

RISK-BASED INSPECTION IN PROCESSING PLANTS

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service is working in cooperation with its food safety partners to create a more robust risk-based inspection system (RBI). This system would initially be for regulated meat and poultry processing facilities, with later intentions of focusing on slaughter and egg products facilities.

Our goal is to focus more of FSIS' time and valuable resources on prevention, to enable us to decrease time spent on responding to adverse situations. We want a common sense public health strategy that best serves the American consumer by preventing human illness.

A more robust risk-based inspection system for meat and poultry processing is not about saving money or decreasing FSIS' inspection force. We will still conduct daily inspection in every processing plant. Instead, it's about spending work hours in a smarter way with more time in the plants that need assistance and expertise to better protect the public's health.

That is what this initiative is all about – lowering the chance that a consumer will contract a foodborne illness by reducing the prevalence of dangerous pathogens in the meat and poultry supply.

Under optimal RBI, the type and intensity of inspection activity at each establishment would be determined by an analytical process that permits inspectors to anticipate problems and focus their efforts on those processes and establishments most likely to have control issues and pose a public health risk.

In contrast, traditional inspection may sometimes divert finite food safety resources away from what data shows should be higher-priority areas. FSIS does not need any additional statutory authority in order to move toward a more robust risk-based inspection system in processing.

FSIS has been and will continue to be open and transparent throughout this important process. Numerous steps have been taken to ensure that an ongoing dialogue occurs in an open and transparent manner with USDA employees, the industry, and consumer organizations on how a more robust risk-based system can best be developed. This partnership will continue as we begin to look toward implementing RBI.