

## FDA considering closing seven testing labs

*by UPI*

ALAMEDA, Calif. -- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is considering consolidating its food-safety system by closing seven testing laboratories across the United States. While FDA officials have said closing the labs would free up vital funds for food-safety efforts, many experts have said the cost-cutting efforts could have the opposite effect, the San Jose (Calif.) Mercury News reported Monday. "In the middle of all these problems that the FDA's having, it looks really bad to start closing all these labs around the country -- and especially to close half of them," Consumer Federation of America food policy director Chris Waldrop said. Waldrop was referring to recent incidents in which imported foods and U.S. produce were linked to substantial threats to public safety. The newspaper said one of the labs facing closure is an FDA facility in Alameda, Calif., that played an instrumental role in tracing a major E. coli bacteria outbreak in spinach in 2006. If the California facility is closed along with the other six FDA labs, many U.S. regions would be forced to delay vital product inspections by shipping samples away to other locations.

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