

MARKET February 2026 NEWS



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Focus on China

Chinese authorities urge greater safety control on infant formula products

BEIJING -- China's State Council Food Safety Office and State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) have instructed local authorities to tighten the quality and safety oversight of infant formula, following a recent precautionary recall of Nestle products.

In response to the recall, which was triggered by the detection of an emetic toxin produced by the *Bacillus cereus* bacterium in certain batches of infant formula, the two authorities have urged Nestle China to complete the recall of specific batches sold on the Chinese mainland, the SAMR said in a statement.

To date, no confirmed cases of poisoning linked to the consumption of infant formula contaminated with the toxin have been reported in China, according to the statement.

The SAMR has also directed local regulators to strengthen risk control across the production chain, urging all manufacturers to screen for the toxin, enforce strict raw materials inspection measures, and tighten checks before products leave factories to ensure the safety of infant formula milk powder.

Natl standard for premade food issued

China released a draft national food safety standard for premade dishes on Friday, aiming to provide clearer definitions and tighten oversight of the rapidly expanding industry amid rising consumer concerns over safety and nutrition.

The draft standard, issued by the National Health Commission, is open for public feedback to protect public health and promote high-quality development in the premade meal sector.

According to the draft, ready-made meals are defined as prepackaged dishes made from one or more edible agricultural products or their processed forms, with or without seasoning, and without preservatives. These products undergo industrial preprocessing — such as mixing, marinating, molding, stir-frying, frying, baking, boiling, or steaming — and require reheating or further cooking before consumption.

Several categories are explicitly excluded from the definition, including staple foods, fresh-cut vegetables, ready-to-eat foods, and dishes produced in the central kitchen model used by chain restaurants. These products are already governed by other national food safety standards.

The new standards will strengthen controls on contaminants and food additives, setting limits on key risk factors such as lead, chromium,

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and pathogenic microorganisms, while strictly regulating additive use. "The use of food additives should be minimized," the draft states.

Greater emphasis will be placed on preserving nutritional quality. The draft calls for avoiding excessive cooking during processing and encourages the use of advanced technologies and equipment to retain nutrients. Producers are also urged to control the amount of cooking oil, salt, and sugar used, and to set product shelf life considering both food safety and nutritional quality.

The draft stipulates that the shelf life for prepared dishes — a category within premade meals — should not exceed 12 months, aiming to balance public expectations of freshness with operational realities of food producers, said experts involved in drafting the standard.

Some consumers have expressed concerns over shelf life, questioning labels indicating unusually long storage periods, which are "mentally hard to accept". To address this, the draft includes specific provisions on shelf life requirements for premade dishes, which is uncommon in previous food safety rules, they said.

To ensure safe consumption, the draft requires clear labeling on whether products are fully cooked, partially cooked, or uncooked, along with specific preparation instructions. This requirement aims to prevent food-borne illnesses caused by insufficient heating and to avoid quality and nutrition loss due to overcooking.

The standard for premade dishes has drawn widespread public attention after a public debate between Xibei, a well-known Chinese catering brand, and Luo Yonghao, a livestreaming influencer, over the labeling, transparency, and quality of ready-made meals. The controversy amplified consumer concerns about the identification and regulation of such foods.

International News

FDA Takes Several Actions Related to the Food Traceability Rule

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today issued [guidance](#) addressing stakeholder questions regarding implementation of the [Food Traceability Rule](#) and a [notice](#) exempting certain cottage cheese products from the requirements of the Food Traceability Rule. FDA is also announcing a series of engagements with stakeholders to fulfill a directive from Congress in the [Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act of 2026](#). FDA is committed to ensuring industry has the information and tools necessary to comply with the Food Traceability Rule and these actions advance that objective.

The Food Traceability Rule establishes additional recordkeeping requirements, beyond those in existing regulations, for those who

manufacture, process, pack, or hold foods FDA has designated for inclusion on the [Food Traceability List](#). The final rule requires such entities to maintain records containing information on critical tracking events in the supply chain for these designated foods, such as initial packing, shipping, receiving, and transforming these foods. The requirements established in the final rule will help FDA rapidly and effectively identify recipients of these foods to prevent or mitigate foodborne illness outbreaks and address credible threats of serious adverse health consequences or death.

Questions and Answers Guidance on the Food Traceability Rule

The [guidance](#) issued today includes questions and answers to assist industry with understanding the scope of the Food Traceability Rule and meeting the requirements of the rule. The guidance addresses several topics, including:

- Applicability of the rule to entities such as farms, farmers' market stalls, fishing vessels, first land-based receivers, retail food establishments, and restaurants;
- Applicability of the rule to activities such as intracompany shipments, commingling, initial packing, and transformation, including answers to questions about breaking pallets and culling produce;
- Details about the exemption for raw molluscan shellfish;

- Determining if a product is “fresh-cut” for the purpose of identifying whether it is on the Food Traceability List; and
- Additional information on the food traceability plan and recordkeeping requirements.

Guidance documents represent FDA's current thinking on a specific topic. Guidance documents do not impose legally enforceable requirements. Public comments on this guidance document can be submitted to <https://www.regulations.gov/>, using Docket FDA-2025-D-2837.

Finalizing Exemption for Certain Cottage Cheese Products from the Requirements of the Food Traceability Rule

In the preamble to the final Food Traceability Rule, FDA announced its intention to consider initiating a process to exempt certain cottage cheese products from the rule. In 2024, FDA published a notice proposing to exempt Grade “A” cottage cheese that appears on the Interstate Milk Shippers (IMS) List (“IMS listed Grade “A” cottage cheese”) from the rule. Today, FDA is publishing a [notice](#) announcing that we are finalizing that exemption.

Much of the cottage cheese produced in the U.S. is regulated through the National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments (NCIMS). FDA and NCIMS have together developed a cooperative, Federal-State program (the IMS Program) to ensure the sanitary quality of milk and milk products shipped interstate. The IMS program relies on the

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Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO), which represents the most current science-based knowledge and experience concerning the safe production and processing of Grade “A” milk products, including cottage cheese. After considering the comments on the proposal, FDA has concluded that the exemption is warranted because the processing requirements specified in the PMO for IMS listed Grade “A” cottage cheese address the risk factors that resulted in cottage cheese being included on the Food Traceability List, and because of the enhanced oversight of the manufacturing of IMS listed Grade “A” cottage cheese through the IMS program. In keeping with the statutory and regulatory provisions that allow for this type of exemption, facilities required to register with FDA that manufacture, process, pack, or hold IMS listed Grade “A” cottage cheese will still be required to maintain records identifying the immediate previous source of such food and the immediate subsequent recipient of such food.

Stakeholder Engagement Sessions

The FDA is also announcing a series of engagements with stakeholders, organized by the Partnership for Food Traceability (PFT), to fulfill a directive from Congress in the [Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act of 2026](#). FDA will engage quarterly with regulated entities, including farms, restaurants, retail food establishments, and warehouses distributing to retail food

establishments and restaurants, to better understand concerns and explore options for assisting regulated entities with complying with the Food Traceability Rule. The PFT and FDA will hold a series of listening sessions on these topics. The sessions will include opportunities for public input as well as smaller group discussions. The listening sessions will provide an opportunity to engage with FDA on Food Traceability Rule implementation of lot-level tracking, challenges facing regulated entities, and potential solutions. The first session will take place March 6, 2026, for PFT members, with a public session the following quarter. Additional sessions will be announced as they are scheduled.

Enterprise News

More than 3 million pounds of chicken fried rice -- including Trader Joe's brand -- recalled because of glass

Ajinomoto Foods North America Inc. of Portland, OR, is recalling 3,370,530 pounds of frozen not ready-to-eat chicken fried rice after consumer complaints of glass in the products the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) announced today.

The chicken fried rice items were produced between Sept. 8, 2025, and Nov. 17, 2025. There is concern that consumers may still have the product in their homes because of its long shelf life. The following products are subject to recall:

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- 1.53-kilogram cardboard packages containing 6 bags of frozen “AJINOMOTO YAKITORI CHICKEN WITH JAPANESE-STYLE FRIED RICE” with BEST BEFORE/MEILLEUR AVANT dates 26 SE 09 through 26 NO 12.
- 20-ounce plastic bags containing frozen “TRADER JOE’S Chicken Fried Rice with stir fried rice, vegetables, seasoned dark chicken meat and eggs” with BEST BY dates 9/8/2026 through 11/17/2026.

The products subject to recall have the establishment number P-18356 inside the USDA mark of inspection. The Trader Joe’s item was shipped to Trader Joe’s retail locations nationwide. The Ajinomoto item was exported only to Canada.

The problem was discovered after the establishment notified FSIS that it received four consumer complaints regarding glass found in product. There have been no confirmed reports of injury due to consumption of this product. Anyone concerned about an injury should contact a healthcare provider.

Consumers who have purchased these products are urged not to consume them.



Cream cheese being recalled because of Listeria contamination

Made Fresh Salads Inc. of Bay Shore, NY, is recalling assorted flavors of cream cheese because they have the potential to be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*.

The cream cheese was distributed in Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx and New York City area by direct delivery to retail stores and distributors. Products are distributed in 5-pound white plastic tubs with a Made Fresh Salads label. The flavors being recalled are as follows with expiration dates marked in the bottom left corner of the label.

- 5 lb. tub Apple Cinnamon Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Caramel Apple Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Blueberry Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Garlic & Herb Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Jalapeno Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Jalapeno Cheddar Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Lox Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Scallion Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Strawberry Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Sundried Tomato Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Vegetable Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Walnut Raisin Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Whipped Cream Cheese
- 5 lb. tub Tofu Whipped

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No illnesses have been reported to date.

The recall was the result of a routine sampling program by the company which revealed that a part of the mixer used to manufacture finished products was contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*. The company has ceased production using the mixer in question and removed it from service.

MARKET NEWS - REPLY

If you have any views or comments on the articles in the marketing news please feel free to contact us on the following email address:
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