



# FSIS Constituent Update

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Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Security

## FSIS Establishes Food Emergency Response Network Division

FSIS has established a new division that will play a major role in developing the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN), an integrated network of laboratories across America that can quickly respond to food-related emergencies.

The FSIS FERN Division will work with the Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to expand and manage an existing group of more than 90 federal, state, and local laboratories with the capability to detect and identify biological, chemical and radiological agents in food. The FERN Division has been established under the FSIS Office of Public Health Science and will be co-located with the FSIS Eastern Laboratory in Athens, Ga.

"Developing a network of laboratories that can communicate effectively and work together applying consistent laboratory practices will increase our ability to prevent and respond to possible attacks or emergencies involving food," said Acting Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Merle Pierson. "FERN not only allows us to strengthen our national laboratory system, it also improves cooperation and communication between public health officials at the national, state and local levels," Dr. Pierson said.

Personnel at participating FERN laboratories 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 will coordinate many of these activities as well as recruit new public laboratories to participate in the network.

The establishment of the FERN Division is the latest in a broad series of actions that FSIS has taken to protect consumers from deliberate contamination of meat, poultry and egg products.

For more information visit: [www.fsis.usda.gov/Security/Security\\_Guidelines/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Security/Security_Guidelines/)

## Export Requirement Updates

The [Library of Export Requirements](#) has been updated to reflect changes in export requirements for the following:

**European Union**  
**Mexico**  
**Qatar**  
**Sri Lanka**

Complete information is available online at:

[www.fsis.usda.gov/  
Regulations\\_&\\_Policies/  
Export\\_Information/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/)



## Public Meeting to Discuss Proposals for the Task Force on Foods Derived Through Biotechnology

The Office of the Under Secretary for Food Safety, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services will hold a public meeting to provide information and receive comments on new work and priorities for the Codex Alimentarius Commission *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology. The Task Force was established at the 27th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission that met in Geneva on June 28 – July 3, 2004.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology will develop standards, guidelines and recommendations for foods derived from modern biotechnology. These are based on scientific evidence and risk analysis relevant to the health of consumers and the promotion of fair practices in the food trade.

For more information about the public meeting, contact Paulo Almeida, U.S. Codex Office, FSIS, at (202) 690-4042 or by e-mail at [paulo.almeida@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:paulo.almeida@fsis.usda.gov).

## Previously Collected *E. Coli* and *Salmonella* Data Now Available

Data from older baseline studies conducted after the implementation of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System (HACCP), has recently been added to FSIS' Web site. This data, while generated several years ago, (1997-2000) may be helpful to plants in comparing their testing results with national levels. These studies, conducted after HACCP began, were not used to establish performance standards under HACCP.

The *Salmonella* baseline data are for cattle, swine, turkeys and geese. The generic *E. coli* data are for cattle, swine, geese, young chickens and turkeys.

The Pathogen Reduction HACCP System final rule set pathogen reduction performance standards for *Salmonella* for seven categories of products and required all establishments slaughtering cattle, pigs, chickens or turkeys to test for generic *E. coli* at a production volume frequency.

The baseline studies are available at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Baseline\\_Data/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Baseline_Data/)

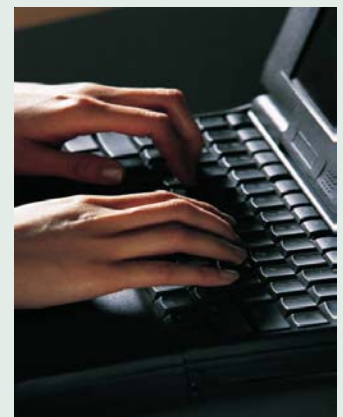
## THIS WEEK'S HOT WEB LINKS

### FSIS Production and Inspection Fact Sheets

[www.fsis.usda.gov/fact\\_sheets/Production\\_&\\_Inspection\\_Fact\\_Sheets/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/fact_sheets/Production_&_Inspection_Fact_Sheets/)

### Speeches and Presentations

[www.fsis.usda.gov/News\\_&\\_Events/2004\\_Speeches/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/2004_Speeches/)



## Public Meeting to Address Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling

On March 15, 2005, the Office of the Under Secretary for Food Safety, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will hold a public meeting to provide information and receive comments on agenda items that will be discussed at the 26th Session of the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling in Budapest, Hungary, April 4 - 8, 2005. The public meeting will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., in room 1A002 of the Harvey W. Wiley Federal Building, 5100 Paint Branch Parkway, College Park, Md.

For more information or to arrange a sign language interpreter, contact Dr. Gregory Diachenko, Director, Division of Chemistry Research and Environmental Review, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, FDA, Harvey W. Wiley Federal Building, 5100 Paint Branch Parkway, College Park, Md., 20740, at (301) 436-1898. Agenda items for the meeting can be found at: [www.codexalimentarius.net/current.jsp](http://www.codexalimentarius.net/current.jsp).

## Reminder: New Food Security Checklist for Industry is Now Available

FSIS has made available an industry self-assessment checklist for food security. The voluntary "Industry Self-Assessment Checklist for Food Security," provides plants with a constructive way to evaluate their security plans to prevent intentional contamination of their products, helping to ensure safe and secure food and protection of public health. Instructions on how to use the checklist are available at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/Food\\_Security\\_&\\_Emergency\\_Preparedness/Security\\_Guidelines/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Security_&_Emergency_Preparedness/Security_Guidelines/).

This self assessment is based primarily on *the Food Security Guidelines for Food Processors*, published by FSIS in 2002 and is available at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/Food\\_Security\\_&\\_Emergency\\_Preparedness/Security\\_Guidelines/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Security_&_Emergency_Preparedness/Security_Guidelines/)

*The Constituent Update will not publish the week of February 21 due to the scheduled federal holiday.*

**To submit comments or questions, contact the editor at:**

[fsisupdate@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:fsisupdate@fsis.usda.gov) (202) 720-9113



## 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:

**March 19, 2005**

Albertson's Grocery Store  
(St. George, UT)

**April 8-10, 2005**

Clark County Fair & Rodeo  
(Logandale, Nev.)