

## Reuters

### **US House Defeats Sweeping Reform of Food Safety**

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**By Charles Abbott**

The U.S. House defeated a proposed sweeping reform of the federal food safety system on Wednesday amid complaints it would bury small farmers in paperwork with no assurance of an increase in inspections.

The bill was debated under special rules that limited debate to 40 minutes with no amendments allowed and a two-thirds majority needed for passage. It fell eight votes short, 280-150.

The bill would give the Food and Drug Administration the power to order food recalls, step up the frequency of plant inspections, require facilities to have a food safety plan in place and give FDA more access to company records.

Democrats predominantly voted for the bill and most Republicans voted against it. But there was a sizable cross-over -- four dozen Republicans voted for the bill. Two dozen Democrats opposed it.

"This is not the way to make law," said Rep. Frank Lucas, Oklahoma Republican, who led the opposition on the House floor. The bill would raise \$189 million a year through registration fees but Lucas said there was no requirement to spend it on food inspections. Given the large support for the bill, two congressional staffer workers said Democratic leaders could call another vote soon and under terms that require only a simple majority.

"This is a piece of legislation that will stop Americans being killed by bad foods," said Rep. John Dingell, Michigan Democrat. Other proponents echoed Dingell in saying action was needed after high-profile outbreaks of illnesses linked to peanut butter, spinach and peppers.

Dingell and senior members of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which drafted the bill, negotiated for days with farm-state lawmakers to resolve objections that family farmers would face the same fees, recordkeeping and reporting rules as multinational food processors.

Rep. Collin Peterson, Minnesota Democrat and chairman of the Agriculture Committee, said revisions were made to exempt grain and livestock producers from registration fees and assure FDA would not intrude in areas where the Agriculture Department handles inspections.

Nor would a proposed food trace-back system affect farmers, said Rep. John Shimkus, Illinois Democrat.

Foes said three versions of the food safety bill, each an update of preceding versions, appeared on Wednesday so there was little time to see if small farmers would be treated fairly. Said Rep. Jerry Moran, Kansas Republican, "Uncertain results -- vote no."