

FDA, USDA, CDC Continue to Lose Staffers in Fiscal Year 2026

By Bailee Henderson



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New data from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) shows the most recent and complete picture of staff losses at federal agencies responsible for food safety and public health. **The data is current through December 2025.**

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OPM notes that incentives, reduced pay, and a shrunken workforce have shrunk considerably.



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early retirement workforce has employees.

USDA is Hiring

Regarding specific monitoring and

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- **The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)** lost 19,984 staffers in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 and another 2,269 so far in FY 2026. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) was reduced by 874 and 39 personnel in FYs 2025 and 2026, respectively; the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) by 1,932 and 73, respectively; and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) by 2,017 and 15, respectively. Notably, USDA’s workforce has decreased in size more than any other federal agency since 2015, with net losses of more than 17,400 staffers (the vast majority of these losses occurring in 2025–2026).
- **The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** was reduced by 3,859 and 473 in FYs 2025 and 2026, respectively.
- **The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** was reduced by 2,499 and 390 in FYs 2025 and 2026, respectively.

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Potential Effects of Workforce Losses on Food Safety and Public Health

Since RIFs began shortly after the inauguration of President Trump, food industry stakeholders have shared concerns about how a significantly leaner federal workforce could affect agencies’ ability to safeguard the food supply, monitor pathogens, and respond to illness outbreaks. Worries about “brain drain” have also been expressed, as many of the employees at USDA who have left since January 2025 were veteran staffers and/or held advanced degrees.

Exemplifying the effects that widespread RIFs can have, in April 2025, some FDA food safety scientists, laboratory staff, and inspectors were rehired after their terminations affected day-to-day operations and programs. Similarly, USDA-APHIS reportedly struggled to rehire personnel charged with responding to the current avian influenza H5N1 outbreak.

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Bailee Henderson is the Digital Editor of *Food Safety Magazine*, where she covers industry-relevant current events, regulatory affairs, and scientific developments. She also produces the *Food Safety Five Newsreel*. Notably, Bailee's coverage for *Food Safety Magazine* has been featured in national televised news segments including *CBS Sunday Morning* and *MSNBC's Rachel Maddow Show*. She can be reached at hendersonb@bnpmedia.com

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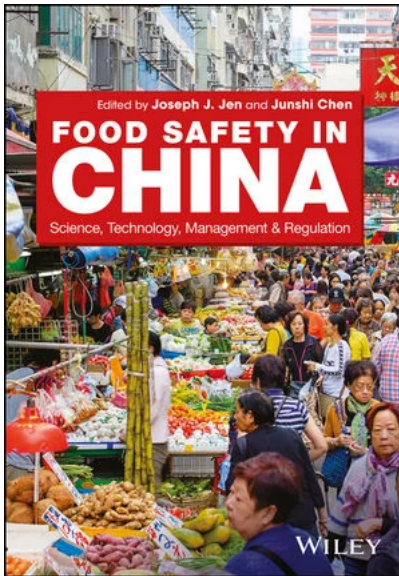
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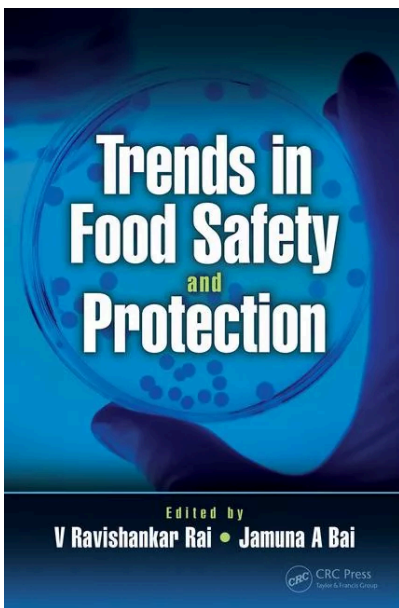


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August 12, 2025

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