



AMERICAN CHEESE SOCIETY
2696 S. Colorado Blvd., Ste. 570
Denver, CO 80222
www.cheesesociety.org

Contact:
Rebecca Sherman Orozco
Marketing & Communications Director
rorozco@cheesesociety.org
720-328-2788 (o) | 203-605-6949 (m)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FDA PAUSES TESTING FOR NON-TOXIGENIC *E. COLI* IN CHEESE

Denver, CO (February 8, 2016) – Today, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a statement addressing industry concerns over newly enforced limits on non-toxigenic *E. coli* in raw milk cheese. [In this statement](#), FDA announced that it is **“in the process of pausing its testing program for non-toxigenic *E. coli* in cheese.”**

FDA has stated that it will be reevaluating its approach to testing for non-toxigenic *E. coli* within the overall preventive control framework of FSMA, including assessing whether it is appropriate to have a single criterion for non-toxigenic *E. coli* in both raw and pasteurized cheeses. We are pleased that FDA expressed its respect for raw milk cheesemaking and artisan producers in today's statement.

This action comes on the heels of collaborative efforts by industry members, [including ongoing regulatory advocacy by ACS](#), to address permissible levels of non-toxigenic *E. coli* in raw milk cheese. In December, [a bicameral letter from legislators](#) expressing concern over the change in standards for non-toxigenic *E. coli* in raw milk cheese further supported FDA's reevaluation of its position. FDA's response to legislators shows their continued effort to adhere to science-based regulatory changes, something ACS has championed. As FDA recently sampled and collected data on 1,200 imported and 400 domestic raw milk cheeses, we hope the overall safe profile of legally-made raw milk cheeses from licensed facilities will inform any future changes to existing standards.

ACS is proud that its advocacy efforts, in conjunction with those of so many allied industry groups domestically and abroad, have made a real impact on the regulatory landscape. Of course, that work is not over. ACS will continue to maintain a keen focus on preserving traditional cheesemaking for generations to come.

To enhance its understanding of the artisan cheese industry, FDA is holding a Listening Session on February 11 at their Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN) to hear directly from ACS raw milk cheesemakers about their experiences and concerns. ACS President, Dick Roe, and ACS Executive Director, Nora Weiser, will be joined by seven raw milk cheesemakers from around the country, who will share their stories and speak to the impact of potential regulatory changes on their businesses. By lending their voices to this effort, these producers are advancing the candid dialogue and understanding that is needed for continued growth in the artisan cheese industry.

- Gianacis Caldwell, Pholia Farm Creamery and Dairy (OR)
- Lynn Giacomini Stray, Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese (CA)
- Andy Hatch, Uplands Cheese Company (WI)

- Mateo Kehler, Jasper Hill Farm (VT)
- Jeremy Little, Sweet Grass Dairy (GA)
- Marieke Penterman, Holland's Family Cheese (WI)
- Jeremy Stephenson, Spring Brook Farm and Farms for City Kids Foundation (VT)

Michael Taylor [and FDA colleagues](#) will be present to hear from these producers, and will have an opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue. This is a critical opportunity to better educate FDA about the unique characteristics of raw milk cheeses, the unique challenges that these cheesemakers face, and the important contributions raw milk cheesemakers are making to our culinary and cultural landscape. It is through opportunities such as these, when producers are able to share their experiences first-hand with regulators, that the seeds of real change are sown.

ACS will share a recap of this Listening Session, along with other important regulatory updates, on its website at www.cheesesociety.org.

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About the American Cheese Society (ACS)

ACS is the leading organization supporting the understanding, appreciation, and promotion of artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheeses produced in the Americas. At nearly 1,700 members strong, ACS provides advocacy, education, business development, and networking opportunities for cheesemakers, retailers, enthusiasts, and extended industry. ACS strives to continually raise the quality and availability of cheese in the Americas.