NEED FOR REGULATIONS

When the United States began to change from a rural society to an urban one, food science was nonexistent, microbiology was in its infancy, and little was known about the chemistry of foods. Workers in the food business were trained in the need for sanitation. The adulteration of food was common.

As people became aware of the problems in their food supply, they demanded some action. In 1906, Congress passed the Pure Food and Drugs Act, as well as the Meat Inspection Act.

Some regulations are needed to eliminate unfair competition. For example, a process such as pasteurization will help control a health hazard, but increases the cost of production. If every processor is not required to pasteurize a particular product, it is difficult for those willing to do it to compete. The inspection of meat and poultry, with elimination of diseased animals, is a cost that an unscrupulous person would not be willing to pay without government regulations.

PURPOSE OF REGULATIONS

The basic purpose of food laws and food regulatory agencies is to ensure that all foods reaching the consumer are safe, wholesome, and truthfully labeled. The production and marketing of wholesome foods should be important to everyone affiliated with the food industry.

There is general agreement that we, as consumers, want clean, wholesome food that is produced and processed in a sound, sanitary manner and is free of microbial pathogens, toxins, or harmful chemicals. Some consumer advocates demand 100 percent assurance of safety of all consumer goods. However, there is no way that absolute safety of food or any other commodity can be proven. The safety of food involves the evaluation of a variety of risks. Everything we do in life involves some risk, including eating food.

Since we have an abundant supply of food in the United States, the present demands for food safety overshadow the hunger in many other
countries. A hungry person is more interested in satisfying an appetite than in the esthetic aspects of the food that is offered.

**FOOD LAWS**

The enforcement of the Pure Food and Drugs Act and Meat Inspection Act of 1906 was delegated to the Secretary of Agriculture in the United States Department of Agriculture.

The Pure Food and Drugs Act made illegal the adulteration of food entering into interstate commerce. The individual states maintained the sole authority to regulate intrastate production and marketing of food.

The enforcement of the law improved the quality of the food supply. However, as advances were made in technology, it became apparent that a major revision was needed. In 1933, a bill was introduced in Congress and, after many revisions, was passed in 1938. It became the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. This act is still the basic legislation, although it has been amended several times. The law applies to exports, imports, and commerce between states, in the District of Columbia, and in the territories. The act prohibits adulteration of food and requires certain information on the food label. It authorizes definitions or standards for food. The specific standards are the standards of identity, standards of quality, and standards of fill of container.

Among the amendments to the act, the Miller Pesticide Amendment of 1954 allows the establishment of tolerances of residues of pesticides on raw agricultural commodities shipped in interstate commerce.

The Hale Amendment of 1954 simplifies procedures for establishing food standards. The Factory-Inspection Amendment of 1954 provides that inspections of processing plants and other establishments are authorized upon presentation of credentials and a written notice to the owner, operator, or agent in charge.

The Food Additives Amendment of 1958 requires proof of safety before a chemical additive can be used in food. It allows the use of substances that are safe at the levels of intended use. This amendment put the burden of proof of the safety of additives on the chemical and food industries rather than on the regulatory agencies. The Delaney Clause in this amendment forbids the use of any substance in any amount if it is found to induce cancer in humans or animals. This clause has resulted in much controversy.

The Fair Packaging and Labeling Act of 1966 requires the use of retail packages that are not deceptive. The label must contain certain meaning-