

FLEXNEWS**∴ Food Industry News****Categories: Food Safety****U.S. Food Safety Could Be Stronger - B&G CEO**

Source: Reuters

18/03/2009

Chicago, March 17 - Regulators could be more rigorous in inspections, but foodmakers also need to take responsibility for the safety of the food on U.S. dinner tables, B&G Foods Inc Chief Executive David Wenner said on Tuesday.

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"There's no question, I think we need to be more rigorous in terms of food safety," Wenner said at the Reuters Food and Agriculture Summit in Chicago.

Regulators at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration are under fire after a string of often deadly food poisoning incidents, including an ongoing outbreak of salmonella in peanut products that has sickened roughly 700 people around the United States and resulted in the forced recall of more than 3,000 food items.

President Barack Obama chose public health and biological threat expert Dr. Margaret Hamburg on Saturday to run the troubled FDA and announced a Cabinet-level food safety group.

The FDA, which also regulates prescription drugs and medical devices, has jurisdiction over produce and processed food while the U.S. Department of Agriculture oversees meat and eggs.

With the all of the factories and overseas ingredients involved in food production, FDA has a lot of ground to cover, Wenner said.

"It's not conceivable that the FDA is going to touch all the bases, so the industry has to be responsible," said Wenner, whose company sells Cream of Wheat hot cereal, Ortega Mexican food and B&M Baked Beans.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said last month that a single U.S. agency should be created and put in charge of the food safety work now handled by a variety of agencies.

Some lawmakers have their own proposals.

U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, a long-time critic of FDA's food oversight, unveiled a bill in February that would create a separate agency in charge of ensuring the safety of fruits, vegetables and processed foods.



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