



# THE MEAN SIXTEEN

## Major Biosecurity Threats Facing U.S. Agriculture and How Policy Solutions Can Help

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Farmers, ranchers, and producers in America are facing a barrage of new and emerging threats that have the potential to upend our entire food system.**

Today, pest and disease outbreaks are affecting every single agricultural sector – from corn to cattle to cotton to citrus. These challenges are wrecking production in a number of markets, disrupting American business and trade, hurting farmers' profitability, and in many cases, leading to significantly higher food costs for consumers.



**DISRUPTING BUSINESS  
+ TRADING**



**HURTING FARMERS'  
PROFITABILITY**

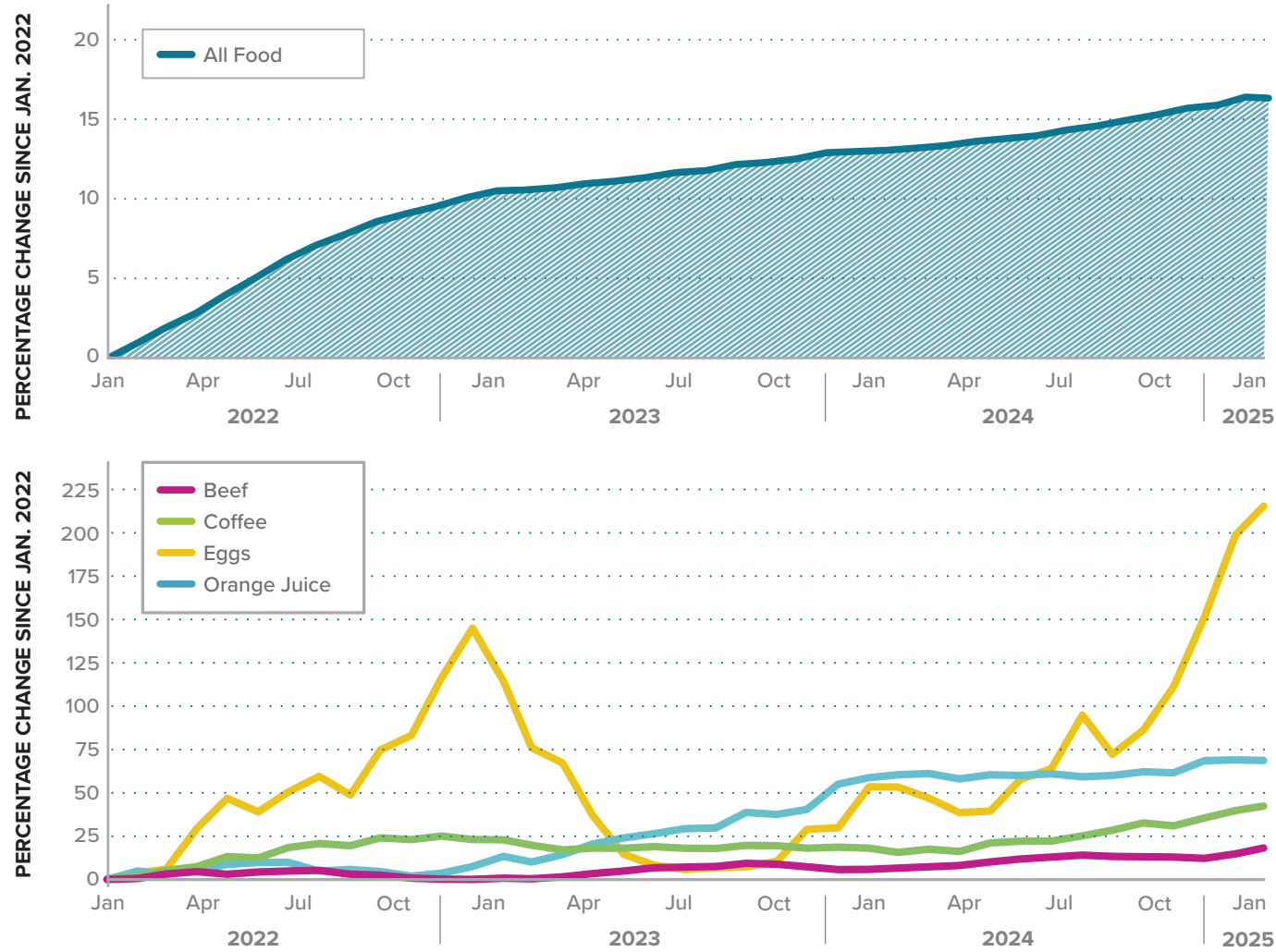


**INCREASING PRICES  
FOR CONSUMERS**

A few of these outbreaks, like avian influenza in poultry and New World screwworm in cattle, have captured the public's attention recently because of their impact on prices and markets. However, numerous other risks are flying under the radar, while causing significant damage to the national economy. In this paper, we call attention to a select list of 16 of the worst pest and disease threats facing American agriculture today, plus a handful of overseas outbreaks that are hurting beloved consumer products like bananas, chocolate, and coffee, and discuss their economic impact and the outlook for the future. This list drew from the expertise of many of agriculture science's leading national voices – but it's also incomplete. New pest and disease threats are constantly emerging, so it's difficult to know for certain what our next big outbreak will be. For this reason, it is absolutely crucial that the U.S. should support mechanisms to protect farmers from risks and make sure that our food supply chain can remain resilient even when challenges occur. To this end, this paper recommends that the U.S. government invest in three strategic categories – international coordination and related solutions, domestic solutions, and agricultural research and development – to ensure that U.S. agriculture remains strong even in the face of uncertain conditions.

For millions of Americans, the spectre of the global COVID-19 pandemic still looms large in our collective memory. From that disaster, we all learned just how rapidly diseases can jump between species, disrupt vital infrastructure systems, and spread around the world. Crop and livestock diseases are no different, and in some ways, these threats are even more significant due to their potential to harm a fundamental element of human existence – our food. Investing in agricultural research, development, and the long-term viability of our food supply chain is critical for protecting our national security and economy, and we are hopeful that our nation’s leaders will rise to meet this challenge before it’s too late.

### The Consumer Cost of Pest and Disease Outbreaks



**American food prices have climbed about 17 percent since January 2022. Eggs, orange juice, coffee, and beef are examples of products that have been hit by major recent pest and disease outbreaks, contributing to higher consumer costs.**

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics via the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (FRED) for All Food CPI (CPIUFDSL), Orange Juice (APU000071311), Coffee (APU0000717311), and Eggs (APU0000708111), and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Average Price Data for Uncooked Ground Beef (user-provided dataset)



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