

A researcher with the Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (AAEA) has cast doubt on the future effectiveness of the incoming U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) at reducing food-borne illnesses.



Nearly half of all food-borne illnesses in the U.S. are tied to fresh produce, according to a release from the association.

In 2010, the FSMA was passed with the intent of regulating fresh produce marketed in the U.S.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the agency in charge of the legislation, describes it as a way to “ensure U.S. food supply is safe by shifting the focus from responding to contamination to preventing it.”

However, John Bovay of the University of Connecticut said: “I would assess this more as a band-aid than a cure-all.”

Bovay is part of a team of researchers who looked at the impact of FSMA from several points of view in the paper [“Economic Effects of the U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act,”](#) which was selected to appear in the journal Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy.

The researchers used the fresh tomato industry as a case study into FSMA.

“We demonstrate how, under FSMA, certain categories of suppliers will gain advantage over others,” the paper's authors say.

“Growers and suppliers within the United States, and their buyers, are likely to gain relative to foreign producers and importers because FSMA imposes specific requirements for importers.

“Among fully regulated growers, large growers will benefit relative to small growers. Many

producers have already adopted food-safety standards that closely resemble the FSMA rules, and the cost of implementing the FSMA requirements for these producers will be much lower than for other producers."

As for the cost to the consumer and the foodborne illness concerns FSMA was created to prevent, Bovay says the jury is still very much out on that.

"FSMA will reduce the number of food-borne illness cases by some unknown amount," he said.

"Even if FSMA is effective, because it is similar to many private and state rules and regulations already in place, I don't have a lot of confidence that this is going to drastically diminish the number of illnesses."

Photo: [www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com)

[www.freshfruitportal.com](http://www.freshfruitportal.com)