

FDA Moffett Center and SANHAFL Laboratory Operations Support State Laboratories, Industry and the US Food Supply

The work performed in the US Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Moffett Center and the San Francisco Human and Animal Food Laboratory (SANHAFL) are critical to the safety of the US food supply and the fresh produce, dairy and shellfish industries. Their essential and unique responsibilities should lead the new administration to prioritize support for these laboratories and the scientists who work there.

The Moffett Center

The Moffett Center supports the quality system needs of the FDA [Grade A Milk](#) and [Shellfish](#) programs, the [FDA Food Emergency Response Network \(FERN\)](#), the [USDA Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network \(Vet-LIRN\)](#) and others. The Moffett Center's proficiency testing (PT) programs evaluate a laboratory's ability to accurately and reliably produce test results, and it performs work that is not available in the private sector.

Supporting America's Dairy Industry

- The Moffett Center provides [Grade "A" Milk Program](#) PT, which is essential to assuring accuracy of dairy testing and foundational for the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance and the National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments (NCIMS) programs. The Center issues raw milk and finished product-based proficiency tests for milk quality, antibiotic residues, pasteurization efficiency and vitamins. Many of these PT samples are not available in the private sector; **without them, there would be a significant adverse impact on dairy farmers**, as the milk testing program is a key pillar of inter-state commerce.
- Already impacted by federal reductions in force, the [Vet-LIRN](#) Interlaboratory Comparison Exercise (ICE) for detecting Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI, also known as "bird flu") in milk was canceled. Over 40 laboratories from FDA, states and the private sector were registered to participate in this PT program in April 2025, and its cancellation was a huge loss in the protection of our dairy farmers. **APHL is pleased to hear that the HPAI ICE is rescheduled for July 2025.**
- FDA has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NCIMS to strengthen the Interstate Milk Shippers Program and enforce compliance with FDA's Pasteurized Milk Ordinance. The Moffett Center's PT program is a key requirement of this MOU, as laboratories that support inter-state shipment agreements must be in conformance with NCIMS. For more than seventy years, FDA's milk PT program has been the standard for several public health initiatives around the world, ensuring the same level of milk safety for imported milk and milk products.

Proficiency Testing: A Key Pillar of Quality Data

It is essential that industry and regulatory programs have confidence in the accuracy and reliability of government laboratory results. To this end, laboratories must have a quality management system to support the defensibility of the data generated by the laboratory and used by regulatory programs. PTs are crucial for a laboratory's quality system because they provide an external, objective assessment of the facility's analytical performance and staff expertise.

Eliminating a key pillar of a quality management system creates opportunities for issues to occur during an active regulatory response, damaging government credibility, trust and relationship with industry.

Supporting America's Shellfish Industry

- The Moffett Center issues the [FDA's shellfish and water PT program](#), annually assessing the performance of shellfish testing laboratories and analysts as they test products for bacterial contamination and marine biotoxins. FDA's shellfish proficiency testing program is a key pillar of the National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP), a cooperative effort between the FDA, states and the shellfish industry to maintain quality controls on growing, harvesting, processing, and shipping of molluscan shellfish. **Without these programs, there would be a significant impact on the people who harvest shellfish.**
- FDA has an MOU that establishes the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) as a federal-state-industry cooperative body to uniformly enforce the NSSP. The Moffett Center's PT program is a key pillar of this MOU, as laboratories that support inter-state shipment agreements must be in conformance with the ISSC. If they do not participate in a PT program, they will lose that certification.

Defending America's Food Supply through FERN

- The [FERN network](#) integrates federal, state and local food testing laboratories who are ready to respond to emergencies involving biological, chemical or radiological contamination of food. It is imperative that laboratories are ready to test on a moment's notice.
- Many FERN PT exercises offered by the Moffett Center are not commercially available. For analytes with commercially available PTs in food, they are often not sold for the food types or contamination levels that are necessary to protect Americans through FERN.
- The Moffett Center provides FERN proficiency testing for laboratories that identify unknown poisons/toxins in human food matrices. This FERN PT program feeds into the quality system for the [Laboratory Flexible Funding Model \(LFFM\)](#). Through the LFFM, state laboratories stay prepared to accurately detect accidental or intentional food contamination events. In summer 2025, for example, the Moffett Center will release a FERN PT to assess the ability of laboratories to test for glyphosate in barley samples.

Ensuring Laboratory Readiness to Respond to *Cyclospora* Outbreaks

The Moffett Center is launching a PT exercise for *Cyclospora* in spinach, scheduled for June 2025. This PT will allow laboratories to demonstrate competency prior to the summer, when FDA usually sees large, recurring outbreaks and there is a demand for product testing associated with investigations.

FDA San Francisco Human and Animal Food Laboratory

The SANHAFL staff provides critical support in multiple testing areas and in outbreaks and investigations. The laboratory's location is ideally suited for rapid testing of fresh produce collected from the Salinas Valley growing region. Due to the short shelf-life of fresh produce, SANHAFL's location and testing capabilities play a crucial role in quickly releasing food into distribution or identifying causative strains and tracing sources of contamination.

SANHAFL also tests for HPAI in dairy products, which protects consumer health and supports California dairy farmers in efforts to control the spread of HPAI. The laboratory is set to begin testing for HPAI in raw pet food.

The SANHAFL staff are highly trained subject matter experts in metals testing. They were critical in the response to the 2024 crisis involving high levels of lead in [WanaBana](#) cinnamon applesauce pouches. Their work results in recalls of cinnamon and other foods contaminated by heavy metals.