

# Small Plant NEWS

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## Small Plant NEWS

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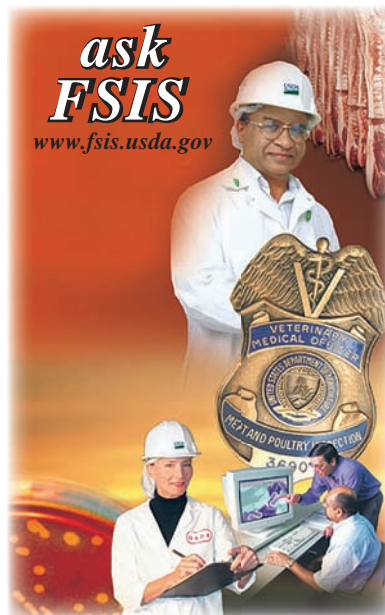
## askFSIS Available Online 24 Hours a Day to Answer Technical and Policy Questions

By Bridgette Keefe

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) now offers a user-friendly tool to assist small plant owners and operators with their questions 24 hours a day. The vehicle is *askFSIS*, a new Web-based feature designed to help answer technical- and policy-related questions on inspection and public health regulations.

The new interactive feature permits more in-depth answers to technical issues than the standard list of "frequently asked questions" currently available through FSIS' Web site. The *askFSIS* feature allows small and very small plant personnel to get information on diverse topics such as exporting, labeling and inspection-related policies, programs and procedures. Users can also register to be immediately notified by e-mail when answers are updated.

*askFSIS* is designed to serve meat, poultry and processed egg products establishments that fall under Federal and state inspection. Its concept is similar to FSIS' virtual representative, *Ask Karen (AskKaren.gov)*, which serves consumers who have questions about safe food handling and the



prevention of food-borne illness 24 hours a day as well.

"This new Web-based tool will be especially helpful to owners and operators of small and very small plants and is another example of how FSIS is finding new and innovative ways to meet the needs of its customers," said USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety

Dr. Richard A. Raymond.

To access *askFSIS*, simply go to FSIS' Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov) and select "Help" from the global navigation buttons at the top of the main page. The *askFSIS* screen includes four tabs: "Answers," "My Questions," "Login," and "Help." The "Answers" tab is the starting point for keyword searches, and it will also display a real-time list of the most popular topics. The "My Questions" and "Login" tabs are used to create an account for those visitors who wish to submit questions, check the status of a request or revisit previously saved information. First-time visitors are encouraged to select the "Help" tab for tips on getting started.

For assistance or details concerning *askFSIS*, send an e-mail to [askFSIS@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:askFSIS@fsis.usda.gov).

# Food Safety Resources

By Mary Gioglio

A video on *HACCP: The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System* is one of the most frequently requested items FSIS makes available to small and very small plants. This video is an excellent HACCP primer. It provides thorough explanations of the seven principles of HACCP, which include:

- Principle 1 – Conduct a Hazard Analysis
- Principle 2 – Identify Critical Control Points
- Principle 3 – Establish a Critical Limit for Each Critical Control Point
- Principle 4 – Establish Monitoring Procedures
- Principle 5 – Establish Corrective Actions
- Principle 6 – Establish Recordkeeping Procedures
- Principle 7 – Establish Verification Procedures

This handy resource is free of charge. If you would like to obtain a copy, then use the order form at



[www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/HACCP\\_Resources\\_Order\\_Form/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/HACCP_Resources_Order_Form/index.asp) and fax it to (202) 690-6519. You can also fill out an online version of the form and send it to [FoodSafetyResources@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:FoodSafetyResources@fsis.usda.gov) or simply call (202) 690-6520 to place your order.

## Education Sessions Bring Small Plant Personnel and Inspectors Together

By Karlease Kelly

Small plant owners and operators are invited to participate in FSIS' Regulatory Education Sessions that bring industry and inspection personnel together to promote a uniform understanding of Agency regulations. These sessions are an important component of FSIS' comprehensive effort to improve outreach to small and very small plants.

These educational sessions cover a diverse array of subjects relevant to both industry and government personnel. These include a thorough overview of the regulations and a focus on topics such as the regulatory requirements of Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures, the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System, and Rules of Practice and Sanitation Performance Standards. There is also a session that covers guidelines on food defense plans.

Dr. Richard A. Raymond, Under Secretary for Food Safety, stated, "I am committed to changing the way FSIS does outreach and these sessions show that we are making progress."

Having industry representatives and inspectors in the room together helps to develop a common understanding and gets everyone on the same page. The average session has an attendance of about 35 participants of which typically 33 percent are FSIS and state inspectors and 67 percent are small and very small plant representatives.

FSIS regional trainers lead and provide the instructions at these seminars. "In my former job as an enforcement investigations and analysis officer, I have seen the small and very small plants' need for assistance firsthand," said FSIS regional trainer Carma Pauli. "I'm thrilled to be a part of a group that has such diverse expertise and depth of knowledge in food safety. This group of professional trainers is perfectly positioned to provide assistance and resources to small and very small plants in outreach sessions."

Dr. Naima Amirian, another regional trainer, added, "The most rewarding experience came outside of the meeting room. While catching a quick bite to eat after the meeting, a participant walked over to my table. He said he had worked all day at his plant and then had driven four hours

to get to our session. He looked me in the eye and sincerely thanked me for my time and said that every minute of the drive here and the drive home was worth it."

The sessions are offered during evenings and on weekends when it is most convenient for small plant owners and operators to attend. The sessions are one to two hours in length and are announced through the *FSIS Constituent Update*. The dates, times and locations for the sessions are also posted in the meetings section of FSIS' Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov/News\\_&\\_Events/Outreach\\_Sessions\\_SVS\\_Plants/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Outreach_Sessions_SVS_Plants/index.asp). If you are unable to access this Web site, then feel free to call (202) 690-6520 for assistance.

Copies of resource materials, such as PowerPoints and regulations, are provided on CD-ROM to participants. Other Agency resources for small and very small plants, such as sample start-up materials, will be available at a resource table. FSIS encourages all participants to complete evaluation forms and provide feedback to help improve future seminars. Keep checking the Web site for a Regulatory Education Session coming near you.

## Updated Food Safety Resources Brochure Now Available

By Keith Payne

FSIS has updated its brochure on food safety resources for small and very small plants. The new full-color brochure lists some helpful resources that have been revised and others that are totally new.

The workbooks that have been revised in 2007 are Ohio State University's *HACCP Plant Implementation and Records Management* and *Supporting Documentation Materials for HACCP Decisions*.

The new resources include the following six DVDs which were produced in cooperation with FSIS:

- *Specified Risk Materials – Identification, Removal and Disposal* produced by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets;
- *Meeting the Requirements for Federal or State Meat Inspections: SSOP and HACCP Basics* produced by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture;
- *Ethnic Foods: Meeting the Challenge* produced by the Georgia Food Safety Task Force;
- *Celebrating Safe Foods at Pow Wows* produced by Montana State University;
- *Retail Meat and Poultry Training Modules* produced by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture; and
- *Security in a Foodservice Operation* produced by South Dakota State University.

All these materials, as well as the others listed on the Food Safety Resources brochure, are free. To obtain a copy of the brochure or order any of the items listed above, call (202) 690-6520. The updated brochure and order form are also available online at [www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/HACCP\\_Resources\\_Brochure/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/HACCP_Resources_Brochure/index.asp).

## Briefs By Sheila Johnson

### Public Meetings

FSIS co-hosted a public meeting in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on the public health significance of non-O157:H7 Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) on October 17, 2007, in Arlington, Va. To obtain more information about upcoming meetings, visit the Agency's Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov) or call (202) 690-6520.

### Salmonella Progress Reports

FSIS provides results from individual *Salmonella* verification sample tests that Agency inspection personnel regularly conducts at establishments to those plants that request the results. The quarterly report of FSIS testing is available on FSIS' Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Microbiology/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Microbiology/index.asp).

### Podcasts

As mentioned in the previous issue of *Small Plant News*, FSIS soon will launch a new medium for you to get information while on the go, at work or at home. Podcast content will cover resources for small plants, labeling, exporting and much more.

### be FoodSafe: The FSIS Magazine

One year ago, FSIS launched a new and innovative publication, titled *be FoodSafe: The FSIS Magazine*, to coincide with the 100-year anniversary of the Federal Meat Inspection Act. This quarterly, full-color magazine provides cutting-edge coverage of food safety behavior trends, emerging science and research, inspection issues and education programs for industry, consumers, educators and others who have an interest in food safety. *Small Plant News* subscribers may obtain the complimentary inaugural issue of the magazine by sending a request to [SmallPlantNews@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:SmallPlantNews@fsis.usda.gov) or calling (202) 690-6520.

### Feedback Requested

We hope you are enjoying the newsletter designed especially for you. This is your newsletter—mailed free of charge every month. It is also posted to our Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov). If you prefer to receive it electronically, then visit our Web site today and take advantage of this great opportunity. We look forward to hearing from you on how we can provide you the information and resources you need. Send your comments to [SmallPlantNews@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:SmallPlantNews@fsis.usda.gov) or call (202) 690-6520.



## Food Safety Information for Small and Very Small Plants

For more information, call (202) 690-6520 or send requests to: Small and Very Small Plant Outreach, USDA/FSIS, Aerospace Bldg., 3rd Floor/Room 405, 14th and Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, DC 20250.

To obtain free copies of the HACCP models or other resource materials, write to the above address or FAX requests to (202) 690-6519. HACCP models and most other resource materials are available on FSIS' Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov).

## Web Portal Offers Big Benefits for Small Plants

By Kathleen Barrett

A comprehensive new Web portal from the U.S. Department of Agriculture is now available to help small plant owners and operators make better management decisions by providing access to predictive models and food microbiology information.

The Predictive Microbiology Information Portal (PMIP), a one-stop resource designed to answer food safety questions and help food processors make wise food production decisions, was developed through a collaboration between USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), FSIS, Rutgers University and Decision Analysis Risk Consultants, Inc., in Canada.

"This partnership builds on our extensive efforts to provide more resources and better tools to the small and very small plants so they can enhance the safety of their products," said FSIS Administrator Al Almanza.

The portal, located on ARS' Web site at [www.ars.usda.gov/naa/errc/mfsru/portal](http://www.ars.usda.gov/naa/errc/mfsru/portal), is geared toward food processing establishments with 500 or fewer employees, but the information it contains can benefit companies of all sizes. FSIS provides a link to the portal to facilitate access by the meat and poultry industry, especially small and very small plants. Currently, the portal offers information on research, regulations and resources related to *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods. In the coming months, it will be expanded to include other pathogen and food combinations. The portal also includes a tutorial section with instructions on using and interpreting predictive models.

As a bonus, small plant owners and operators can also use this searchable database to find information that could be used to develop plans for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point systems.

For more information about the Predictive Microbiology Information Portal, call FSIS' Strategic Initiatives, Partnerships and Outreach office at (202) 690-6520 or send an email to [SmallPlantNews@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:SmallPlantNews@fsis.usda.gov).

## Editorial

By Daniel P. Puzo

## A New Form of Communication



At FSIS, we continually look for ways to expand our outreach efforts to the many diverse audiences we serve. As a small plant owner or operator, you have many options to choose from in getting Agency information—whether it is from workshops, training sessions, courses, the Web site or this newsletter.

And, soon there will be a new way—through podcasts. This is our latest effort at enhancing our outreach to you. Podcasting is a method of publishing audio and video files to the Internet, allowing you to subscribe and receive any new files automatically and free of charge. Soon you will be able to listen to, or in some cases, watch these files whenever and wherever you please—whether you're at work, at home or on the go.

We're excited about podcasting and see this as an expanding means of communication that has far-reaching potential for you. Our goal is to provide you with greater flexibility in obtaining articulate and interesting information in a user-friendly format.

Much like our approach with *Small Plant News*, we're looking at ways to help achieve our common goal of ensuring food safety and preventing foodborne illness. We hope the information, format and flexibility offered through podcasts will do just that.

Many of our first published podcasts will be targeted to you—the small plant owner and operator. Your contributions to food safety and public health protection are very important to consumers in the United States and around the world. We want to make sure you have what you need to perform your job, and we'll be providing podcasts that are specifically targeted to your needs.

Feel free to share your feedback with us by sending an email to [podcast@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:podcast@fsis.usda.gov) or reach us directly in the Strategic Initiatives, Partnerships and Outreach office at (202) 690-6520.

As with everything we do here at FSIS, we value transparency and openness with you, and this podcasting venture is no different. We value your input, opinions and suggestions for what content will serve you best.

## Commonly Asked Question & Answer



Can I have my critical control point for zero tolerance in the cooler?



Yes, an establishment can designate the location of its CCP for zero tolerance. However, FSIS will conduct the establishment's verification activity at the final rail as outlined in FSIS Directive 6420.2, Verification of Procedures for Controlling Fecal Material, Ingesta and Milk in Slaughter Operations.

Zero tolerance in livestock carcasses is verified, documented and enforced at or immediately after the final rail.