



Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

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Food Safety and
Inspection Service

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New Resource to Help Protect Consumers from Pathogen Risks in Food and Water

FSIS and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) unveiled a new tool this week that will help scientists improve the quality of data collected and used to protect consumers from pathogen-related risks in food and water. The tool, a Microbial Risk Assessment (MRA) Guideline, was jointly developed with EPA as a public health collaborative project.

"This new tool will help public health scientists target pathogen-related risks and prevent them from harming the public," said USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Elisabeth Hagen. "We will continue to enhance the tools at our disposal to keep pace with evolving pathogens in our environment with the ultimate goal of protecting the American public and the food supply."

Pathogens in food, water and the environment can result in acute gastrointestinal-related illnesses. Some can have long-term and permanent health effects as well as fatalities. Recognizing this, the MRA Guideline lays out an overarching approach for conducting meaningful assessments of the risks to consumers posed by pathogen exposure.

FSIS has posted the MRA Guideline on its website at www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Microbial_Risk_Assessment_Guideline/index.asp. The MRA Guideline is available to download at www.regulations.gov.

FSIS Policy Update

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. All notices and directives are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index.asp. The following policy update was recently issued:

Notice 47-12, Instructions for Modified Sample Size for National Residue Program Scheduled Muscle Samples

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Export Requirement Updates



The Library of Export Requirements has been updated to reflect changes in export requirements for the following countries:

Canada

Malaysia

Mexico

Complete information can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/index.asp.

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USDA and FDA Partner on Food Safety Resources

FSIS and FDA have partnered to create six booklets with food safety advice for populations that are most susceptible to foodborne illness. The booklets in this “at-risk series” are tailored to help older adults, transplant recipients, pregnant women and people with cancer, diabetes or HIV/AIDS reduce their risk for foodborne illness.

Each of the booklets contains 24 pages of practical guidance on how to prevent foodborne illness. The information is presented in easy-to-read charts, illustrated how-to’s and straightforward descriptions of why each group is at higher risk for foodborne illness and symptoms that may mean trouble. The booklets contain three tear-out cards with quick-reference tips for grocery shopping, cooking to the right temperature and eating at restaurants for times when taking along the entire booklet would be impractical.

While booklets on five of these topics were previously produced in 2006, the two agencies this year created a sixth booklet for pregnant women, who are at particular risk for the illness *Listeriosis*. The six new booklets list other food safety resources, such as www.foodsafety.gov, that have been made available since the earlier copies were printed. They also include revised safe cooking temperatures for meat and poultry: 145 °F for whole cuts of meat, followed by a three-minute rest time; 160 °F for ground meats and 165 °F for all poultry and leftovers.

The two agencies have mailed copies of these booklets to physicians around the country who treat patients in any of these six categories. The booklets are also available for download in PDF format at www.foodsafety.gov/poisoning/risk/index.html. To order booklets, call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) weekdays between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. ET, or email fsis.outreach@usda.gov.

Consumers with food safety questions are encouraged to “Ask Karen,” the FSIS virtual representative available 24 hours a day at www.AskKaren.gov or via smartphone at m.askkaren.gov. “Ask Karen” live chat services are available in English and Spanish weekdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET.

Resources for FSIS' Residue Program Now Available

Agency officials met with various industry representatives this week to discuss the implementation of New Analytic Methods and Sampling Procedures for the National Residue Program for Meat, Poultry and Egg Products as outlined in *Federal Register* notice FSIS-2012-0012.

FSIS posted a Q&A to its website (www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/RD_2012-0012.pdf) to address questions submitted by industry representatives. A summary of the questions raised by industry at this week's meeting and the agency's responses will be made available through the agency's question and answer forum, *AskFSIS* at <http://askfsis.custhelp.com/>.

To review the *Federal Register* notice and other related documents, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/Federal_Register_Notices/index.asp.

Comment Period Ends Next Week for HACCP Systems Validation

On August 9, the comment period will close for the *Federal Register* notice that clarifies requirements for validation and for the guidance document to assist establishments in meeting the validation requirements.

The agency extended the comment period in response to a request from an industry association that stated small businesses with multiple HACCP processing categories need additional time to evaluate the draft guidance document.

Comments may be submitted through the Federal *eRulemaking* Portal at www.regulations.gov or by mail to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, FSIS, Docket Clerk, Patriots Plaza III, 355 E St. S.W., 8-163A, Mailstop 3782, Washington, DC 20250-3700. All items submitted must include docket number FSIS-2009-0019.

FSIS Conducts

Food Defense Plan Survey

FSIS is conducting its 7th annual Food Defense Plan Survey through Aug. 10, 2012, to determine how many FSIS-regulated processed egg products plants, meat and poultry slaughter and processing establishments, and official import inspection establishments have voluntarily adopted a functional food defense plan.

Results from the July 2011 survey indicated that approximately 75 percent of all plants have adopted plans. While this represents an increase from prior years, FSIS has established an agency performance goal for 2015 to have at least 90 percent of establishments with a functional plan.

This year is the first year FSIS will have the ability to conduct the survey through PHIS. Inspection personnel at domestic and import establishments will be able to schedule the questionnaire as a task on their calendar, which will help them plan their time.

For guidance and documents related to food defense, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Defense_&_Emergency_Response/index.asp.

For questions and additional assistance, contact the Small Plant Help Desk at (877) FSIS-HELP, (877-374-7435). Any policy-related questions can also be addressed through the Policy Development Division at <http://askfsis.custhelp.com> or (800) 233-3935.