



Written by [Becky Akers](#) on August 26, 2010

The FDA: Egg on its Face, Yet We're the Butt of the Yolk

We expect such horrifying hubris from our rulers. But it takes a monumental ignorance of economics, politics, and human nature for anyone else to believe that government in general and bureaucracies in particular can, will, or even want to protect us from the shoddy, shady, and dangerous. Fortunately for our rulers, 150 years of dumbing down Americans via compulsory public "education" has inculcated that ignorance: most folks swear that only the FDA saves them from death by food poisoning.

Such silliness rests on several premises. First, believers deny that all men are made of the same sinful, fallible stuff; instead, they divide humanity between two opposing orders: the good, who are either poor or employees of the State, and the bad, who are wealthy or aspire to be. The bad become even worse when they produce a product people — including the believers themselves — willingly buy.



As great a chasm as separated Lazarus and the rich man yawns between this duality; even their motivations entirely differ. The good, which is to say politicians and bureaucrats, don't know the meaning of "self-interest." They labor tirelessly and efficiently for everyone else's benefit. They do not respond to bribes or money in general, advancement, or political pressure; no, all they ask is our respect as they protect us by churning out regulations in unfathomable jargon.

These public servants are also omniscient, knowing far more about any industry without working a day in it than producers who have devoted their careers to it. A bureaucrat can visit — or merely think about — an airport, supermarket, farm, amusement park, or car dealership and instantly comprehend how best to protect consumers from its inherent evil. Nor do these heroes shy from the obligation such superior acumen carries: "FDA is the federal agency responsible for ensuring that foods are safe, wholesome and sanitary," [says the bureaucracy on its website](#). Hmm ... even eggs? Yep: "[The FDA is responsible](#) for protecting the public health by assuring the safety, efficacy, and security of ... our nation's food supply..."

We pay big bucks for this no-money-back guarantee. "The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is requesting \$4.03 billion ... as part of the President's fiscal year 2011 budget — a 23 percent increase over the agency's current \$3.28 billion budget," [its press release confesses](#). But all those billions are well worth it since, as the FDA's "commissioner," Margaret Hamburg, M.D., puts it, she and her selfless employees "act as a strong and smart regulator, protecting Americans through every stage of life, many times each day." You might hope such "strong and smart regulators" could attract funding on their own,



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without the government's stealing it from us in taxation, but alas, no one values their services *that* much.

In tragic contrast to these paragons stand entrepreneurs. Greedy, utterly self-interested, willing to sell their mothers or first-born for a buck, cutters of every corner possible and a few that aren't, entrepreneurs constantly need bureaucrats to supervise and restrain them lest they bankrupt or kill us all. They're stupid, too, unable to grasp the most basic fact about their industry unless regulations spell it out for them (thank God, their stupidity abates long enough for them to decipher unfathomable jargon). They care nothing about their reputation because they magically stay in business whether customers patronize them or not.

Which brings us to the Tale of the Eggs. It's a simple one, really, if we accept the presuppositions above. Greedy businessmen sold eggs contaminated with salmonella to sicken unwary consumers — who could die unless wise, righteous bureaucrats save them. The moral of the story is equally simple: the FDA needs more power, as its aforementioned commissioner happily emphasized: "... [FDA chief Margaret Hamburg said](#) the FDA hasn't had enough authority to help prevent outbreaks. Hamburg said Congress should pass legislation stalled in the Senate that would increase the frequency of inspections and give the agency authority to order a recall. Companies now have to issue such recalls voluntarily. 'We need better abilities and authorities to put in place these preventive controls and hold companies accountable,' Hamburg said."

Really? Actually, "shell egg producers" aren't nearly as free from government's stranglehold as Maggie pretends: myriads of regulations already hamstringing them at the [federal](#) (yes, that link takes us to the disingenuous Maggie's FDA — though the [US Department of Agriculture decrees plenty of regs as well](#)), [state](#), and often even local levels (try raising a couple of chickens in your backyard and see how quickly the local busybodies come running). So the government already owns dictatorial power but failed anyway.

Perhaps that's because bureaucrats aren't nearly as sacrificing and selfless as Americans fantasize; perhaps they have their schemes and ploys and pet projects like everyone else. Could it be, then, that this "crisis" isn't as deadly as the Feds claim? Have our rulers and their minions in the media exaggerated the perils our food poses?

Apparently so. According to their own statistics, the ["incidence" of "foodborne infection"](#) from salmonella has dropped 10 percent over the last decade while rates for other such infections have declined by 26, 30, even 41 percent. We live in one of history's safest periods, not only for food but for other physical threats as well; that begs the question of why we "need" the FDA (or any bureaucracy) to protect us. So count on agencies to hyperventilate at every risk, however minuscule or remote, lest taxpayers object to their unconstitutional and enormous expenses.

Legitimizing itself isn't the FDA's only hidden motive. Like lesser men, bureaucrats enjoy having their way. The FDA has long wanted our food irradiated — [a move as controversial](#) as the [TSA's irradiating passengers](#) at airports so screeners [can ogle them naked](#). No wonder some folks suspect that the ["FDA exploits salmonella](#) eggs recall to pursue food sterilization agenda."

Bureaucrats are also — dare I say it? — as greedy and self-interested as entrepreneurs. Like them, they crave money, lots and lots of it. The legislation whose "stall[ing] in the Senate" Maggie laments not only hands her agency more power, it also showers it with a treasure trove of new fees — a whopping [\\$1,000 annually from each "registered facilit\[y\]"](#) in the food industry.



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Finally, far from being a corporation's worst enemy, bureaucracy is its best friend. Maggie's stalled legislation illustrates why: in addition to fees, it imposes staggering new requirements for paperwork on virtually everyone who produces or sells food. That's a burden only big businesses can support. Smaller firms already wounded by the \$1,000 fee may die, while few start-ups can leap those twin barriers. Which means less competition for the corporations that increasingly dominate the marketplace, including that for eggs: "...[the egg industry](#), like many other food industries, has consolidated over recent years, placing fewer, larger businesses in control of much of the nation's egg supply to consumers." For consumers, stifling competition decreases choice while increasing price.

So don't be surprised when "shell egg producers" blame the lack of regulation for this snafu. Despite the FDA's flaming failure to "[protect] the public health by assuring the safety, efficacy, and security of ... our nation's food supply," they'll agree with Maggie that we need more and stronger bureaucracy if we are to remain healthy or even alive. As *The New American's* own Dennis Behreandt observes, "Government is the only institution that grows through failure."

Becky Akers, an expert on the American Revolution, writes frequently about issues related to security and privacy. Her articles and columns have been published by *Lewrockwell.com*, *The Freeman*, *Military History Magazine*, *American History Magazine*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *New York Post*, and other publications.



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