



FSIS Constituent Update

Volume 6, Issue 14

April 22, 2005

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Security

FSIS Budget Request Presented to Senate Subcommittee

Acting Under Secretary Dr. Merle Pierson testified before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies last week in support of the President's budget request of \$849.7 million for fiscal year 2006 for FSIS.

Dr. Pierson was joined by Mr. Eric Bost, Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services and Mr. William Hawks, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. The three panelists each provided a brief opening statement and answered questions from members of the subcommittee concerning the budget for each mission area.

During his testimony Pierson cited a recent announcement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) report that showed a continued decline in foodborne pathogen-related illnesses. Pierson also commented on the decline in recalls in the past year. "We have seen a break in the annual cycle of multi-million pound recalls. Through the use of risk assessments, working with partners along the farm-to-table continuum, and basing our policies on sound science, we have been able to break this vicious cycle," Pierson said in his testimony.

Pierson also discussed food security. Over the past several years FSIS has strengthened its focus on both intentional and unintentional contamination by conducting vulnerability assessments. Specifically for food security, vulnerability assessments have provided a solid foundation from which FSIS has launched many important initiatives to safeguard the food supply from any intentional threats.

To read the testimony in its entirety visit:
www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/testimonies/

To read the CDC report visit: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/

Export Requirement Updates

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

- Mexico
- People's Republic of China
- Switzerland

Complete information is available online at:
www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/



FSIS Invites Proposals for 2005 Cooperative Agreements

FSIS announced that it is accepting proposals for cooperative agreement projects that will be funded in fiscal year 2005. FSIS continuously seeks new ideas and strategies to reduce the incidence of foodborne illnesses associated with meat, poultry and egg products.

FSIS strengthens its public health capabilities and support for food safety innovation through the funding of cooperative agreements in five specific areas:

- Food animal production, transportation and marketing;
- Small and very small inspected meat, poultry, or egg product establishments.
- Retail stores, food service establishments and other inspection-exempt enterprises subject to state, local, or tribal regulations that process or otherwise handle meat, poultry, and egg products;
- Applications of new technologies that will permit small and very small meat, poultry, and egg product establishments to produce safer products;
- Enhancement of laboratory testing capability of the Food Emergency Response Network for microbiological threat agents.

Academic institutions, state, local and tribal government agencies and non-profit organizations are invited to submit brief proposals (one to two pages) for any of the areas described. These proposals will be reviewed by FSIS. If reviewers find that the proposals would further the food safety and public health goals of FSIS, are applicable nationwide to targeted audiences, can be reproduced and disseminated, and reflect new materials or approaches, submitters will be invited to further develop the proposals for consideration as cooperative agreements with FSIS, as funding is available.

All proposals must be submitted by June 20, 2005. For further information on cooperative agreements and the details of proposals visit:

www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/2005_Notices_Index/

Risk Assessments Public Comment Period has been Extended

FSIS held a public meeting in March to present and discuss two draft risk assessments on *Salmonella* in ready-to-eat (RTE) meat and poultry products and *Clostridium perfringens* in both RTE and heat-treated, but not RTE, products.

The comment period has been extended to July 11, 2005. The notice of proposed rulemaking [66 FR 12589], draft risk assessments and a list of current comments are available at: www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations/2005_Notices_Index/

THIS WEEK'S HOT WEB LINKS

FSIS Newsletters

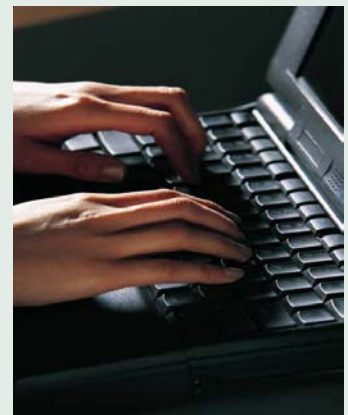
[www.fsis.usda.gov/
News_&_Events/
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FSIS Regulations and Policies

[www.fsis.usda.gov/
Regulations_&_Policies/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/)

FSIS Communications to Congress

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Communications_to_Congress/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Communications_to_Congress/)



FSIS Food Security Workshop Dates Confirmed

FSIS will hold a series of food security workshops to provide additional guidance about the development and implementation of food security plans for meat, poultry and egg processing facilities, import establishments and identification warehouses. There are currently six workshops scheduled from May through July.

The workshops will assist companies with food security awareness and in the development of their food security plans. Tools such as the recently announced Model Food Security Plans, FSIS Industry Self-Assessment Checklist for Food Security and FSIS *Directive 5420.1, Revision 1* (Food Security Verification Procedures) will be addressed in these meetings.

Food Security Workshop Schedule

- May 14 - Dallas, Texas
- May 21 - Oakland, Calif.
- June 4, 2005 Chicago, Ill.
- June 11, 2005 - Savannah, Ga.
- June 25, 2005 - Newark N.J.
- July 9, 2005 - Philadelphia, Pa.

The first workshop will be held on May 14 at the Westin Park Central Hotel, 12720 Merit Drive, Dallas, Texas. You may reach the hotel at (972) 385-3000. Registration is available online at: www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Registration_051405.

For further registration information, contact Diane Jones of the FSIS Strategic Initiatives, Partnerships and Outreach Staff at (202) 720-9692. If a sign language interpreter or other special accommodations are required, please contact Ms. Jones no later than one week before the workshop of interest.

For details on the workshops' agenda, curriculum, and presenters, contact Mary Cutshall, director, Strategic Initiatives, Partnerships and Outreach Staff, Office of Public Affairs, Education and Outreach at (202) 690-6520.

For more information on the meetings visit: www.fsis.usda.gov/News/Meetings_&_Events/.



The USDA Food Safety Mobile: *Taking Food Safety Education on the Road*

The USDA Food Safety Mobile travels continuously throughout the United States to educate consumers about the risks associated with mishandling food and steps they can take to reduce their risk of foodborne illness. The food safety mobile's next dates and locations are as follows:

April 28, 2005
Elementary School
(Las Cruces, N.M.)

April 29, 2005
Elementary School
(Las Cruces, N.M.)

April 30, 2005
11th Annual
Community Earth at
Alameda Park Zoo
(Alamogordo, N.M.)

FSIS Issues Public Health Alert for the Midwest

On April 20, 2005, FSIS issued a public health alert to inform consumers that several cases of *Salmonella* infections in Midwestern states have been linked to stuffed and breaded, frozen chicken entrees. FSIS is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and officials in Michigan and Minnesota to identify the source of the infections and to ascertain whether the chicken products are the sole source of the illnesses.

FSIS also reminded consumers to ensure that frozen meat and poultry products are fully cooked before they are consumed. Using a food thermometer is the only sure way of knowing if your food has reached a high enough temperature to destroy foodborne bacteria.

For more information visit:

www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/NR_042005_01/

FSIS Announces Dollar Limitations for Retail Store Operations Exemptions

FSIS announced calendar year 2005 dollar limitations for retail stores that sell meat and poultry products and qualify for an exemption from federal inspection.

Retail operations are not subject to inspection unless sales to hotels, restaurants and similar institutions exceed 25 percent of total sales of the retail operation or exceed the calendar year dollar limitation.

In accordance with FSIS' regulations, the dollar limitations for meat and meat food products will be increased to \$54,500 in 2005 from \$53,600 last year. For poultry products, the dollar limitation will increase to \$45,800 in 2005 from \$43,600. These adjustments are based on changes in the Consumer Price Index.

More details pertaining to the increase of dollar limitations are available at:

www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations/2005_Notices_Index.

To submit comments or questions, contact the editor, Crystal Straughn at: fsisupdate@fsis.usda.gov (202) 720-9113

Featured Office of the Week

Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) Division

The FSIS FERN Division works with the Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to expand and manage an existing group of federal, state, and local laboratories with the capability to detect and identify biological, chemical and radiological agents in food.

Personnel at participating FERN laboratories will analyze surveillance samples, validate new methods used to detect threat agents in food products and meet a list of guidelines to ensure the security and safety of their facilities and employees. The FERN Division coordinates many of these activities as well as recruiting new public laboratories to participate in the network.

For more information on FERN visit:

www.fsis.usda.gov/About_FSIS/OPHS/