

State of North Carolina

JOSH STEIN
GOVERNOR

June 27, 2025

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 17

EXTENDING THE FOOD SAFETY AND DEFENSE TASK FORCE

WHEREAS, the Food Safety and Defense Task Force ("Task Force") is a public body originally established by executive order on September 12, 2003 and most recently reestablished by Executive Order No. 259 (May 24, 2022); and

WHEREAS, the Task Force was first established by executive order on September 12, 2003 to identify, evaluate, and address vulnerabilities in North Carolina's food-supply system and agricultural industry; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force is comprised of state and local government officers and staff, academic professionals, and agricultural industry stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force has assisted North Carolina in its navigation of multiple wide-spread food safety emergencies and food-borne illness outbreaks in the last few decades; and

WHEREAS, for example, in 2007 the Task Force, in collaboration with other state agencies, helped remove more than 30,000 recalled canned food products from circulation and prevented the spread of botulism in the state; and

WHEREAS, the United States Food and Drug Administration ("FDA") extensively reviewed the Task Force's response efforts during the 2007 recall, which have since become a model for similar recall efforts nationwide; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force also provided vital assistance to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services ("DHHS") during the adoption of the 2009 and 2017 FDA Food Codes, which have significantly enhanced and improved the State's retail food safety inspection process; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force coordinated recall efforts in the 2021 salmonella outbreak linked to onions as well as the apple cinnamon fruit puree recall for lead in 2023; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force organized tabletop exercises for emergencies in both 2024 and 2025 and provided coordination for food safety efforts during Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force's emergency response plans have been incorporated into the North Carolina Emergency Operations Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force continues to support necessary updates to food safety regulations based on available science and continues to provide training and support to

personnel across the food-supply system; and

WHEREAS, since its inception in 2003, the Task Force has subsequently been extended or reestablished by executive orders issued by previous Governors; and

WHEREAS, the most recent Executive Order directing the continuation of the Task Force's important work expires on June 30, 2025.

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of North Carolina, **IT IS ORDERED**:

Section 1. Extending Executive Order No. 259

Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 147-16.2, Executive Order No. 259, which reestablished the Task Force, is hereby extended as modified below.

Section 2. Purpose

The purpose of the Task Force is to coordinate interagency and public-private collaborative efforts to enhance protection of the State's food-supply system and agricultural industry.

Section 3. Membership

- a. The Governor shall appoint members to the Task Force as follows:
 1. The Secretary of DHHS, or designee;
 2. The Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality ("DEQ"), or designee;
 3. The Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, or designee;
 4. The Commissioner of Agriculture, or designee;
 5. Representatives from the University of North Carolina System; and
 6. Representatives from other government agencies, private industry, and other public members associated with the State's food-supply system or agricultural industry (representatives from this Section 3(a)(6) collectively referred to as "Appointed Members").
- b. The Secretary of DHHS, the Secretary of DEQ, and the Commissioner of Agriculture or their respective designees, shall serve as Co-Chairs of the Task Force.

Section 4. Meetings

The Task Force shall meet at least six (6) times a year. A simple majority of the members shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of transacting business.

Section 5. Committees

The Task Force may establish such committees or other work groups as necessary to carry out its duties.

Section 6. Duties

The Task Force, by and through its committees, shall have the following duties:

- a. Conduct focused studies on the vulnerability of the State's food system and make recommendations that would, if implemented, accomplish or address the following:
 1. Improve the safety and defense of the food system by, among other things, reducing the potential threat and impact of terrorism on the food system; and
 2. Improve food safety and defense mitigation and response plans; and

3. Implement and coordinate the training for key stakeholders in the State's food supply system that incorporates the findings from these studies.
- b. Recommend legislation and policy aimed at improving the ability of state departments and agencies to protect the State's food supply and agricultural industry base, including legislation that would protect sensitive and proprietary information pertaining to the State's food-supply system, safety and defense vulnerability data, and defense plans that, if compromised, would increase the State's food-supply system's exposure to criminal or terrorist acts.
- c. Recommend necessary adjustments to improve the ability and capacity of state departments and agencies to protect the State's food-supply system and agricultural industry.
- d. Submit an annual report to the Governor no later than December 1st each year that includes recommendations or proposals for changes in laws, rules, policies, and programs that the Task Force determines are appropriate to enhance food safety and defense in the state.

Section 7. No Private Right of Action

This Executive Order is not intended to create, and does not create, an individual right, privilege or benefit, whether substantive or procedural, enforceable in law or in equity by any party against the State of North Carolina, its agencies, departments, political subdivisions, or other entities, or any other officers, employees, or agents thereof.

Section 8. Miscellaneous

- a. The Task Force's expenditures, if any, shall comply with state law and with the rules and policies of the Office of State Budget and Management.
- b. DHHS shall provide administrative and staff support services to the Task Force.

Section 9. Effect and Duration


This Executive Order shall be effective immediately. It shall remain in effect until June 30, 2027, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 147-16.2, or until rescinded, whichever occurs first.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto signed my name and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in the City of Raleigh, this 27th day of June in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-five.



Josh Stein
Governor

ATTEST:



Rodney S. Maddox
Chief Deputy Secretary of State

