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FOOD POLICY INSTITUTE PRIMER ON FOOD IMPORTS AND REGULATIONS
Rutgers Presents the Only Publicly-Accessible Summary of U.S. Food Import System

New Brunswick, N.J. – Imported foods now make up an estimated 10 to 13 percent of the American diet. The total value of food imported into the United States in 2007 was $70.5 billion, with estimates for 2008 rising to $75 billion. This translates into over nine million entries into the United States of imported food and food-related products annually, passing through one of more than 300 entry points which include ports, border crossings, and postal facilities.

In 2007 multiple instances of contaminated food imported into the United States made news headlines. These incidents raised public questions and concerns regarding the safety and control of food imports. However, understanding the complex set of policies and regulatory procedures related to food imports into the United States can be daunting.

As an aid to understanding the food import system, the Food Policy Institute at the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station has released a new report, The US Food Import System: Issues, Processes and Proposals.

“We have written this primer to assist reporters, writers, scientists, politicians and the public in understanding both the current rules and proposed changes to the food import system,” said Mary Nucci, a research analyst at the Food Policy Institute and lead author of the report. “While there is a great deal of interest in food imports and their safety, the information required to understand the relevant issues is not widely dispersed. This report fills that gap.”
The report examines current policies and the procedures followed by the Food and Drug Administration and the United States Department of Agriculture in their management of food imports. It provides background history on the existing system, explains some current loopholes in the system and outlines several current proposals for both legislative and policy changes.

Copies of the report are free and available to be downloaded through the Food Policy Institute website (www.foodpolicyinstitute.org).

The authors of the report were Mary L. Nucci, Jocilyn E. Dellava, Cara L. Cuite, and William K. Hallman, all affiliated with the Food Policy Institute. The project was funded as part of a National Integrated Food Safety Initiative grant awarded by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The Food Policy Institute is a research unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station that addresses food and health policy issues. The institute supports public and private decision makers who shape aspects of the food system within which government, agriculture, industry and the consumer interact.