



# Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

## Under Secretary Hagen Talks About USDA's Nutrition Labels

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food Safety and  
Inspection Service

Volume 14, Issue 18  
May 11, 2012



Recently, Under Secretary of Food Safety Dr. Elisabeth Hagen made a visit to a local grocery store in Washington, D.C., to talk about the USDA labels which provide in-store nutrition information for consumers to let them know about the content of the meat and poultry they are eating.

“Consumers are rightfully more interested than they have ever been in what’s in their food and what’s not in their food, and what they’re putting on the table,” Hagen said. “The protein piece of the meal is what people often plan around, and so it’s important that people understand what the nutritional value is of that pork chop they’re putting on the plate, or the porterhouse steak, or whatever they choose that night to serve for their families or serve for their friends.”

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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:

**Costa Rica**

**Mexico**

**People's Republic of China**

Complete information can be found at [www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations\\_&\\_Policies/Export\\_Information/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/index.asp).

*FSIS Constituent Update* is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office.

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## ...Hagen Talks About Nutrition Labels

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Hagen also reminded consumers about the important food safety steps of *Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill*, as well as using a food thermometer to make sure they are cooking meat and poultry to a proper temperature. Check out the USDA video on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rgVG1Iz7WJw&feature=youtu.be\\_gdata](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rgVG1Iz7WJw&feature=youtu.be_gdata).

## Happy Birthday: USDA Celebrates One Year of Mobile Ask Karen, Food Safety on Your Smartphone

FSIS celebrates this week the first anniversary of Mobile Ask Karen (*m.AskKaren.gov*), the mobile app that allows consumers to ask food safety questions at any time of day, instantly from their smartphones.

The agency created a mobile version of Ask Karen, its virtual food safety representative who offers advice about properly handling, storing and preparing food to prevent illness, last May to reach consumers where they are used to receiving timely information.

Since the launch of the app a year ago, traffic to the Ask Karen site has increased 15 fold. Additionally, Ask Karen and Mobile Ask Karen have a 99 percent self-service rate, meaning that nearly all users are able to find the answers to their questions.

Both Mobile Ask Karen, which is optimized for iOS and Android devices, and the desktop-based Ask Karen are available 24 hours a day at *m.AskKaren.gov* or *AskKaren.gov*, with nearly 1,500 food safety answers searchable by topic and by product. Consumers can also e-mail, chat with a live representative or call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline directly from the app. To use these features on the app, simply choose "Contact Us" from the menu. The live chat option and the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline, 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854), are available in English and Spanish from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET Monday through Friday.

## **PHIS Import Inspection Component Scheduled to Launch May 29**

FSIS is preparing to implement the import component of the Public Health Information System (PHIS) on May 29. All FSIS import regions are scheduled to begin using PHIS on this date.

In preparation, letters were distributed to foreign governments on March 20 and importers on April 18 providing information on changes to certification requirements, product categorization and presentation for import reinspection and sampling at official import inspection establishments.

Import establishments should also receive a letter with this information. These letters are posted on the web at [www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations\\_&Policies/PHIS\\_Import\\_Component/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&Policies/PHIS_Import_Component/index.asp) and also linked to the FSIS website at [www.fsis.usda.gov/PHIS/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PHIS/index.asp). Look to future issues of the *Constituent Update* and check the website for more information.

## **OIG: FSIS Appropriately Addresses Industry Appeals of Humane Handling Enforcement Actions**

USDA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) reported in April that FSIS appropriately handles industry appeals of its humane handling enforcement actions. An audit was performed at the request of the Office of Food Safety to ensure that FSIS was appropriately enforcing federal humane handling laws. OIG published positive findings, and made no formal recommendations for FSIS.

"The OIG determination shows that FSIS' enforcement of humane handling regulations, as well as its appeals process, is fair and consistent," Under Secretary for Food Safety Elisabeth Hagen said. "As OIG noted, FSIS has taken many steps to improve its inspectors' understanding of humane handling requirements and the tools they have to ensure the humane handling of livestock."

The audit of the agency's performance is among several measures FSIS announced in December 2010 that it was undertaking to better ensure the humane treatment and slaughter of all livestock presented for processing at FSIS-inspected facilities. Those measures are listed in the press release issued on April 30, which can be found in its entirety at [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News\\_&Events/NR\\_043012\\_01/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&Events/NR_043012_01/index.asp).

FSIS has also increased the transparency of its enforcement of federal humane handling laws. The agency began publishing a new Humane Handling Quarterly Report, which includes all noncompliance records issued for inhumane handling, as well as the time spent by employees on humane handling verification activities. FSIS has also begun posting redacted notices of enforcement actions taken against establishments that have been found in violation of federal humane handling laws.

In addition, the agency published a final compliance guide on voluntary in-plant video monitoring to assist meat and poultry establishments that want to improve operations by verifying livestock humane handling and poultry good commercial practices.

The audit report can be found on OIG's website at [www.usda.gov/oig/webdocs/24601-0002-31.pdf](http://www.usda.gov/oig/webdocs/24601-0002-31.pdf).

## **Webinar Available for Generic Labeling Approval Processes**

FSIS will hold a webinar on generic labeling regulations on May 22 at 2 p.m. ET.

The webinar is intended to provide guidance on the types of labeling and modifications to previously approved labels that are generically approved by FSIS.

In addition, the discussion will provide an overview of the agency's proposed rule to allow establishments to label a broader range of products without first submitting the label to FSIS for approval.

To access the webinar, go to <https://connect16.uc.att.com/usda/meet/?ExEventID=85277207>

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## **Updates on FSIS Testing for *E. coli***

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

For comparative previous and current year results, go to [www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Ground\\_Beef\\_E.coli\\_Testing\\_Results/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Ground_Beef_E.coli_Testing_Results/index.asp).

## **Comment Period Extended for Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection Proposed Rule**

FSIS extended the comment period 30 days for a proposed rule to modernize the way young chickens and turkeys are inspected. Comments are now due by May 29. The request to extend the comment period was made by constituents, and the agency agreed.

The notice ([www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations\\_&\\_policies/Proposed\\_Rules/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/Proposed_Rules/index.asp)) clarifies answers to questions from several groups; the posting of those answers ensures that the groups and the public have access to the same information. The notice also specifies that FSIS is seeking information and data on potential impacts of line speed on worker safety.

Comments may be submitted through the Federal *eRulemaking* Portal at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), or by mail to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), FSIS, Docket Clerk, Patriots Plaza III, 355 E St., S.W., 8-163A, Mailstop 3782, Washington, DC 20250-3700. All items submitted by mail or electronic mail must include docket number FSIS 2011-0012.

## **Come to Know the Faces of Food Safety**

Within the last year, FSIS launched Faces of Food Safety, an initiative that shares the stories of its dedicated workforce — inspectors, veterinarians, investigators, administrative assistants and scientists.

Olga Morales, FSIS' newest Face of Food Safety, serves as Acting Program Manager for the Office of Program Evaluation, Enforcement and Review's Enforcement Branch. Since her career began, she has worked as an egg product Inspector, Consumer Safety Inspector, Enforcement Investigation and Analysis Officer, Compliance Specialist and Senior Compliance Specialist.

Using every day as a new learning experience and believing passionately in what she does, she said she still feels the same motivation to go to work today as she did when she started with the agency more than 2 decades ago. "I just knew I wanted to be a part of the FSIS workforce," she said.

To read more about Morales' story, visit [www.fsis.usda.gov/About\\_Fsis/Faces\\_Food\\_Safety/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/About_Fsis/Faces_Food_Safety/index.asp).