High cost of foodborne illnesses: OARDC researcher provides state-by-state breakdown

Foodborne illnesses cost Ohio up to $2.9 billion every year. In other states, such costs range from just $181 million all the way to $12 billion, according to a 2015 study by Robert Scharff, economist with the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Costs fluctuate between states for a variety of reasons, including population, cost of medical care, climate and other factors, Scharff said. Those variations can have a significant impact on local decision making.

Scharff’s Journal of Food Protection study is a first-of-its-kind economic analysis designed to offer public health authorities detailed information to help evaluate the cost-effectiveness of food-safety education efforts and how best to prioritize resources.

“Take an illness from a pathogen like Vibrio,” Scharff said. “It’s associated with seafood, particularly raw seafood in summer. States with higher shellfish consumption — those in coastal areas — have a higher incidence, and so it makes sense for them to devote more resources to battling it.”

More: go.osu.edu/fdillcost

“Scharff’s work has been indispensable to our efforts. His estimates of the economic impact of these illnesses — considered both on a nationwide and state-by-state basis — help make the case that the benefits from policies aimed at preventing food safety problems clearly outweigh costs.”

— Sandra B. Eskin, director of food safety, The Pew Charitable Trusts
OARDC: A LEADER IN AGBIOSCIENCE

ag•bi•o•sci•ence (āg’bi’ō-sī’ens) n. the integration of scientific disciplines to address critical needs of food security, safety and health; environmental sustainability; and biobased energy, fuel and products

Food Security, Production and Human Health

Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Advanced Bioenergy and Biobased Products

Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center

As the research arm of The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) employs nearly 650 scientists and staff members throughout the state.

Ohio State’s Wooster campus is the largest agbioscience research facility in the United States. OARDC scientists work closely with researchers in The Ohio State University Colleges of Education and Human Ecology, Medicine, Public Health, Veterinary Medicine, Biological Sciences, and Engineering.

At any one time, OARDC researchers are engaged in nearly 400 research projects. Primary focus is in three signature areas:

- Food Security, Production and Human Health
- Environmental Quality and Sustainability
- Advanced Bioenergy and Biobased Products

The Ohio General Assembly established OARDC as the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station in 1882. It is supported by a line-item appropriation from the Ohio General Assembly, competitive grants, gifts, contracts, federal grants and other sources. OARDC uses these funds to provide direct research support and economic development for Ohio’s annual $100+ billion agbioscience industry. OARDC is not funded by student tuition or any other general funds of The Ohio State University.

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