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Canadians place food safety trust in government - Nanos poll

OTTAWA, May 20 /CNW Telbec/ - The vast majority of Canadians want government to step in and play a much more active role to ensure food safety because they don't trust industry to do the job, according to a new Nanos survey.

Seven in ten Canadians believe Ottawa should invest more resources and be more hands-on in policing the safety of food, while only one in five believe the government should rely more on the food industry to police its own safety processes.

The survey also found that only 4% of Canadians have a high level of trust in food companies to assess themselves when it comes to compliance with safety rules.

"Public opinion is far ahead of Ottawa's current approach to inspecting food companies for compliance with safety rules. Currently, there simply are not enough inspectors to verify that processed meat producers are following the safety rules and that's not good enough for Canadians," said Bob Kingston, President of the Agriculture Union - PSAC, which commissioned the poll.

On Monday, May 25 at 4 pm, Bob Kingston will be testifying before the parliamentary committee investigating the listeriosis outbreak.

The survey found that sixty-four percent of Canadians either blame the government for turning over critical inspection duties to industry or business for cutting food safety corners to save money. Only 27% subscribe to the view that the outbreak was simply an unfortunate and unavoidable accident.

"Canadians reject industry and government's explanation that an unforeseen and unavoidable risk led to last summer's food poisoning outbreak that left 22 people dead. This was a failure of the inspection system, in spite of what business and government decision-makers would like us to believe, and Canadians want it fixed," Kingston said.

Some MPs on the parliamentary committee investigating the listeriosis outbreak and food safety have been troubled that government officials including Minister Ritz and Canadian Food Inspection Agency President Carole Swann have refused to accept ultimate responsibility for what happened last summer.

On the question of who should be responsible, Canadians are very clear: 73% think the government should take the lead role in ensuring food safety standards are met, while only 18% think food business can ensure food safety standards are met for the foods they produce.

Nanos Research conducted a random telephone survey of 1001 Canadians 18+ years of age from April 25th to May 3rd to produce these data. A sample of this size produces a margin of accuracy of plus or minus 3.1%, 19 times out of 20.

NANOS

STAT SHEET - NATIONAL OMNIBUS - AGRICULTURE UNION-PSAC

Q1. Which group do you trust most to ensure that the food consumed by Canadians is safe: (Rotate) Government food inspectors and scientists, food company employees, grocery store employees?

Government food inspectors and scientists	Food company employees	Grocery store employees	Unsure
72.4%	13.7%	5.9%	7.9%

Q2. Do you think that (ROTATE) the government should rely more on the food industry to police its own safety processes or that the federal

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government should invest more resources and be more hands on in policing the safety of food?

The government should rely more on the food industry to police its own safety processes	The federal government should invest more resources and be more hands on in policing the safety of food	Unsure
21.9%	70.5%	7.5%

Q3. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all trust and 5 is very much trust, how much trust would you place in unverified safety compliance assessment reports food companies conduct themselves and provide to government?

Not at all trust	2	3	4	Very Much trust	Don't know
23.0%	27.3%	33.0%	8.4%	4.0%	4.3%

Q4. Some people think that (ROTATE) food businesses can ensure food safety standards are met for the foods they produce, others think that the government should take the lead role in ensuring food safety standards are met. Which of these views best reflects your personal view?

Food businesses can ensure food safety standards are met for the foods they produce	The government should take the lead role in ensuring food safety standards are met	Unsure
18.0%	72.7%	9.4%

Q5. As you may know, an outbreak of listeriosis last summer killed 22 people and left many others ill. Which of the following do you think best describes why these incidents occurred?

They are simply unfortunate and unavoidable accidents	Businesses cut food safety corners to save money	The government turned over critical inspection duties to industry	Unsure
27.3%	37.9%	25.7%	9.1%

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