

# Investment in Food Laboratories Protects Americans' Health

## Preserve FDA's Transformative LFFM Funding

### FDA Cuts Limit Our Ability to Keep Food Safe

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) decimated FY25 funding for state food testing operations, slashing the [Laboratory Flexible Funding Model \(LFFM\)](#) by 25%.<sup>\*</sup> This funding reduction means **less states are testing food** for harmful pathogens and chemical contaminants, increasing the likelihood that **more people will get sick** from their food, and **more of those people may die**. These cuts also **dismantle the nation's integrated food safety system** and our ability to **respond to multi-state emergencies**.

In the fall 2025 LFFM funding notices, several states that had actively participated in the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) for over 15 years were not funded for further work. This national laboratory network that monitors our food supply for harmful contaminants (*Salmonella*, pesticides, Arsenic, *Cyclospora*) now has less data to inform state and federal actions.

Recent events—like the investigations of radiochemical contamination in imported products and the presence of *Clostridium botulinum* in powdered infant formula—show the need for testing readiness. The previous LFFM program's Food Defense tracks supported testing and response for these types of contamination events. These tracks were greatly reduced in the FY25 funding cuts—it is uncertain how many states will maintain testing capabilities without federal funding.

### LFFM Supports Key Food Safety Testing

The LFFM program enables state laboratories to provide critical food product testing that protects Americans from foodborne illness. It enhances capability and capacity of important testing methods, such as:

- ▶ *Listeria monocytogenes* testing, including enumeration
- ▶ PFAS
- ▶ Dead-end Ultrafiltration (DEUF) for pathogens in agricultural water
- ▶ Allergen testing
- ▶ Pesticide testing
- ▶ Alpha/beta/gamma radiation detection methods

### The Impact of LFFM Cuts

FDA's 2025 Y01 LFFM funding is 25% lower than the average yearly awarded amount of the last LFFM program. FDA prioritized funding product testing tracks but provided no funding for growing state testing capabilities or ensuring emergency response readiness.

Impacts are already being seen in:

- ▶ Cuts to laboratory workforce
- ▶ Decreased national product testing coverage
- ▶ Stagnated testing capabilities
- ▶ Gaps in analytical testing

Previous Funding Levels (Annualized)	2025
<b>\$26,000,000</b> awarded per year	<b>\$19,485,779</b> awarded
<b>55</b> laboratories funded	<b>43</b> laboratories funded
<b>41</b> Food Defense laboratories	<b>15</b> Food Defense laboratories
<b>52</b> projects per year funded to increase testing capabilities	<b>0</b> projects funded to increase testing capabilities

<sup>\*</sup> Relative to annualized LFFM funding levels (\$130M over five years).

## Cuts to Laboratory Workforce

Over the past five years, LFFM has supported the equivalent of over 100 full-time state laboratory scientists in the 55 funded laboratories. Decreased or eliminated funding has resulted in states:

- ▶ Reducing or eliminating full-time scientific staff who were keeping our food safe
- ▶ Implementing a hiring freeze, thus decreasing capacity for risk-informed testing
- ▶ Shifting staff to unsustainable state/general funds as a short-term solution.

With public health laboratories already facing staff shortages, these losses are especially devastating.

## Decreased National Product Testing Coverage

LFFM laboratories collect and test food products for harmful contaminants throughout the US. When paired with regulatory partner actions, these surveillance results **prevent outbreaks by identifying contaminated foods and quickly removing them from consumers' reach** or can **link human illnesses to the source of contaminated food**. This year's funding cuts reduced the number of laboratories brought into the LFFM's very successful surveillance program. These labs now lack robust surveillance capabilities and routine participation in a national surveillance program, making our overall Integrated Food Safety System less prepared to respond to emergencies.

## Stagnated Testing Capabilities

The FY25 funding cuts to the LFFM grant have created a serious blind spot in our national food safety system. The LFFM previously supported projects that equipped laboratories with cutting-edge methods to rapidly detect harmful pathogens, toxic chemicals, and radioactive materials in our food supply. Past investments in method development and efforts to increase capability and capacity within laboratories have directly improved our ability to respond to public health emergencies and foodborne outbreaks. **This funding track no longer exists** in the LFFM.

## Gaps in Analytical Testing

FDA recently issued several warnings about weight loss products containing [yellow oleander](#), a plant that contains cardiac glycosides, which are highly toxic to humans and animals. The current FERN poison/toxin method used for screening samples with an unknown agent of concern does not screen for cardiac glycosides. These warnings highlighted several key analytical needs that FDA and states have been eager to respond to. The elimination of method development projects limits LFFM's ability to ensure states are prepared to appropriately test for cardiac glycosides.

### Broken and Aging Equipment

State laboratories are struggling to replace critical equipment that is aging or reaching end-of-life, especially amid LFFM funding cuts and shrinking state budgets. Delays in replacing this equipment jeopardize essential daily operations, including surveillance and outbreak response.

## LFFM Funding Restoration Is Essential

Restoring federal funding for LFFM is essential to regain our national capacity to detect and respond to emerging food safety threats. Without it, we risk delays in outbreak response, avoidable harm to brand reputations, increased health costs and diminished preparedness in the face of future crises.