties, cities and townships.319 Each level reports to the next higher level.320 Provinces report directly to the State Council.321 Even though Provinces are of the same bureaucratic level
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as Ministries in Beijing, they are deemed local governments according to the Constitution.322 Each of the four levels of local government mimics the structure of the State Council; i.e., each local government directs various departments.323

2. Central and Local Enforcement Agencies

At the central level, the new FSL requires that the State Council establish a Food Safety Commission (FSC) to administer its provisions.324 As a Commission, the FSC will acquire a ministerial rank. Since the law just became effective, the State Council has not yet defined the scope of the FSC and its jurisdiction. At this point, the prospective relationship between the FSC and other Ministries remains unclear.

The new FSL designates the Ministry of Health (MOH) as the primary agency in charge of setting food safety standards, evaluating food safety risks, issuing public notices on food safety, and investigating major food safety incidents.325 In addition, it grants the MOH the authority to set standards for food certification agencies.326 It further makes the AQSIQ, the State Industrial and Commercial Administration (SICA), and the State Food and Drug Administration (SFDA) responsible for the supervision of food manufacturing, distribution, and catering services.327

At the local level, the new FSL places governments at the county level and above in charge of food safety administration in their respective jurisdictions.328 Within each level of local government, the FSL mandates departments of health, agriculture, quality control, industrial and commercial, and food and drug to coordinate with each other to enforce its provisions.329

Thus, local governments are on the frontline of food inspections. Notwithstanding the Central Government’s power to conduct inspection tours, it is practically impossible for officials from Beijing to make regular visits to the nearly two million food manufacturers scattered around the country. Therefore, whether the new FSL succeeds in securing food safety ultimately depends on the effectiveness of local government enforcement.

In addition to government agencies, the new FSL encourages trade associations, consumer protection organizations, research institutions, and individuals to contribute to the enforcement of its requirements. Article 10 specifically grants private organizations and individuals the right to report to the government any safety violation occurring in the food production process.330

322. See id. art. 95.
323. See id. art. 95–111.
324. See Food Safety Law, supra note 284, art. 4.
325. See id.
326. See id.
327. See id.
328. See id. art. 5.
329. Id. art. 6.
330. See id. art. 10.
3. Food Safety Standards

In China’s transition from a predominately agrarian society to an industrial society, the food industry remains extremely fragmented with 170,000 food processing firms, over 70% having fewer than ten workers.331 Prior to the FSL, the government promulgated some food quality standards that were typically inconsistent, outdated, and underdeveloped.332 A lack of sufficient standards is a serious problem in food safety. To remedy this issue, the FSL devotes an entire chapter to defining mandatory food safety standards.333

Under the new FSL, the MOH is responsible for determining and promulgating food safety standards except for pesticide residue levels, which the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) sets.334 Article 21 requires that the State Council and concerned Ministries establish safety standards for meat and poultry.335

According to Article 20, the FSL food safety standards are to include:

a) Tolerance levels of pathogenic microorganisms, pesticide residues, animal drug residues, heavy metals, pollutants and other health hazardous materials;

b) Food additives and their scope and usage;

c) Nutritional content of infant food and foods intended for particular groups of people, such as the sick and old;

d) Labeling related to food safety and nutrition;

e) Sanitary conditions for food processing;

f) Quality requirements related to food safety;

g) Food inspection methods and procedures; and

h) Other food safety standards.336

On January 20, 2010, the MOH established the State Food Safety Standard Assessment Committee, which is in charge of drafting a national standard on food safety.337 Violation of the food safety standards will result in a fine of not more than 50,000 Yuan ($7,000), if the sale value is less than 10,000 Yuan ($1,400); or a fine of not more than ten times the sale value, if the sale value is more than 10,000 Yuan. Serious violations will result in revocation of the food manufacturer’s license.338

To ensure food industry compliance with the new law, the MOH intends to study the consistency between the new safety standards and the existing quality and sanitary standards.339 Realistically, it will take a long

332. See id. at 25–27.
333. See Food Safety Law, supra note 284, arts. 18–25.
334. See id. art. 21.
335. Id.
336. Id. art. 20.
338. See Food Safety Law, supra note 284, art. 18.
339. See id. art. 22.
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time for the Health Ministry to complete this study.

4. Enforcement Tools

Like the U.S. FD&C Act, the new FSL provides two kinds of enforcement tools: outcome-based and production-based.

a) Outcome-based Approach

The new FSL requires that the county government departments of quality control, industrial and commercial, and food and drug conduct regular or unannounced inspections of food manufacturers.\footnote{See id. arts. 60, 77.} The scope of these inspections includes site visits, sampling, auditing of contracts, and review of receipts and accounting books.\footnote{Id. art. 77.} Upon finding FSL violations, the departments are authorized to seize illegal food products, materials, additives, or equipment.\footnote{See id.} The departments may also shut down food manufacturers if they deem it necessary. The new FSL also requires that the departments keep inspection records and increase inspections of repeat violators.\footnote{Id. art. 79.} If an FSL violation constitutes a crime, the departments must transfer the food manufacturer’s case to the public security department for a criminal investigation.\footnote{See id. art. 81.}

To ensure impartial inspections and certifications, the new FSL provides administrative penalties for inspectors who violate the law. If an inspector issues a false report, the inspector will face dismissal or forced resignation, and disbarment from conducting food inspections for ten years. In addition, the government will revoke the inspection agency’s practice license.\footnote{Id. art. 93.}

The new FSL provides for product recall as another enforcement tool.\footnote{Id. art. 93.} If a food manufacturer fails to comply with food safety standards, the manufacturer must immediately stop production and voluntarily recall illegal products already in circulation. It must also contact consumers and publicly announce the recall. The manufacturer must further inform the relevant departments of the local government. In addition, the manufacturer must take appropriate measures to destroy recalled products in order to prevent reentry into the market. If the manufacturer refuses to conduct a voluntary recall, the local government must compel it to retrieve its illegal products.

b) Production-based Tools

The new FSL encourages food manufacturers to adopt GMP or HACCP practices.\footnote{Id. art. 33.} It tasks the government accreditation agency to issue certificates to qualified manufacturers and conduct follow-up audits of these accredited manufacturers. If the agency finds that a certified manufacturer

\begin{itemize}
\item[340.] See id. arts. 60, 77.
\item[341.] Id. art. 77.
\item[342.] See id.
\item[343.] Id. art. 79.
\item[344.] See id. art. 81.
\item[345.] Id. art. 93.
\item[346.] Id. art. 53.
\item[347.] Id. art. 33.
\end{itemize}
fails to meet the requirements of GMP or HACCP, the agency must revoke the certification and inform the relevant local department. The agency must also publicly announce such revocations.

To increase traceability, the new FSL requires food manufacturers to keep records regarding the supply of raw food materials, food additives, and other food ingredients. Manufacturers must keep these records for at least two years. Manufacturers have a duty to check the quality of raw materials and verify supplier certifications. Additionally, manufacturers must keep records, for at least two years, of internal quality checks conducted before their products entered the market. Failure to maintain the required records will result in a fine of not more than 20,000 Yuan ($3,000) for minor violations. For serious violations, manufacturers face injunction or revocation of their production license.

C. Criminal Penalties

The new FSL does not directly set forth criminal penalties for serious food safety violations. Instead, the FSL only refers to application of the Criminal Law of China. The Criminal Law imposes severe criminal sanctions on producers and sellers who produce counterfeits or substandard products that cause serious bodily injury or death. For example, Article 140 prohibits the production of adulterated products as well as the sale of counterfeits as genuine products, substandard products as good products, or unqualified products as qualified ones. For producers who

348. See id.
349. Id. art. 36.
350. Id.
351. Id. art. 39.
352. Id. art. 37.
353. Id. art. 87.
354. Id.
355. Id. art. 98.
356. Liu, supra note 268.

Any producer or seller who mixes impurities into or adulterates products, or passes a fake product off as a genuine one, a defective product as a high quality one, or a substandard product as a standard one, if the amount of earnings from sales is more than 50,000 yuan but less than 200,000 yuan, shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not more than two years or criminal detention and shall also, or shall only, be fined not less than half but not more than two times the amount of earnings from sales; if the amount of earnings from sales is more than 200,000 yuan but less than 500,000 yuan, he shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not less than two years but not more than seven years and shall also be fined not less than half but not more than two times the amount of earnings from sales; if the amount of earnings from sales is more than 500,000 yuan but less than 2,000,000 yuan, he shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not less than seven years and shall also be fined not less than half but not more than two times the amount of earnings from sales; if the amount of earnings from sales is more than 2,000,000 yuan, he shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of 15 years or life imprisonment, and shall
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violate this law and have sale amounts exceeding two million Yuan ($280,000), Article 140 mandates a sentence of a fifteen-year, fixed-term imprisonment or life imprisonment.\(^{358}\) In addition, the provision imposes a fine of 50% to 200% of the sale amount or a confiscation of the total amount of the illegal proceeds.\(^{359}\)

Similarly, Article 143 imposes criminal sanctions on producers and sellers of foods that do not conform to hygienic standards.\(^{360}\) For substandard products that cause food poisoning accidents or other severe food-borne diseases, the responsible parties face mandatory sentences ranging from several years of fixed-term imprisonment to life imprisonment, depending on the severity of the circumstances.\(^{361}\) Violators may additionally face a fine of up to twice the total sale amount of the substandard products.\(^{362}\)

Further, Article 144 proscribes the most severe criminal punishment for producing adulterated foods.\(^{363}\) This article applies to those who produce or sell foods mixed with poisonous or harmful non-food materials. Under this article, committing the act itself results in a sentence of not more than five years of fixed-term imprisonment. If the act gives rise to serious harm to human health, the sentence must be not less than five years and not more than ten years. If the adulterated products cause serious bodily harm or death, however, the sentence may be the death
penalty.  

D. Enforcement Obstacles

On its face, the new FSL bears a close resemblance to the U.S. FD&C Act. Both laws set forth high standards for food content and manufacturing processes; both laws rely on outcome-based and production-based enforcement tools. But while the new FSL offers potential solutions to China’s entrenched food safety problems, the FSL will nonetheless face serious challenges in implementation. This section examines four major obstacles the Chinese government will face in enforcing the new FSL.

1. Local Protectionism and the Melamine Tainted Milk Scandal

Since the new FSL primarily depends on local governments for its enforcement, soon after its passage many Chinese experts expressed doubt about its effectiveness. These concerns are well grounded because the new FSL does not include any mechanism to combat widespread local protectionism, which has been blamed for several major food safety scandals in China.

Ironically, local protectionism originated from the economic reforms in the 1980s that set China on the path toward rapid economic growth. The essence of the reform was to transition from a planned economy to a market economy though, among other strategies, decentralization. During the decentralization process, local governments assumed the primary role of developing local economies. Government officials at each level are actually appointed by government officials at the next higher level,

364. See id. arts. 141, 144. Article 141 states:

Whoever produces or sells fake medicines that are harmful enough to seriously endanger human health . . . [or] if death is caused to another person or especially serious harm is done to human health, he shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not less than 10 years, life imprisonment or death, and shall also be fined not less than half but not more than two times the amount of earnings from sales or be sentenced to confiscation of property.

365. Zhang Ling, Shipin Anquan Reng Duotou Guanli Weiyuan Huyu Chedi Gaige

366. Liu, supra note 268.


368. See id. at 386–87, 395.

369. Contrary to the western model, which promotes market economy by means of democracy, China seems to have succeeded in achieving economic growth without moving towards democracy. Therefore, the revered statesman Mr. Deng Xiaoping referred to the Chinese model as “Socialism with the Chinese Characteristics.” Deng Xiaoping, Former Chairman, Central Military Commission of CCP, Speech to the Second Session of the Council of Sino-Japanese Non-Governmental Persons: Build Socialism with Chinese Characteristics (June 30, 1984), available at http://www.wellesley.edu/Polisci/wj/China/Deng/Building.htm.
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rather than elected by the local people.\textsuperscript{370} As a result, local officials became accountable only to the government officials directly above them.\textsuperscript{371}

Seeking economic miracles, the central government has emphasized higher gross domestic production (GDP) disproportionally to food safety.\textsuperscript{372} Compared with economic growth, food safety has rarely been a top priority except during outbreaks of major food scandals. As a result, the primary criterion for assessing the performance of local officials is their ability to increase local GDP.\textsuperscript{373} Local officials, seeking reappointments and promotions, have made every effort to maintain high economic growth, even at the expense of safety and quality.

In the process, local officials have forged close ties and developed mutually beneficial relationship with local industries. Local governments expect and rely upon local enterprises to grow the local economy. In exchange, the local government gives local industries special favors including minimum safety and quality inspections.\textsuperscript{374} Corruption often taints the ties between enterprises and government officials. In the Shanxi Province, for example, a number of local leaders in charge of mine safety actually held significant financial stakes in local mines with notorious safety records.\textsuperscript{375}

The 2008 melamine tainted milk scandal illustrates the special relationship between local governments and local milk industries.\textsuperscript{376} In September 2008, a news report first linked the death of an infant to baby formula tainted with melamine. The Sanlu Company (Sanlu) based in Shijiazhuang City, Hebei Province produced the tainted formula.\textsuperscript{377} According to official estimates, at least six babies died and nearly 300,000 were sickened from drinking the tainted milk.\textsuperscript{378} More than 300 children

\textsuperscript{370}. This practice seems contrary to the notion envisioned in the Constitution that the local people’s congress elects local government officials. See \textit{Xianfa} [Constitution of the People’s Republic of China] art. 101 (1982) (P.R.C.) translated at http://english.people.com.cn/constitution/constitution.html. In reality, however, the local people’s congress consistently rubber stamps nominations by the Chinese Communist Party. Thus, the central government succeeded in designating pre-ordained officials to charge local economies. In many cases, the central government has “parachuted” officials into particular provinces without open consultation with the local congresses. Bo Zhiyue, \textit{China’s New Provincial Leaders: Major Reshuffling Before the 17th National Party Congress}, 5 CHINA: AN INT’L J. 1, 12–13 (2007).

\textsuperscript{371}. In recent years, the central government has frequently shifted governors from one province to another without elections. See, e.g., id. at 17.

\textsuperscript{372}. See Huang, supra note 211, at 141.

\textsuperscript{373}. See id.

\textsuperscript{374}. See id.


\textsuperscript{376}. Liu, supra note 268.

\textsuperscript{377}. See Loretta Chao, Victims of Tainted Milk File Lawsuit in China’s High Court, WALL ST. J., Jan. 20, 2009, at A10.

\textsuperscript{378}. Woguo Gong 29 Wan Yinger Miniao Xitong Yin Shi Wenti Naifen Naifan Chuxian Yichang [Over 290,000 Infants Suffered Urinary Abnormalities from Drinking the
were hospitalized for treatment.\textsuperscript{379}

The melamine contamination was by no means an accident. The milk suppliers deliberately added melamine to diluted milk in order to deceive quality control reviewers.\textsuperscript{380} In later production, milk processors only checked protein levels by measuring nitrogen concentration. As a nitrogen-rich crystalline compound, the added melamine increased the nitrogen content and made the adulterated milk appear rich in protein.\textsuperscript{381} To make matters worse, some reports alleged that milk processors also added melamine to already contaminated milk in order to cut costs and increase revenue.\textsuperscript{382}

A month before the scandal broke out, Sanlu actually made urgent reports to the local government about the unusually high level of melamine in its products and the numerous complaints from consumers.\textsuperscript{383} According to the law, the local government had a legal obligation to promptly report the incident to the State Council in Beijing.\textsuperscript{384} The local government, however, took every measure to conceal relevant information for fear of damaging the local economy.\textsuperscript{385}

While the internal communications between Sanlu and the local government remain a mystery, a post-scandal public apology was quite revealing. In the apology, the local government explained the reasons for its failure to immediately report the problem to the central government.\textsuperscript{386} The local government blamed itself for a lack of political sensitivity and attributed the cover-up to its failure to fully appreciate the serious political and economic consequences of the scandal.\textsuperscript{387} The apology also stated that it believed that Sanlu could eventually restore its shattered image and regain public trust if it could quickly improve quality.\textsuperscript{388} The local govern-
The obstacles of outsourcing imported food safety to China

The government admitted that it was concerned a revelation would damage Sanlu’s reputation and result in job losses. The local government regretted that, because of its delay, the central government had missed the opportunity to control the negative impact of the scandal.\footnote{Id.}

The apology instantly drew immense public criticism. As pointed out by Zhang Qianfan, a prominent constitutional law expert at Beijing University, Sanlu was not only an important source of local revenue but also of local political legacy.\footnote{Zhang Qianfan, Yi Sanlu Naifen Shijian Weili: Shipin Anquan Libukai Meiti Jiandu [Sanlu as an Example: Media Reporting is Indispensable for Ensuring Food Safety], Nanfan Ribao, Oct. 7, 2008, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/newmedia/2008-10/07/content_10159399.htm.} The apology revealed that the local government’s first reaction was how to help Sanlu avoid bad publicity and eliminate the negative impact of a scandal. Another commentator, Mr. Shao, discerned that the apology was not actually directed to the victims but to the central government itself.\footnote{Shao Jian, Shijiazhuan Shi Zhengfu Jiujing Gai Xiang Shui Daoqian? [Whom Did Shijiazhuang Government Owe an Apology?], Zhujiang Wanbao, Oct. 3, 2008, available at http://news.sina.com.cn/pl/2008-10-03/090016392010.shtml.} The real purpose of the apology was to beg for forgiveness from those high officials with the authority to determine the political futures of local leaders.

Depending upon governments to enforce high safety standards is illogical when those governments are willing to conceal scandals for local industries. U.S. scholars have long held concerns about the overall enforcement of laws in China due to local protectionism. Professor Lubman pointed out that “local protectionism is so strong that ‘it is practically impossible for the leadership in Beijing to maintain sustained and systematic monitoring across China, with the possible exception of a handful of key issues, because enforcement costs are prohibitive.’”\footnote{Stanley Lubman, Looking for Law in China, 20 COLUM. J. ASIAN L. 1, 77 (2006).} Professors Liebman and Milhaupt echoed this observation stating that “[l]ocal protectionism is perhaps the single biggest problem undermining China’s efforts to strengthen its legal system, and the combination of devolved authority and local protectionism frequently leads to under enforcement.”\footnote{Benjamin L. Liebman & Curtis J. Milhaupt, Reputational Sanctions in China’s Securities Market, 108 COLUM. L. REV. 929, 982 (2008); see also Eric Priest, The Future of Music and Film Piracy in China, 21 BERKELEY TECH. L.J. 795, 822 (2006) (“Local protectionism probably constitutes the largest obstacle to cracking down on piracy in China.”); Srini Sitaraman, Regulating the Belching Dragon: Rule of Law, Politics of Enforcement, and Pollution Prevention in Post-Mao Industrial China, 18 COLO. J. INT’L ENVTL. L. & POL’Y 267, 335 (2007) (arguing that “[t]he lack of strong centralized environmental administration and a deep-seated political unwillingness to disrupt economic growth, combined with corruption and local protectionism, has precluded China from fully complying with its international treaty obligations and enforcing its domestic environmental laws.”).}
2. Rampant Corruption and Mr. Zheng's Execution

China has the most serious corruption problems among industrialized nations, despite government efforts to punish corrupt officials. Transparency International's 2008 survey indicated that China is very similar to other countries plagued with corruption scandals, such as Ghana, Romania, Mexico, and Peru. Overall, China ranks 72 among 180 countries surveyed for general corruption perceptions, despite its status as one of the most robust economies in the world.

In recent years, some corrupt officials and executives found safe havens in Canada and the United States because the two countries do not have extradition treaties with China. The Ministry of Public Security estimated that in 2004 around 500 corrupt Chinese officials had fled overseas with approximately $8 billion worth of state assets. An infamous example is Mr. Lai Changxing, who circumvented Chinese customs and allegedly "smuggled goods worth as much as $10 billion, under the protection of corrupt government officials." Mr. Lai is now seeking asylum status in Canada on the ground that he would be executed if repatriated. The relation between corrupt officials and China’s food and drug industry is best illustrated by the case of Mr. Zheng Xiaoyu. Mr. Zheng was the director of the State Food and Drug Administration (SFDA). In 2007, the People's Court convicted Mr. Zheng on charges of bribery and

395. Id.
399. See id.
dereliction of duty; the combined sentences resulted in an order for his immediate execution.\footnote{402}

Even though the death sentence stemmed from Mr. Zheng’s bribery conviction, his prosecution on dereliction charges revealed the entrenched administrative failures of China’s food and drug safety system.\footnote{403}

Due to lack of oversight, the SFDA had no standard procedures for reviewing and approving new drug applications. Furthermore, the SFDA lacked a plan to handle the relentless number of new drug applications submitted by over 6,000 pharmaceutical companies across the nation.\footnote{404} Even after streamlining the verification process,\footnote{405} the flood of applications continued to overwhelm the SFDA. At its peak, one SFDA officer had to review over 30 applications per day.\footnote{406} During Mr. Zheng’s eight-year tenure, the SFDA approved 150,000 new drugs.\footnote{407} In 2004 alone, the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[403] See David Barboza, \textit{A Chinese Reformer Betrays His Cause, and Pays}, \textit{N.Y. Times}, July 13, 2007, at A1. Mr. Zheng was a longtime drug maker who moved steadily up the bureaucratic ladder. When China decided to establish the SFDA in 1998, Mr. Zheng became its first director. See id. Mr. Zheng’s appointment was the direct result of his two seminal proposals: (1) to consolidate drug registration and approval power under the SFDA; and (2) to mandate all drug makers across the country to adopt GMPs in line with internationally acknowledged standards for drug industries. See id. The two proposals offered promising solutions to the serious food and drug safety problems that China had experienced in the 1990s.
\item[404] See A Typical Case of Corruption, supra note 401.
\item[405] To reduce application backlogs, Mr. Zheng abandoned the original plan that required the SFDA to verify each application package. See id. Instead, Mr. Zheng authorized provincial food and drug departments to verify the application materials in their respective jurisdictions. See id. As a result, the SFDA missed the opportunity to identify phony applications and thus seriously compromised the very goal that the consolidation was designed to achieve. See id.
\item[407] Barboza, supra note 403.
\end{footnotes}
SFDA approved 10,009 new drugs, while the U.S. FDA only approved 148 new drugs during the same year.\textsuperscript{408} In other words, the SFDA approved a new drug every 12 minutes. At such a rapid pace, there was simply no way to ensure the authenticity of the applications.\textsuperscript{409} It was no surprise when at least six fake drugs were subsequently identified among the SFDA approved drugs that seriously injured and killed patients.\textsuperscript{410}

Mr. Zheng's tenure was also marked by his strenuous push for GMP standards to ensure drug safety and quality.\textsuperscript{411} China’s drug industry lagged behind those in developed countries. Many drug makers still kept antiquated equipment in operation. In some Chinese herb medicine factories, workers used their bare feet to blend drug ingredients.\textsuperscript{412} As soon as Mr. Zheng became the head of the SFDA, he made implementation of GMP his top priority. The SFDA required all pharmaceutical producers to meet GMP standards by 2004.\textsuperscript{413} As mandated, failure to meet the standards would result in losing a state production license.\textsuperscript{414}

As with new drug approvals, the SFDA and drug industry were not fully prepared to handle the chaos caused by Mr. Zheng’s changes. For the entire pharmaceutical industry, the adoption of GMP became a tremendous undertaking.\textsuperscript{415} For small and mid-sized drug makers, GMP standards were all but an unrealistic goal. Facing the tough choice between losing accreditation and incurring additional costs to adopt GMP, pharmaceutical companies quickly attempted to avoid both possibilities by bribing Mr. Zheng and his family. Court documents show that Mr. Zheng took more than $850,000 in bribes from pharmaceutical companies.\textsuperscript{416} To solicit these bribes, Mr. Zheng directed his wife and son to form a consulting firm that provided guidance to pharmaceutical companies. For example, Double Doves Company (DDC) retained the consulting firm and paid his wife’s salary and company stock even though she did not work for the company.\textsuperscript{417} DDC also generously provided the down payment for a house in Shanghai for Zheng’s son. In return, Mr. Zheng expedited the approval of DDC’s application for production of sterilized syringes.\textsuperscript{418}

\textsuperscript{408}. See A Typical Case of Corruption, supra note 401.
\textsuperscript{410}. See Barboza, supra note 403.
\textsuperscript{411}. See id.
\textsuperscript{412}. See id.
\textsuperscript{413}. Id.
\textsuperscript{414}. Id.
\textsuperscript{415}. See id.
\textsuperscript{416}. Id.
\textsuperscript{417}. See id.
\textsuperscript{418}. See People v. Zheng Xiaoyu, available at http://www.lawyee.net/Case/Case_Display.asp?RID=194443&KeyWord= (Sup. People’s Ct. Gaz. July 7, 2007). Kangyu Pharmaceutical acted less discreetly, simply giving Zheng’s son a check for 1 million Hong Kong Dollars ($132,000). Shortly thereafter, Mr. Zheng directed SFDA staff to approve Kangyu’s application for a new drug. Other drug companies followed suit, giving money or villas to Zheng’s wife and son in exchange for SFDA’s approval of an increasing number of drugs, medical equipment, and import quotas.
GMP certification is an important production enforcement tool in securing food safety. But Mr. Zheng’s case demonstrates that ensuring GMP implementation in China’s food and drug industries is virtually impossible. Sanlu and other milk processors that produced melamine tainted products were all GMP certified firms. Without rigorous follow-up testing and auditing by truly impartial and incorruptible agencies, GMP is nothing but a commercial tool to deceive consumers.

Ironically, China has the most serious penalties in the world for taking bribes, yet suffers some of the worst corruption problems among the world’s leading economies. The apparent reason is that the death penalty has not produced the kind of deterrence that the Chinese government desired because the government has not enforced its laws equally and consistently. Both the judiciary and prosecutors lack independent authority and only act under the direction of the Party and government officials. When high ranking officials are caught for taking bribes, they are often administratively disciplined rather than criminally prosecuted. Occasionally, some officials are prosecuted and convicted, but are sent to special prisons with comfortable amenities. This arbitrary and capricious manner of prosecution has created political rents for officials, such as Mr. Zheng, and thus incentivizes them to game the system. Mr. Zheng’s luck simply ran out because of the frequent food and drug scandals in which people died after consuming tainted food and drug products approved by the SFDA under his watch. The Chinese government did not treat Mr. Zheng’s case as an ordinary criminal matter; rather, it used his execution as a statement to the world underscoring its seriousness about food safety.

Despite Zheng’s execution, corruption problems have continued to plague quality and safety systems. A New York Times article commented: Industry analysts say Beijing will have to do a great deal more to solve the country’s food and drug safety problems. “If the head of the drug agency is corrupt,” said James J. Shen, a longtime industry analyst in Beijing and the publisher of Pharma China, “you can imagine how corrupt the whole system is.”

419. See Transparency International, supra note 394.
422. See Mr. Wang Yong’s Speech, infra note 427.
424. See Barboza, supra note 403.
426. Barboza, supra note 403.
Unsurprisingly, Mr. Wang, director of AQSIQ, acknowledged that corruption still poses serious challenges in winning public trust. He revealed that from 2003 to 2008, 829 quality inspection officials were administratively disciplined, with 199 of them subject to criminal prosecution on corruption charges. In 2009, AQSIQ administratively disciplined 105 officials, 40 of them subject to criminal prosecution on corruption charges. In April 2010, Mr. Wei Liang and four other SFDA high officials were arrested on corruption charges. Critics commented that Mr. Zheng’s execution apparently failed to provide effective deterrence.

3. **Fragmented Food Industry and Unethical Practices**

China’s fragmented food industry also poses serious challenges to the implementation of the FSL. Despite the fact that China has become the largest exporter in the world, the Chinese food industry is still in a rudimentary stage. The food industry is made up of over 170,000 food processing firms, 72% of which employ fewer than ten workers. According to a recent SFDA survey of 450,000 food firms, 29% of them did not have any production standards. Of the firms surveyed, 60% did not conduct quality checks of food products nor were they even capable of conducting self-inspections. Furthermore, nearly 50% of the firms lacked sanitation certificates or production licenses. In many cases small firms frequently changed locations to evade inspections. As a result, it is almost impossible for the local government to keep track of these small firms, let alone maintain any meaningful supervision of the food production process.

432. Ying, supra note 270.
433. See Miao, supra note 431.
434. See id.
435. See id.
436. Id.
Even worse, the small food processing firms obtain supplies from hundreds of millions of even smaller family-based farms, many of which are “no larger than a basketball court.”\textsuperscript{437} China has 1.3 billion people, but it has only 122 million hectares of arable land, or 0.27 hectares per capita, which is 40% less than the world average, or 12.5% of the U.S. level.\textsuperscript{438} Industrialization and urban expansion have not only caused significant shrinkage of China’s arable land but have also degraded land quality.\textsuperscript{439} As a result, China has seen a rapid decline in agricultural production in recent years.\textsuperscript{440} To ensure higher yields from limited farmland, farmers excessively use pesticides, fertilizers, and animal drugs including antibiotics and growth hormones.\textsuperscript{441}

Unsanitary and unethical practices also pose challenges to FSL implementation. Many business owners in China are not convinced that sanitary requirements are worth implementing.\textsuperscript{442} The President of Hami Food in Beijing revealed that “chilled and frozen products very often come in taxi cabs or in vans—not under properly controlled conditions.”\textsuperscript{443} Just after the passage of the new FSL, a reporter from China Central Television (CCTV) made an investigative report that revealed the dreadful conditions under which food products were processed in small firms.\textsuperscript{444} In a covert interview at a family-based sausage mill, a worker pointed to his legs and told the reporter that he had just come back from working in a manure pit without a shower. The reporter asked him if anyone would want to buy his sausages and the man replied, “Without knowing [what I did], people will enjoy my sausages.”\textsuperscript{445}

In addition to unsanitary conditions, unscrupulous food producers have deliberately adulterated food with various industrial chemicals to increase profits. In 2005, food safety officials in Beijing ordered the removal of duck eggs from the shelves because farmers fed the ducks with Sudan Red 1, a cancer-causing dye.\textsuperscript{446} The purpose was to give the yolks a

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{437} SUBCOMM. ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS, supra note 176, at 2.


\textsuperscript{439} See id.

\textsuperscript{440} See id.

\textsuperscript{441} See Liu, supra note 268, at 415.

\textsuperscript{442} See Aleda V. Roth et al., Unraveling the Food Supply Chain: Strategic Insights from China and the 2007 Recalls, 44 J. SUPPLY CHAIN MGMT 22, 30 (2008).

\textsuperscript{443} Id.

\textsuperscript{444} Cai Jing, Kaowen Shipin Zhiliang Haiyou Sha Neng Chi [Food Quality: What is Left to Each?], (China Central Television (CCTV) broadcast Mar. 11, 2009), available at http://www.39kf.com/focus/spaq/01/2009-03-11-573535.shtml. The full transcript of the interview is still on a few websites as of the time of this writing. The author has a printed copy of this interview on file.

\textsuperscript{445} Id. In another interview, a worker at a dry tofu plant added industrial dye to make the finished products appealing to consumers. When asked if she would eat the dyed tofu, the worker replied, “it is poisonous, I would never eat it.” Id.

\end{footnotesize}
deep red color\footnote{Li Huiying, Fuzhou Chahuo Han Sudanhong de “Hongxin” Jidan, Egg [Eggs Tainted with Sudan Red Found in Fuzhou], XINHUA NEWS, Nov. 19, 2006, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2006-11/19/content_5350233.htm.} and deceive consumers who often believe that intensely red yolks were more nutritious than plain ones.\footnote{See Wu Beibei, Jidan Yingyang Jiazhi yu Danke Yanse Wuguan [Nutrition of an Egg Has Nothing to Do with Shell Color], XINHUA NEWS, Jan. 20, 2010, http://www.sn.xinhuanet.com/2010-01/20/content_18816571.htm.} Several Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) stores in China abruptly stopped selling hot wings for a week because the hot sauces the stores purchased from a Chinese vendor were tainted with Sudan Red I.\footnote{Ke Huiming, Yin Han Sudan Hong Kendeji Zhihai, Baisheng Yuan Chengdan Falv Zeren [Kentucky Fried Chicken is Liable for its Products Tainted Sudan Red], SINA NEWS, Mar. 17, 2005, available at http://finance.sina.com.cn/xiaofei/ consume/20050317/1606143880.shtml.} Sudan Red I has been widely found in foodstuffs across the country.\footnote{Lei Min & Liu Juhua, Woguo 30 Jia Qiyue 88 Zhong Shipin Bei Chachu You Sudan Hong [Eighty-Eight Food Products Produced by 30 Firms Are Tainted with Sudan Red], Xinhua News, Apr. 6, 2005, available at http://finance.sina.com.cn/xiaofei/puguangtai/20050406/00041490488.shtml.}

In 2007, AQSIQ published a long list of poisonous industrial chemicals that food processors had deliberately added to foods for better taste or as preservatives. The following list offers a few examples:\footnote{Cai, supra note 444.}

\begin{itemize}
  \item [a)] Melamine added to milk to boost protein counts;
  \item [b)] Hydrochloric acid and human hair, which are rich in amino acid, added to soy sauce;
  \item [c)] Tannic acid used with alcohol and water to make red wine;
  \item [d)] Dichlorvos (a pesticide) added to sausage for better taste;
  \item [e)] Formaldehyde added to hot pot soups for better taste;
  \item [f)] Sulphur added to dry fruits as a preservative;
  \item [g)] Paraffin wax as a preservative used in rice;
  \item [h)] Copper sulfate used as a preservative in dry mushrooms; and
  \item [i)] Clenbuterol added to pig feeds, a chemical that can turn fat into red meat in a few weeks.
\end{itemize}

After the promulgation of the new FSL, the CCTV reports showed that vendors continued to market illegal chemicals designed to boost protein counts in food inspection.\footnote{Id.}

4. Environmental Degradation and the Case of Aquacultured Seafood

Another obstacle for the implementation of the new FSL is environmental degradation. A World Health Organization (WHO) expert advised the Chinese government that implementing “from farm to table” checks is the ultimate solution to food safety.\footnote{Chua Chin Hon, Call for “Farm to Table” Checks: Expensive Tests on End-Products Less Effective: WHO, STRAITS TIMES (Singapore), Oct. 23, 2008, available at http://www.straitstimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/Asia/Story/STIStory_293882.html.} However, China’s serious environ-
mental problems make ensuring the safety of the food supply from polluted farms extremely difficult, if not entirely impossible.

China’s explosive economic growth has taken a heavy toll on its environment, largely because of a “pollute first, control later” development model. In 2007, China became the world’s biggest emitter of carbon dioxide, overtaking the United States. Amid the zealous pursuit for a high GDP, local leaders have rarely considered environmental damage as a cost. In some regions, local governments have stretched the development model to the extreme by claiming that people would “rather be choked [by pollution] to death than be starved to death.” Because of China’s excessive dependence on coal for energy, large numbers of so-called “cancer villages” have emerged, in which many villagers are struck with similar types of cancers. Studies have shown that outdoor pollution has contributed to between 300,000 and 400,000 premature deaths every year in China. It is estimated that air pollution alone has cost $25 billion in health and loss of productivity costs. In August 2009, more than 600 children near a metal smelter house in Shaanxi Province were found to have high levels of heavy metals in their blood. The pollution was so severe that over one hundred children required hospitalization. The incident prompted an angry protest calling for compensation from the smelter.

Industrial revolution has also had catastrophic effects on China’s water systems. According to a joint study by the United Nations Development and Environment Program (UNDP) and the Chinese government, “only five percent of household sewage and seventeen percent of industrial waste are properly treated prior to discharge.” Approximately 3.7 billion tons of industrial waste and sewage are discharged daily into rivers.

454. Alex Wang, The Role of Law in Environmental Protection in China: Recent Developments, 8 VT. J. ENVTL. L. 195, 198 (2007); see also Yuhong Zhao, Trade and Environment: Challenges After China’s WTO Accession, 32 COLUM. J. ENVTL. L. 41, 48–49 (2007) (providing Table 2, which shows the correlation between trade growth and environmental pollution).


459. Sitaraman, supra note 393, at 277.


461. Id.

462. Id.

463. Sitaraman, supra note 393, at 280.
lakes and coastal waters.464 The Chinese Environmental Science Academy reported that 80% of the 200 lakes surveyed are no longer suitable for drinking because of industrial pollution.465 In 2006, the State Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) revealed an even bleaker outlook of the water systems: seven of the nine lakes under its surveillance were even dangerous "to human skin on contact."466

Alarmingly, China is the largest exporter of aquacultured seafood in the value of $8.7 billion,467 which accounts for 70% of the world’s total production.468 China is the third largest exporter of seafood into the United States.469 "Approximately 80% of the seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported from approximately 62 countries."470 Seafood from China makes up about 21% of the total imported seafood into the United States.471 According to Food & Water Watch, the conditions that aquacultured seafood is grown under in China are deplorable: [P]roducers tightly cram thousands of finfish and shellfish into their facilities to maximize production. This generates large amounts of waste, contaminates the water, and spreads disease, which can kill off entire crops of fish if left untreated. Even if a disease does not kill off all the fish in an aquaculture facility, remaining bacteria, such as *Vibrio*, *Listeria*, or *Salmonella*, can sicken people who eat the fish.472

To maintain productivity in severely polluted waters, aquaculture farmers routinely use excessive amounts of antibiotics, fungicides, and pesticides, none of which would be approved by either the Chinese or U.S. government.473 The U.S. FDA has concluded that the unapproved chemicals used by the Chinese aquaculture farms, such as malachite green, nitrofurans, fluoroquinolones, and gentian are carcinogenic.474 An FDA report stated, "The presence of antibiotic residues may contribute to an increase of antimicrobial resistance in human pathogens."475 In addition to animal drugs and pesticides, farmers feed fish and shrimp substances such as melamine, vitamin C, contraceptive drugs, fertilizers, and olaquindox in

464. Food & Water Watch, supra note 7, at 5.
468. FDA IMPORT ALERTS, supra note 2.
469. Id.
470. Id.
471. Food & Water Watch, supra note 7, at 2.
472. Id. at 5.
474. FDA IMPORT ALERTS, supra note 2.
475. Id.
order to increase production while saving feed costs.\textsuperscript{476} In April 2009, the local government was alerted to the use of olaquindox in the feed only after farmers reported large numbers of dead fish.\textsuperscript{477}

VI. Comparative Perspectives: Hong Kong and Japan

Hong Kong imports 95\% of its food supply, the bulk coming from China.\textsuperscript{478} While food scandals break out frequently in China, Hong Kong has kept a nearly impeccable food safety record. The measures that the Hong Kong government take to protect the public from deleterious imported food may provide some lessons to the United States.\textsuperscript{479} First, Hong Kong allocates considerable resources to screening Chinese imports. The government not only conducts visual inspections but also conducts tests on samples of imports checking for microbiological or chemical contaminations at the Hong Kong government’s laboratories.\textsuperscript{480} For example, vegetables are tested for pesticide residues.\textsuperscript{481} Second, Hong Kong only imports eggs, chickens and vegetables from farms and processing plants that have registered with the Hong Kong government.\textsuperscript{482} Moreover, Hong Kong sends inspectors to audit the registered farms and plants to ensure compliance.\textsuperscript{483} Third, Hong Kong designates ports for import entry according to product type; for example there is a fish port and a vegetable port. Through specialization, the government can efficiently allocate resources to maximize the effect of border inspections.\textsuperscript{484}

Japan imports more foods from China than the United States.\textsuperscript{485} Japan samples and tests about 15\% of food imports from China,\textsuperscript{486} while the FDA only tests 1\% of imported foods. Like Hong Kong, Japan only imports food from a small number of process plants and farms in China. For example, only 36 processing plants are qualified to ship processed chickens to Japan.\textsuperscript{487} Moreover, the Japanese government sends food safety officials to inspect those processing plants and farms annually.\textsuperscript{488}

In addition to the rigorous physical inspections at their ports of entry, Hong Kong and Japan have taken a systematic approach to selecting and auditing processing plants and farms. In contrast, the “FDA often has very limited information regarding conditions under which most food is pro-

\textsuperscript{476} Wu & Tan, supra note 473.  
\textsuperscript{477} Id.  
\textsuperscript{478} See SUBCOMM. ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS, supra note 176, at 8.  
\textsuperscript{479} See id.  
\textsuperscript{480} Id.  
\textsuperscript{481} See id.  
\textsuperscript{482} See id.  
\textsuperscript{483} Id.  
\textsuperscript{484} Id.  
\textsuperscript{486} See SUBCOMM. ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS, supra note 176 at 9.  
\textsuperscript{487} Id.  
\textsuperscript{488} Id.
duced in foreign countries.489 Experts predict that the United States will not adopt either the Hong Kong or Japanese model because the costs for additional inspections and audits would be prohibitively expensive for U.S. groceries.490 Besides, American consumers would most likely be unwilling to pay for additional regulatory costs.491 For this precise reason, the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) has avidly lobbied the government to avoid any increase in import inspections.492

Conclusion: Some Thoughts on Regulatory Costs, Adverse Selection and Food Safety

There are three approaches for securing food safety in the U.S.: (1) increase inspections at the borders by utilizing traditional outcome-based enforcement tools; (2) certify and inspect foreign food facilities, utilizing production-based enforcement tools on exports to the U.S.; and (3) reduce imports by increasing domestic production. The use of outcome- and enforcement-based tools has proven effective in the domestic context, but applying similar methods to imported food will invariably increase costs for importers and retailers. The FDA is unwilling to incur such costs on imported foods because doing so would hinder international trade.493 Part of the FDA’s reluctance to impede trade is due to the successful lobbying efforts of the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA).494 The GMA is adamantly against both named enforcement choices because the subsequent rise in regulatory costs will reduce profits. The result is that the Agreement with China on food safety wholeheartedly embraces the GMA’s wishes to outsource regulatory power to China. As analyzed in Part IV, however, the Chinese government is not capable of handling this task because of inherent flaws in its food safety regulatory framework. In addition, environmental degradation now threatens China’s raw food supply.

Therefore, the most sensible approach to ensuring food safety in the United States is to increase domestic production. This approach, however, is difficult to implement, because it largely hinges on consumer demand. Without knowing the conditions under which imported foods are grown and processed, consumers naturally opt for the cheapest products.495

489. FDA FOOD PROTECTION PLAN, supra note 1, at 8; see Suppan, supra note 247247, at 11.
490. See Suppan, supra note 247, at 7 (finding that the FDA cannot “afford the cost of rising to Japanese and Hong Kong’s inspection and testing rates.”).
491. See id. at 7–8 (noting that unlike American consumers, Japanese consumers are “willing to pay a premium for safety.”).
492. Id. at 6; see also GROCERY MFRS. ASS’N, supra note 262, at 6.
494. See id. at 6; see generally Vincent R. Johnson, Regulating Lobbyists: Law, Ethics, and Public Policy, 16 CORNELL J.L. & PUB. POL’Y 1 (2006) (extensively analyzing the effect that lobbyists’ conduct has on law and policy).
495. See, e.g., George A. Akerlof, The Market for “Lemons”: Quality Uncertainty and the Market Mechanism, 84 Q.J. ECON. 488, 488 (1970) (finding that when product quality is unknown to consumers then producers are incentivized to produce inferior goods to maximize profit).
When domestic food manufacturers are subject to more frequent inspections and other regulatory costs, they find it impossible to compete with imported foods subject to little or no regulatory oversight. For example, Louisiana shrimpers sustained substantial financial losses when importers placed mislabeled low quality Chinese shrimp in the U.S. market.\textsuperscript{496} As consumers are incapable of telling differences from appearance, their uninformed demand for inferior imported foods drives high quality domestic foods out of the market. According to George Akerlof, a Nobel Prize winning economist, this phenomenon is called “adverse selection.”\textsuperscript{497}

When market failure occurs because of “adverse selection,” governmental intervention is imperative to protect consumer welfare.\textsuperscript{498} With regard to food safety, governmental intervention means effective use of both outcome- and production-based enforcement tools. Unwisely, the FDA’s action plan runs contrary to established wisdom by moving away from traditional enforcement tools and outsourcing regulatory power to China. While recent food scares caused by domestically produced foods frustrated U.S. consumers, they have yet to fully realize that U.S. food safety problems pale in comparison to those in China.

Consequently, there is no shortcut to food safety. Utilizing traditional outcome- and production-based enforcement tools for imported foods is the only way to ensure food safety. Regulatory costs are inevitable. In this regard, Japan and Hong Kong have set a good example for the United States by not only frequently inspecting imports, but also certifying Chinese food facilities. When the FDA implements direct supervision over imported foods, the rising regulatory costs will force importers to be vigilant about selecting supply sources and increased food safety will result. Greater regulatory expenditures will also put domestic foods on an equal footing with imported foods in terms of market competition. The simple truth is that with lax governmental regulation, producers under-invest in food safety. Consequently, regulatory power over food safety cannot be delegated.


\textsuperscript{497} See Akerlof, supra note 495, at 488–500.

\textsuperscript{498} See id.