



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI: PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPORT SAFETY
A GOOD START TO IMPROVE SAFETY
OF IMPORTED FOODS, PRODUCTS***

Washington D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today said he is encouraged by many of the recommendations issued by the President's Interagency Working Group on Import Safety and reaffirmed his commitment to develop a comprehensive response to improve the safety of all food in the United States and better protect consumers and their families.

“I will be studying in detail Secretary Michael Leavitt's report as I work on a comprehensive approach to improve the safety of the food we eat,” Enzi said. “Of these fifty suggestions for food safety, many concentrate on the high priority areas – those most susceptible to problems. Other recommendations would provide more transparency on which companies and food products are safe – and which are not. They would establish best practices and provide some incentives.”

Enzi said Congress will take an active role in working with all stakeholders in this issue to develop a legislative proposal on food safety but cautioned that a sound legislative solution will require a bipartisan effort.

“I appreciate Secretary Leavitt's diligence in completing crucial tasks. As Governor, and now as Secretary, he has shown tremendous ability to focus on what is important now and to deliver results with clarity. I have learned much from Secretary Leavitt's insights on previous issues, particularly health information technology, and I look forward to reviewing these recommendations thoroughly as the HELP Committee conducts its own examination of these issues.”

The President's Interagency Working Group on Import Safety today laid out a strategic approach to improve the safety of imported products, particularly food. Health and Human Services Secretary Leavitt chairs the panel.

“When Americans purchase a snack, eat at a restaurant, or sit down to dinner with their families, they should be able to expect that the food they eat will not make them sick. We need to restore that faith, and I am working with my colleagues to develop a comprehensive, effective strategy to enhance food safety.”

The Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act of 2007, signed into law in September, takes the first steps to address the critical issue of food safety. It includes a provision authored by Senator Enzi and Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) to establish standards for pet food and set up early warning systems for any problems with pet foods. It improves communication systems about all food recalls, and coordinates state and federal activities on fresh and processed produce. Finally, the new law creates a database of instances of tainted food so that FDA can better track patterns of problems and target its limited resources to where they are most needed.

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