



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI PUSHES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF FOOD SAFETY SYSTEM;
SEEKS BETTER FEDERAL, STATE COOPERATION, NEW
TECHNOLOGIES TO PREVENT FUTURE OUTBREAKS***

Washington, D.C. - In light of recent outbreaks of food-borne illness due to E. coli and Salmonella, U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee today said improving the nation's food safety system may depend on advancing new technologies to limit or even prevent future outbreaks now being developed by small businesses, and upon better coordination and cooperation between federal and state officials charged with safeguarding the food supply.

“We can and must improve coordination and cooperation between federal and state officials because they are critical in identifying, tracking and responding to outbreaks of food-borne illness,” Enzi added. “We must also look into new technologies that could help limit or even prevent future outbreaks being developed by small businesses nationwide. No one innovates like small business, and there is no shortage of companies with great new ideas to improve food safety.”

Enzi chaired a hearing today, “Food Safety: Current Challenges and New Ideas to Safeguard Consumers,” to focus on the need to improve the food safety system, and included witnesses from federal and state agencies, as well as the food industry.

Late this summer, reports of an outbreak of illness due to a strain of the E. coli bacteria caused 204 people to become sick in 26 states and resulted in three deaths. Just last month, the CDC began investigating a Salmonella outbreak, which was traced back to tomatoes served at restaurants. Twenty one states have reported 183 cases of illness due to these tomatoes.

“For many of us, the safety and reliability of our food system is something we all too often take for granted,” Enzi said. “We rely upon a system of checks and balances that take place behind the scenes that we are often unaware of – until something goes

wrong. Then and only then do we realize how dependent we are on the food safety system that is supported by the activities carried out by federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as by the food industry itself.”

The CDC estimates that food-borne illnesses affect 76 million Americans each year, resulting in 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths. Food-borne illnesses also impose tremendous costs on the U.S. economy. The Department of Agriculture estimates costs associated with medical expenses, premature death, and losses in productivity due to missed work from five major types of food-borne illnesses at \$6.9 billion annually.

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