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## Protecting America's Food Supply Trust for America's Health

**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research  
Public Opinion Strategies

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*The following analysis is based on a national research project funded by the Trust for America's Health and conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and Public Opinion Strategies. The project included 8 focus groups conducted in May 2008 among various audiences in four locations, as well as a national survey of 1,026 registered voters conducted June 1 – 8, 2008. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.*

Though America's food supply is one of the safest in the world, it is far from completely secure. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration estimates that diseases such as salmonella and E. coli cause five thousand deaths and 76 million cases of food-borne illness in the U.S. every year. Further, there is a public misconception that the food coming into America is highly regulated and inspected. When evidence to the contrary is presented, it raises a big red flag for people.

This issue is personal. It is about the things people eat and feed to their children every single day; food safety has a direct effect on people's health and wellbeing. As a result, the public is actively looking to the government to take action on this issue to ensure public safety.

### Key Findings

- **A major outbreak of food-borne disease is seen as highly likely to occur.** Fed by a recent string of outbreaks, including E. coli in spinach in 2006 and salmonella in peppers just this year, 78 percent of the public believes that an outbreak of food-borne disease is likely to occur in the United States in the next five to 10 years, including 42 percent who believe it is very likely to happen.
- **The public views the protection of the nation's food supply as a primary government responsibility.** Sixty-five percent respond that "protecting food from diseases like salmonella and E. coli" is a very important issue for government to focus on ("very important" means they rated it between 8 and 10 on a scale from 0 to 10, where 10 means the issue is extremely important for government to focus on). More than two people out of five (43 percent) gave this issue a rating of 10.

- **Current sense of the safety of our food supply is shattered by the lack of regulation and inspection of food products coming into the country.** Seventy-one percent of people believe that the U.S. government is prepared to handle an outbreak of food-borne disease such as salmonella or E. coli. But when presented with the fact that approximately 60 percent of fresh fruits and vegetables and 75 percent of seafood consumed in the U.S. are imported, yet only one percent of imported foods is inspected, this confidence in government regulation is called immediately into question. Nearly everyone (88 percent) says that this fact makes them concerned about the health of the country, with 69 percent responding that it makes them very concerned, more than any other issue tested in this research.