

**Conference for Food Protection  
2016 Issue Form**

**Issue: 2016 III-037**

**Council Recommendation:** Accepted as Submitted \_\_\_\_\_ Accepted as Amended \_\_\_\_\_ No Action \_\_\_\_\_

**Delegate Action:** Accepted \_\_\_\_\_ Rejected \_\_\_\_\_

*All information above the line is for conference use only.*

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**Issue History:**

This is a brand new Issue.

**Title:**

Creation of a Mail-Order Food Safety Committee

**Issue you would like the Conference to consider:**

Many consumers purchase meat, poultry, seafood and other products over the internet and these products are shipped by mail directly to their homes. Although the products are typically packaged with gel packs or dry ice, research has shown they have the potential to be temperature abused (see public health significance below). Therefore, there is a need to provide targeted guidance for food establishments (as defined in the FDA Food Code) that produce perishable food products and ship them to consumers by mail (e.g., by air, ground, or other forms of transport).

A committee should be created to develop guidance addressing proper packaging of products shipped by mail, temperature control during delivery, availability of food safety information, returning compromised and abused products, and other related topics.

**Public Health Significance:**

The primary challenge when shipping perishable food items is to maintain proper temperatures during steps such as transportation, delivery, and storage. A study by Hallman et. al. found that only 5% of retailers that sell raw meat, poultry and seafood products over the internet require customer signatures upon delivery. This practice may allow packages to be subjected to temperature abuse if proper temperature control is not maintained upon delivery. In addition, more than half (58%) of the retailers studied provided no food safety information on their websites, which could lead to an increased risk for foodborne illness.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has issued a *Mail Order Food Safety Fact Sheet* for consumers, but it has not developed specific guidance for retailers that ship products by mail. In addition, FSIS has issued the *"FSIS Safety and Security Guidelines for the Transportation and Distribution of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products"* and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued *"Guidance for Industry: Sanitary Transportation of*

*Food,*" however these guidelines do not address transportation of perishable products through the mail.

Specific guidance is needed to address the transportation of perishable food items that are produced at retail food establishments and transported by mail. Although FSIS or the FDA could independently issue revised transportation guidance documents, it is recommended that a CFP committee be formed so that experts from government, state and local health departments, industry, and consumer groups can provide practical recommendations that are most likely to be effective and implemented within the industry.

References:

FSIS Mail Order Food Safety Fact Sheet, found at:

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/mail-order-food-safety/ct\\_index](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/mail-order-food-safety/ct_index)

FSIS Safety and Security Guidelines for the Transportation and Distribution of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products, found at:

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/shared/PDF/Transportation\\_Security\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/shared/PDF/Transportation_Security_Guidelines.pdf)

FDA Guidance for Industry: Sanitary Transportation of Food, found at:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/SanitationTransportation/ucm208199.htm>

Hallman, W. K., Senger-Mersich, A., and S. Godwin. Online Purveyors of Raw Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products; Delivery Policies and Available Consumer Food Safety Information. *Food Protection Trends*, Vol35, No. 2, p. 80-88.

**Recommended Solution: The Conference recommends...:**

that a Mail-Order Food Safety Committee be created composed of members from all constituencies in the CFP. The Committee will be charged with:

1. Identifying best practices and existing guidance documents that relate to transportation of perishable food items by mail.
2. Developing a guidance document for food establishments that includes best practices for transportation of perishable products, to include proper packaging; temperature control during shipping, receiving, and storage; return of compromised and abused products; and other food safety related topics.
3. Determining appropriate methods of sharing the committee's work, including but not limited to a recommendation that a letter be sent to FDA requesting that the Food Code, Annex 2 (References, Part 3-Supporting Documents) be amended by adding references to the new guidance document as well as any existing guidance documents that the committee recommends, and the posting of information on the CFP website.
4. Reporting the committee's findings and recommendations to the 2018 Biennial Meeting of the Conference for Food Protection.

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