

President Bush Endorses FDA Recall Power

The proposed plan would grant the FDA new authority to recall human and pet food products.

Posted: November 8, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

With Secretary Mike Leavitt of the Department of Health and Human Services looking on, President George W. Bush delivers a statement on import safety Tuesday, Nov. 6, 2007, in the Roosevelt Room of the White House. White House photo by Chris Greenberg

After meeting with a Cabinet-level working group charged with reviewing the country's safety measures for imports, President Bush this week endorsed the Food and Drug Administration's right to recall food products.

"Specifically, the FDA would be empowered to order a recall when a company refuses to recall their product voluntarily, or moves too slowly in removing the unsafe product from the market," he said. "With this authority, the FDA will be in a better position to act quickly if any problem occurs."

The Interagency Working Group on Import Safety presented its 14-point action plan to the President on Nov. 6, and the FDA released its Food Protection Plan simultaneously.

Both reports recommend granting the FDA new authority to recall food products in the event a voluntary recall is ineffective. The new mandate would, however, "provide for appropriate due process rights for any firm subject to a recall order," according to the working group's report.

Citing nearly \$2 trillion worth of imported goods through more than 825,000 importers last year, President Bush said the recommendations will establish "new incentives for importers that follow strong safety practices and demonstrate a good track record;" increase penalties; and develop higher standards for high-risk categories of goods.

In addition, the FDA food plan would require food facilities to renew their registration with the FDA every two years, require new food and animal feed export fees and allow third-party inspectors to review imports, among other items.

Congress would need to approve any additional legislation, but much of what was suggested, such as FDA recall power, was included in legislation passed this September under the 2007 Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act.