



Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

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FSIS to Consolidate Some of Its Offices

Move Follows USDA-Wide Consolidation of Agencies and Streamlining of Functions

Secretary Vilsack announced this week that some of the functions within USDA would be consolidated along with the closure of USDA offices. As part of that announcement, FSIS will consolidate some of its district offices – a move that will reduce the number of offices from 15 to 10.

The FSIS offices affected by the consolidation will be Albany, NY; Beltsville, MD; Madison, WI; Minneapolis, MN; and Lawrence, KS. The functions performed by those offices will be merged with other FSIS district offices. The change will affect the reporting structure and will not impact the inspection duties performed in the districts.

The FSIS consolidation, which is expected to take effect in FY 2013, comes on the heels of the release of the agency’s strategic plan and the implementation of PHIS, which revealed places where the agency could achieve efficiencies while not compromising public health.

Consolidation is First Major Change in More Than a Decade

This is the first major change to the agency’s structure in more than 15 years, according to Food Safety Under Secretary Dr. Elisabeth Hagen and FSIS Administrator Al Almanza, who personally spoke with the employees who will be affected by the consolidation. “We had to take a hard look at our operations – the

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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

Kuwait

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

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way we do business and how we manage our budget,” Hagen said. “The American public expects its government to operate efficiently and be a good steward of their hard-earned dollars. That means making prudent decisions that will not jeopardize the public’s health.”

“When we started the process of developing our strategic plan, we took a close look at our operations,” said Almanza. “We knew we didn’t want the plan to be something that sat on a shelf, but could serve as a guiding principle for what we do and a foundation document for both the long-range and day-to-day operations of the agency. The plan, along with what we have learned from PHIS implementation, influenced the changes we are making. This consolidation will not have an impact on the inspection work we do. In-plant staffing will not change under the consolidation.”

Agency is Committed to Working with Employees During Consolidation

“We will do everything that we can to limit the impact on our employees and their families, including offering all permanent employees an option to move to another location, as well as exploring telework possibilities for affected employees,” said Almanza. “We want our consolidation process to be carried out in a way that is as minimally disruptive to our employees as possible.”

USDA Announces Implementation of Microbiological Baseline Data Collection for Raw Chicken Parts

This week, FSIS posted to its website Notice 04-12, *FSIS Nationwide Microbiological Baseline Data Collection Program for Raw Chicken Parts*. This guidance provides updated instructions to inspection program personnel at establishments participating in the nationwide baseline study.

For approximately 6 months, FSIS will sample non-frozen, not-ready-to-eat chicken parts potentially destined for retail, hotels, restaurants or similar institutions, known as HRIs, along with products bound for export or inclusion in special purchase orders.

This baseline study will provide FSIS and industry with data

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USDA to Hold Codex Public Meeting for the Intergovernmental Task Force on Animal Feeding

FSIS and FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine are sponsoring a public meeting to receive public comments and draft U.S. positions to be discussed at the 6th session of the Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Animal Feeding (AFTF) in Berne, Switzerland.

The public meeting will be held on Jan. 18, from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Jaime L. Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Room 107-A, Washington, D.C., 20250

Documents and agenda items related to the 6th session of the AFTF will be accessible at www.codexalimentarius.org.

For more information, or to submit written comments contact, Daniel McChesney, FDA, at (240) 453-6830 or daniel.mcchesney@fda.hhs.gov

...Baseline Study

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concerning the national prevalence estimate, percent positives as well as quantitative levels of selected foodborne pathogens and microorganisms. The data will enable the agency and industry to target interventions and effectively work toward reducing the risk of foodborne pathogens in FSIS-regulated products. The agency also expects to establish pathogen reduction performance standards for not-ready-to-eat chicken parts.

For general information regarding FSIS baseline studies, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Baseline_Data/index.asp.

Food Safety Agencies Announce Public Meeting to Discuss Foodborne Illness Attribution Estimates

FSIS, FDA and CDC recently announced a public meeting to discuss federal efforts to enhance food safety strategies through improved use and characterization of foodborne illness source attribution. The meeting will be held in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 31 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Discussions will include federal approaches to food source attribution and outline efforts to develop harmonized food source attribution fractions to inform food safety strategies. The meeting also will be used to review a draft strategic plan developed by the Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration, which was formed in 2011 to increase collaboration on analytic projects.

Individuals are encouraged to pre-register online at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/meetings_&_events. Registration closes on Jan. 25.

The meeting will be held at USDA's South Building, Jefferson Auditorium, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250. Non-USDA employees must provide photo identification to enter the building.

For general information or to request special accommodations due to a disability, contact Juanita Yates, FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, at (240) 402-1731 or Joan Lindenberger, FSIS, at (202) 720-6755.

New Feature: FSIS Data Webpage

FSIS recently instituted a webpage highlighting the agency's data collection and analysis efforts.

This new page includes information about FSIS' data resources. Specifically, it includes data on inspection and enforcement activity, domestic establishments and import facilities, pathogen and chemical residue verification testing, and FSIS baseline studies and analyses conducted to support *Federal Register* issuances.

Moreover, it features information on analyses conducted by the agency, specifically in the areas mentioned above, along with policy analysis and impact, foodborne illness attribution and performance management and strategic data analysis planning.

To find data analysis and reporting content, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Data_Analysis/index.asp.

Beta-Agonist Screening and Confirmation Method

The FSIS CLG Method, Screening and Confirmation of Beta-Agonists by HPLC-MS-MS (High Performance Liquid Chromatography – Mass Spectrometry), has been updated with technical improvements and fitted with text to align it with ISO 17025 standards.

These technical improvements include lowering the level of applicability for one analyte (ractopamine, a beta-agonist used to promote growth in production animals) from 21 ppb to 3 ppb as well as streamlining the extraction of samples.

The method will be posted to the FSIS Chemistry Laboratory Guidebook once finalized, with an effective date no earlier than January 17, 2012.

Research: Taking a Fresh Look at What's Out There

FSIS has posted the agency's assessment of priority research topics that will help further its public health mission (www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Food_Safety_Research_Priorities/index.asp).

This priorities supports three goals of the FSIS 2011-2016 Strategic Plan:

- 1) Strengthen collaboration among internal and external stakeholders to prevent foodborne illness;
- 2) Effectively use science to understand foodborne illness and emerging trends; and
- 3) Implement effective policies to respond to existing and emerging risks.

These priorities are topic areas that meet the FSIS food safety objectives and are provided for researchers looking for research suggestions.

While the agency does not fund grants for research, it recognizes that there are other agencies that fund food safety research (e.g. National Institute of Food and Agriculture or National Institutes of Health). It is hoped that this listing will help guide a researcher to select a topic that would be of national interest.

For questions or to share information about research on related topics not currently listed here, contact Dr. John Johnston at (202) 365-7175 or john.johnston@fsis.usda.gov.

Regulatory Webinar Available on Recalls of Products With Undeclared Allergens

The agency will host a webinar on Feb. 7 to provide guidance on addressing a recent increase of products recalled because of undeclared allergens.

The discussion will focus on the steps establishments can take to prevent the production of items containing undeclared allergens.

To access the webinar, go to <https://connect16.uc.att.com/usda/meet/?ExEventID=85277207> and follow the on-screen instructions. For questions, contact Kristin Goodwin at (301) 504-0878 or kristin.goodwin@fsis.usda.gov.

Updates on FSIS Testing for *E. coli*

Weekly updates for the agency's raw beef *E. coli* sampling program are posted on the FSIS website.

For previous and current year results, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Ground_Beef_E.coli_Testing_Results/index.asp.

Proposed Rule to Streamline Generic Labeling Approval Processes

FSIS proposed a new rule that will allow establishments to label a broader range of products without first submitting the label to the agency for approval. After the rule goes into effect, FSIS will continue to verify that labels are accurate, not misleading and in compliance with all labeling features.

Individuals are invited to submit comments electronically through the Federal *eRulemaking* Portal at www.regulations.gov until Feb. 3. Comments may also be mailed to USDA, FSIS, OPPD, RIMD, Docket Clearance Unit, Patriots Plaza III, 355 E St., S.W., Rm. 8-164, Washington, D.C. 20024-3221. All items submitted must include the docket number FSIS-2005-0016.

In addition, a webinar on this subject will be held on Feb. 14 at 2 p.m. ET. To access the webinar, go to <https://connect16.uc.att.com/usda/meet/?ExEventID=85277207> and follow the on-screen instructions. For questions, contact Kristin Goodwin at (301) 504-0878 or kristin.goodwin@fsis.usda.gov.

Register for Webinar on Nutrition Labeling Rule

FSIS is delaying the effective date of the final rule that will require nutrition labeling of the major cuts of single-ingredient, raw meat and poultry products and ground or chopped meat and poultry products. The original effective date of the final rule was Jan. 1, but is now delayed until March 1.

The new effective date will ensure that industry has adequate time to comply with the requirements of the final rule. The *Federal Register* notice announcing the delay was published to the FSIS website (www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&Policies/Interim_&Final_Rules/index.asp).

Webinars on this subject will be held on Jan. 18 and Feb 28 at 2 p.m. ET on both days.

To access the webinar, go to <https://connect16.uc.att.com/usda/meet/?ExEventID=85277207> and follow the on-screen instructions. For questions, contact Kristin Goodwin at (301) 504-0878 or kristin.goodwin@fsis.usda.gov.

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline

Food safety experts are available year-round from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time to answer questions in English and Spanish about safely preparing and cooking foods.

The toll-free number is 1-888-MPHotline (888-674-6854). Recorded messages are available 24 hours a day.

Register for the 2012 Agricultural Outlook Forum

USDA is hosting the 2012 Agricultural Outlook Forum, *Moving Agriculture Forward: USDA – Growing, Innovating, and Celebrating 150 Years*, Feb. 23-24, at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington, Va.

The forum features 30 breakout sessions spotlighting a range of issues related to global food security, locally grown foods, fighting foodborne illnesses, sustainability and the farm income outlook for 2012.

To learn more and register for the Forum, visit www.usda.gov/oce/forum.

FSIS Policy Updates

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. The following policy updates were recently issued:

Notice 03-12, *FSIS Actions in Establishments That Temporarily Alter Routine Practices During Routine Risk-Based Listeria Monocytogenes (RLM) Sampling or Intensified Verification Testing (IVT)*.

Notice 04-12, *Nationwide Raw Chicken Parts Microbiological Baseline Data Collection Program: Implementation Note: Do not Implement Until January 23, 2012*.

All notices and directives are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index.asp.

Get Answers at AskFSIS

AskFSIS is a web-based technology and policy question-and-answer forum on topics such as exporting, labeling, inspection, programs and procedures.

In addition, *AskFSIS* offers Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds that link back to the Q&As. To view recently posted topics, visit <http://askfsis.custhelp.com/>.

***Salmonella* Performance Standard Sample Set Started with Paper Sample Forms (FSIS Form 10,210-7) and Documenting the Task in PHIS**

http://askfsis.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1719

Accessing Lab Sample Management Folders in Outlook

http://askfsis.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1720