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To: Health Commissioners, Environmental Health Directors, Nursing Directors,
ODA Food Safety Specialists, and Other Interested Parties

Subject: Update FDA Salmonella *Typhimurium* Outbreak and Frequently-Asked
Questions and Answers

Date: January 18, 2009

Update FDA Salmonella *Typhimurium* Outbreak

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is conducting a very active and dynamic investigation into the source of the Salmonella Typhimurium outbreak. At this time, the FDA has traced one likely source of Salmonella Typhimurium contamination to a plant owned by Peanut Corporation of America (PCA), which manufactures both peanut butter that is institutionally served in such settings as long-term care facilities and cafeterias, and peanut paste—a concentrated product consisting of ground, roasted peanuts—that is distributed to food manufacturers to be used as an ingredient in many products including cakes, cookies, crackers, candies, cereal and ice cream.

The FDA has notified PCA that product samples originating from its Blakely, Ga., processing plant have been tested and found positive for Salmonella by laboratories in the states of Minnesota, Georgia and Connecticut. The state of Minnesota reported to FDA that its samples of King Nut peanut butter are a genetic match to the strain of Salmonella that has caused illnesses in the state and around the country. King Nut is a distributor of PCA product.

As a result of these updated test results, on January 16, PCA expanded its voluntary recall to include all peanut butter produced on or after August 8, 2008, and all peanut paste produced on or after September 26, 2008, in its Blakely, Ga., plant because of potential Salmonella contamination. The product being recalled is sold by PCA in bulk packaging in containers ranging in size from five to 1700 pounds. The peanut paste is sold in sizes ranging from 35-pound containers to product sold by the tanker container. These products are not sold directly to consumers. PCA has stopped all production at its Blakely, Ga., plant as the FDA continues its investigation into the source of the Salmonella contamination.

Based on this information, and on the current state of the investigation, the FDA recommends that consumers avoid eating products that have been recalled and discard them.

Because identification of products subject to recall is continuing, the FDA urges consumers to postpone eating commercially-prepared or manufactured peanut butter-containing products and institutionally-served peanut butter until further information becomes available about which products may be affected. Efforts to specifically identify those products are ongoing.

At this time, there is no indication that any national name brand jars of peanut butter sold in retail stores are linked to the PCA recall. As the investigation

continues over the weekend, and into next week, the FDA will be able to update the advice based on new sampling and distribution information.

The FDA is working closely with members of the food industry to narrow this advice and to publish a detailed list of implicated products as soon as possible. The FDA is encouraging manufacturers to help inform consumers about whether their products could have contained commercially prepared peanut butter or peanut paste from PCA. Also, if manufacturers know their products do not contain ingredients from PCA, they may wish to inform consumers of that fact. Retailers should stop selling products which have been recalled.

The FDA will closely monitor these events by continuing to work with the firms on the details of their actions, conduct follow-up audits and inspections, monitor the progress of the firms' actions, and notify our foreign regulatory counterparts of products that may have been distributed internationally

Frequently-Asked Questions and Answers about the Recent *Salmonella* Outbreak

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Why has Salmonella been in the news recently?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been receiving reports, from many states, of illnesses caused by a type of Salmonella called Salmonella Typhimurium. Tests suggest that the people who became sick may have eaten the same contaminated food, because they were infected with the same strain of Salmonella Typhimurium (i.e., the strain of Salmonella shared the same genetic "fingerprint"). .

Is this outbreak linked to peanut butter?

Many, but not all, of the people who became sick reported that they had eaten peanut butter in the week prior to becoming ill in institutional settings, such as nursing homes. An

open container of peanut butter obtained from a nursing home where three patients were affected by the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium was found to contain the same strain.

Minnesota state officials said that they found a container of peanut butter contaminated with *Salmonella*, so does this mean all the illnesses are due to peanut butter?

An epidemiologic investigation by the Minnesota Department of Health suggested King Nut creamy peanut butter as a likely source of *Salmonella* infections among several ill persons in Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture Laboratory isolated the outbreak strain from an open, five-pound container of King Nut brand creamy peanut butter. The product is distributed in several states to institutions such as long-term care facilities, hospitals, and cafeterias. The FDA and the States are currently testing unopened containers of the same brand of peanut butter. To date, CDC and FDA have not definitively determined that peanut butter from the Peanut Corporation of America (PCA) is directly linked to the national outbreak.

Does this mean I should avoid eating peanut butter?

A major investigation by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is underway, in collaboration with the CDC and state health and agriculture departments, and results will be reported as they become available. The investigation is ongoing, and exposures to peanut butter and other peanut butter-containing products are being examined. To date, CDC and FDA have not definitively determined that peanut butter from PCA is directly linked to the national outbreak.

What about foods that contain peanut butter?

FDA and CDC are working to identify foods that contain the peanut butter under investigation. Both agencies will keep the public informed of their progress.

When did the illnesses start?

The CDC began receiving reports of illnesses associated with this outbreak in mid-September 2008 and launched an investigation to find out whether people who became ill had eaten one or more food items in common.

How does FDA determine that an outbreak is underway?

State health departments report certain illnesses to CDC. State health departments maintain surveillance systems for reportable infectious diseases, including salmonellosis, and routinely conduct a genetic analysis called pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) on each bacterial isolate to define its DNA fingerprint. Patterns may develop that indicate an outbreak. A surge of reported infections with a common DNA fingerprint over what is normally seen often signals the beginning of a common-source outbreak.

CDC, working with the States, determines which food the people who became sick had in common, and notifies the FDA of their findings. FDA then can begin tracing these foods back through the food-supply chain, to look for the point (or points) where the foods may have been contaminated, so that further illness can be prevented.

What is FDA doing to prevent more illnesses from this outbreak?

FDA is working to determine whether the peanut butter manufactured and distributed by PCA is the actual source of the outbreak and, if so, what factors contributed to the peanut butter's contamination with Salmonella Typhimurium. The agency also is following up with companies that bought products from PCA, as well as collecting samples, conducting investigations, and identifying products manufactured by PCA to help CDC and States identify the specific food or foods contributing to this nationwide outbreak.

Has this outbreak resulted in any food recalls?

The open container of peanut butter from the nursing home found to contain the outbreak strain of Salmonella Typhimurium was King Nut brand. On January 10, King Nut Companies (Solon, OH), a distributor of peanut butter manufactured by Peanut Corporation of America (Lynchburg, VA), voluntarily recalled peanut butter distributed under the King Nut label. King Nut distributes its products to institutions, such as nursing homes, schools, hospitals, and bakeries.

King Nut Companies also issued a voluntary recall of Parnell's Pride peanut butter (distributed by King Nut), which is produced by the same manufacturer (Peanut Corporation of America). The recalled products have lot codes beginning with "8."

The manufacturer of these products, Peanut Corporation of America, also issued a voluntary recall on January 13, 2009. This recall includes all of the peanut butter and peanut paste that PCA manufactured on the days that the peanut butter later recalled by King Nut was manufactured, which were certain dates between July 1, 2008, and the present.

I heard on the news that peanut butter crackers are also being recalled. Is that true?

On January 14, 2009, Kellogg Company announced that it was taking voluntary action to place a hold on any inventory of certain products in its control, remove these products from retail store shelves, and encourage customers and consumers not to eat these products until regulatory officials complete their investigation. The affected products are as follows: Austin and Keebler branded Toasted Peanut Butter Sandwich Crackers, Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich Crackers, Cheese and Peanut butter Sandwich Crackers, and Peanut Butter-Chocolate Sandwich Crackers.

What are the symptoms of Salmonella and how long do the symptoms last?

Most persons infected with Salmonella develop diarrhea (sometimes bloody), vomiting, fever, and abdominal cramps within 12 to 72 hours after infection. Illness ranges from mild to severe. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most people recover without treatment. However, infants, the elderly, and people with impaired immune systems are more likely to become severely ill from a Salmonella infection than are others. When severe infection occurs, Salmonella may spread from the intestines to the bloodstream and can even cause death unless properly treated.

What should I do if I think I have Salmonella?

If you have the symptoms listed above, see your health professional. Infection is usually diagnosed by culture of a stool sample. If your health professional determines you have the Salmonella infection, he or she will likely recommend that you increase your fluid intake to replace losses from diarrhea and, in some (but not all) instances, may also prescribe antibiotics to speed recovery. Your health professional can help you determine the right amount and type of fluid for your particular needs.