



Pew project says foodborne illness costs nation \$152 billion annually

Compiled by Staff

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Washington, March 3. Acute foodborne illnesses cost the United States an estimated \$152 billion per year in healthcare, workplace and other economic losses, according to a report published by the Pew Charitable Trust's Produce Safety Project (PSP). The study, [Health-Related Costs from Foodborne Illness in the United States](#), was written by Dr. Robert L. Scharff, a former Food and Drug Administration (FDA) economist and current Ohio State University assistant professor in the department of consumer sciences. The study estimates that more than a quarter of these costs, an estimated \$39 billion, are attributable to foodborne illnesses associated with fresh, canned and processed produce.

The study comes as the Senate considers legislation similar to a bill passed by the House last year that would require more government inspections of food manufacturers and give the FDA more recall authority. Also, the FDA says it will propose later this year mandatory safety standards for the growing and handling of fresh produce. The PSP says the standards will be the first to be applied nationwide on fresh fruits and vegetables.

"An up-to-date cost analysis of foodborne illnesses is critical for FDA officials and lawmakers to craft the most effective and efficient reforms," said Jim O'Hara, PSP director. "A decade ago, we spent more than \$1.3 billion annually to try to reduce the burden of foodborne illness and today we are spending even more. We need to make certain we are spending limited funds wisely and hitting our target of reducing sicknesses and deaths, and this study gives us a yardstick to measure our progress."

The study states that fresh, canned and processed produce accounts for roughly 19,700,000 of the reported illnesses documented, at a cost of approximately \$1,960 per case and \$39 billion annually in economic losses. The study lists California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois and Pennsylvania as the states most impacted by produce-related foodborne illnesses.

For more on this report: <http://www.producesafetyproject.org/media?id=0009>

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