



**Together: A Food Safe America**

## The Costs of Foodborne Illness

Foodborne illness is much more than the “stomach flu”, and it is a serious health issue and economic burden for consumers. According to the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the USDA, each year \$6.9 billion in costs are associated with five bacterial pathogens, *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *E. coli* O157:H7, and *E. coli* non-O157:H7 STEC (2000). These costs are associated with medical expenses, lost productivity, and even death.

The ERS estimates that the annual economic cost of salmonellosis—the illness caused by the *Salmonella* bacterium—is \$2.65 billion (2009). This estimate is for all cases of salmonellosis, not just foodborne cases. The estimate includes medical costs due to illness, the cost (value) of time lost from work due to nonfatal illness, and the cost (value) of premature death.

The ERS estimates that the annual economic cost of illness caused by shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC O157) is \$478 million (2009). This estimate is for all cases of STEC O157 disease, not just foodborne cases. The estimate includes medical costs due to illness, kidney dialysis and transplant costs, and the cost (value) of time lost from work due to nonfatal illness, and the cost (value) of premature death.

The ERS estimates that the annual economic cost of illness caused by *Campylobacter*, the most frequently isolated cause of foodborne diarrhea, is \$1.2 billion. The estimate includes medical costs, lost productivity, and death due to campylobacteriosis from food sources and costs associated Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS), a form of paralysis.

Estimates for the cost of foodborne illness do not include other significant costs to both industry and government.