

**STATEMENT OF DR. RICHARD RAYMOND  
USDA UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD SAFETY  
RISK-BASED INSPECTION AT PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENTS**

“With the announcement of a tentative timetable for the implementation of a more robust risk-based inspection system in processing establishments, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is once again demonstrating its determination and commitment to a transparent and inclusive process.

“As I indicated based on comments received from stakeholders at a two-day public meeting in October, FSIS intends to gradually implement risk-based inspection in a careful and deliberative manner. We are proposing that beginning in April, FSIS inspection program personnel will begin performing food safety verification procedures based on risk in 30 prototype locations, performing inspection tasks for the first time based on an objective measurement of a plant’s inspection track record and the relative risk of what is produced. FSIS inspection program personnel will be applying their knowledge, training and experience in a way that we believe will further protect public health. FSIS will conduct ongoing analysis of the tasks inspectors perform in these locations without computer-driven task scheduling. Improvements will be identified and implemented. If all goes well at the 30 prototype locations, the number will be gradually expanded to 150 locations by the end of this calendar year.

“As the Resolve report made clear, all stakeholders agree that dedicating more inspection resources to those plants that are not demonstrating effective and consistent control of risk is a sound concept. Resolve is the third party facilitator recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection. Everyone agrees that not all plants and all processes pose an equal risk to public health and that FSIS should have the ability to shift resources as needed to more proactively protect the public from foodborne illness from meat, poultry and egg products.

“While FSIS proposes to begin the implementation process in April, we fully intend to continue discussing and receiving input on the specific components of risk-based inspection in an effort to continue improving the value of our data and how it is applied. However, FSIS believes that the data today is sound, comprehensive and reliable and we do not intend to let the desire for perfection impede the potential to make real and immediate improvements when public health is at stake. As I have said previously, risk-based inspection at processing establishments is about improving the effectiveness of inspection and protecting public health. It will not reduce the number of inspectors nor will it save any money.

“In the coming months, we intend to conduct a second expert elicitation to further refine our ranking of products. Among the changes in the second elicitation will be asking experts, including those with public health expertise, to consider the severity of potential illness in determining a product’s risk, which was suggested by various groups.

“We also plan technical briefings to discuss the use of production volume, industry data, non-compliance records, expert elicitations and foodborne disease attribution data as part of a more robust risk-based inspection system.

“Risk-based inspection has benefited from the free exchange of ideas and constructive suggestions presented to us by our stakeholders. These valuable insights will continually be sought in many ways as the process of implementing risk-based inspection in processing establishments continues.”