

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE

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NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
MEAT AND POULTRY INSPECTION

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May 23, 2006
8:30 a.m.

USDA South Building Cafeteria
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C.

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(8:30 a.m.)

MR. TYNAN: Good morning. It's a little past 8:30. So we're behind time already, and we haven't even started. So I apologize for that. But I want to welcome you to our Spring 2006 Meeting of the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection. I know I appreciate all of you coming from the Committee, taking time out of your busy work schedules to participate in our meeting. It's an important event for us, and we have an ambitious agenda for today's meeting tomorrow's as well.

So we have an ambitious agenda, and it will focus again on risk based inspection as we did in our November meeting, and since we're -- we have so much to do today, I want to be the first to introduce our first speaker, Dr. Richard Raymond, our Undersecretary for Food Safety, who will make a few welcoming remarks.

DR. RAYMOND: Thanks, Bob. Good morning. I'm happy to welcome you all back to Washington, D.C. and for those of you who live here, I just welcome you

1 to the South Building Auditorium.

2 Your work here today and tomorrow is going
3 to be very critical to our efforts to move towards a
4 more robust Risk-Based Inspection System as you know
5 and to insure -- help insure that all federally
6 inspected establishments have the resources that they
7 need to bring HACCP plans into the 21st Century.

8 Last November, I challenged this Committee
9 to identify the ideal working group to assist us as we
10 approach the next steps needed to enhance our risk-
11 based system. You answered that challenge. I had two
12 requests in November. One, that the working group
13 would have to help insure that the process we're
14 beginning will be as transparent and as inclusive as
15 possible. And, secondly, I wanted this committee to
16 focus less on what has worked in the past. Instead, I
17 asked you to focus on what would work in the future
18 for employees, consumers and industry through this
19 important process.

20 My monitor, when it comes to consumer
21 groups, industry reps and our employees, is that
22 everyone must move forward together.

1 I've tried to beat this point home in talks
2 using a three-legged stool. Well, I use the metaphor,
3 a three-legged stool. I haven't really tried to bet
4 it with the stool itself but all three legs must help
5 support this platform as we move forward.

6 Your final recommendations have exceeded my
7 expectations. The time, thought and effort that you
8 put into that final report at the last meeting and in
9 the interim, for those of you who continue to work
10 with us, has been very easy to recognize the quality.
11 I appreciate that dedication, and I believe our
12 actions have demonstrated just how seriously we've
13 taken your recommendations. Knowing what this
14 committee is capable of, I'm here again asking for
15 your input on two critically important areas.

16 The first, we are asking for guidance on how
17 to most meaningfully measure, how well meat and
18 poultry processing establishments control the inherent
19 risks in their own operations. Everyone here knows
20 that I want to focus our time and valuable resources
21 on prevention rather than on response and recall.
22 Command and control is the old agency mantra. What we

1 are now after is the common sense of public strategy
2 to best serve the American consumer by prevent human
3 illnesses. That is why it is so important that we
4 begin to lay the foundation for a more robust Risk-
5 Based Inspection System for the 21st Century.

6 The key to this effort is an objective set
7 of results orientated criteria that will allow us to
8 better measure how well potential risks are being
9 controlled in FSIS inspected establishments. This is
10 not about increasing or decreasing the resources that
11 we dedicate to inspections. It's about how best to
12 currently -- to use currently available inspection
13 related data and resources to improve the
14 effectiveness of our hardworking inspection program
15 personnel. This will allow them to better protect
16 consumers.

17 Later today, you're going to be hearing our
18 preliminary ideas of what we want to measure as well
19 as how we might measure it. We're very interested in
20 hearing your own thoughts and ideas on this important
21 subject. We look forward to a lively discussion. It
22 is not finalized by any stretch of the imagination.

1 In addition to continue to host open forums
2 with our employees on these topics, we also are going
3 to follow up this Committee's meeting next week, on
4 Tuesday, with a joint meeting of consumers and
5 industry to hear their thoughts on this important
6 topic and our proposal. We've been meeting monthly
7 with industry and consumers since Barb and I took our
8 roles last summer. This will be the first time we've
9 met jointly with them on this topic.

10 And then, after that, a neutral third party,
11 as you recommended, will be the one tasked with
12 facilitating and soliciting input from all
13 stakeholders for a finished -- for a recommendation
14 for a finished product. You'll hear more about the
15 third party when Barbara gives her your comments.

16 I firmly believe and still believe and will
17 always believe, that an open and honest approach which
18 takes the time to address everyone's concerns is in
19 the best interest of all of our food safety partners.

20 The second thing we're going to ask you to
21 do these two days is provide us input on FSIS' efforts
22 to insure that every establishment that it affects or

1 is under State inspection is using a HASA plan that's
2 designed to meet the demands and challenges of the
3 21st Century.

4 Everyone here knows this marks the 100th
5 year anniversary of the Federal Meat Inspection Act.
6 That Act was a watershed event in the history of food
7 safety and public health in the United States. But
8 that Act was based on visual examination for visible
9 signs of diseases. The future demands that we be able
10 to focus on things which the human eyes cannot see,
11 the nose cannot smell or the fingers cannot feel.
12 That HACCP plan of every federally inspected
13 establishment must take this and other realities we
14 face in the 21st Century into account.

15 We do realize the small and very small
16 plants have unique needs when it comes to HACCP plans
17 and they do not have the resources that the large
18 plants do. That's why I've made it an absolute
19 priority for us to increase the communications between
20 FSIS and the small and very small plants so that we
21 can identify and respond to those typical needs faster
22 and more efficiently.

1 We began last summer by holding listening
2 sessions. We held three sessions in Montana,
3 California and Pennsylvania and have followed up with
4 two more since then. These sessions did help us
5 better understand what was causing the gaps between
6 plant performance and our expectations for them to
7 operate under HACCP.

8 In December, Barbara and I attended a two-
9 day brainstorming session hosted by the International
10 HACCP Alliance on the key needs of small and very
11 small plants. Some of you were there, and you know
12 that at that meeting, six key needs were identified
13 and an internal FSIS Task Force immediately formed to
14 pinpoint how the Agency could better meet these needs.

15 We're here today asking for your comments
16 and advice concerning the report that the Task Force
17 produced. It's called the FSIS Strategic
18 Implementation Plan for Strengthening Small and Very
19 Small Plant Outreach, and it represents a dramatic
20 shift in the approach of our outreach efforts and what
21 has been done in the past.

22 Our new approach will be focused on insuring

1 that small and very small plants can easily access
2 accurate and consistent answers to their questions
3 whether it has to do with HACCP compliance, food
4 defense or food safety.

5 More importantly, the plan details concrete
6 actions for FSIS to take in order to implement this
7 new mindset. We will also be providing more
8 educational resources and workshop opportunities for
9 the small and very small plants on a variety of
10 important subjects, concentrating on helping the plant
11 employee who wants to participate but has too many
12 demands on his or her time to be able to do that.

13 I know that it's often just not practical
14 for owners of small and very small plants to take the
15 time, to take a day off to go attend a workshop.
16 Sometimes one person taking a day off for a workshop
17 means one-third of the workforce is gone. That's why
18 we're dedicated to providing small and very small
19 plants with numerous options designed to make it
20 easier to receive this training than we have in the
21 past. These will include web tests, more night and
22 weekend workshops, as well as making sure that all of

1 our workshops are available on DVD and CD-ROM for
2 those who want to access them so they can actually
3 attend these courses at the time that they choose and
4 in the environment that they so choose.

5 We'll also be working with Dr. Gayle
6 Buchanan, the just recently confirmed Undersecretary
7 for Research, Education and Economics, on ways to
8 reenergize Extension programs and expand the reach of
9 our educational courses. In fact, I'll have to leave
10 this meeting for a little bit this morning to talk
11 with Dr. Buchanan about that very issue. He's very
12 interested in working with us and see Extension become
13 part of our course again.

14 This is important to use them because I
15 believe that education facilitates a greater
16 understanding and helps close the performance gap that
17 we're seeing in come of the implementation of the
18 HACCP plans in small and very small plants.

19 This hopefully will achieve the goal of
20 HACCP compliance without taking a lot of regulatory
21 and enforcement actions. I'm much happier with the
22 solution that calls for increased education rather

1 than increased regulations. However, we will do
2 whatever it takes to make sure that a robust HACCP
3 system is implemented and is maintained in each and
4 every plant that is producing meat or poultry products
5 for human consumption no matter how large or how small
6 that plant may be. We must have safe products no
7 matter what the size of the plants.

8 When we eat a hamburger in this cafeteria,
9 you don't know if it came from a small or very small
10 or very large plant. When you go to a barbecue that
11 someone's holding, you don't know where the meat or
12 the poultry product came from, what size of plant. We
13 must make sure they all have equally robust HACCP
14 plans and equally safe.

15 We also realize that implementation of
16 robust HACCP plans is not always just a matter of
17 education. Sometimes it's a simple matter of
18 economics. That's why we'll also be working with
19 Undersecretary Thomas Dorr for rural development to
20 distribute important information to small and very
21 small plants concerning the loans and grants that are
22 available. This is actually a little bit about rural

1 economic maintenance or rural economic development. A
2 lot of the NRs what we write address shortcomings in a
3 plant's physical environment and sometimes the money
4 is just not there to correct that physical environment
5 problem. But with low interest loans and with grants
6 that we can make available, those plants can come into
7 the 21st Century.

8 These are just a few examples of the new
9 approaches that we're going to be taking for small and
10 very small plant outreach and the concrete steps
11 outlined in the plan. You're going to hear a lot
12 about this from Karlease and Bobby later today, right
13 after lunch I believe.

14 But the biggest change is unwritten. It's
15 not in the plan. It's not in the six steps. And
16 that's a change of mindset at FSIS. This may be the
17 most difficult task that we have. Dr. Mann, who is my
18 Deputy Undersecretary for Food Safety is using an
19 analogy once in a while about when you go by a police
20 car, you often see the logo, we're here to protect and
21 serve. Well, FSIS is going to change our thoughts,
22 and we're going to be -- we are here to regulate and

1 we're also here to educate, and if some of our
2 employees can't make that mindset change, we'll have
3 to help them along the way, but we will create mindset
4 change of being helpers rather than just regulators.

5 As you learn more about this plan, don't
6 think of it as a culmination of our efforts to improve
7 outreach to small and very small plants. Please think
8 of it just as the beginning. This issue will remain
9 an important priority for the Office of Food Safety as
10 long as Dr. Mann and I are here.

11 Before I finish, I do want to thank the
12 Committee again for your valuable service. These are
13 very important issues. Your wealth of experience and
14 knowledge will be critical to insure the successful
15 outcome on these two projects. We know from past
16 experience that we can improve food safety and protect
17 public health by relying on sound plans and more
18 effectively mitigate risks. That's why we're asking
19 for your input on how we measure how well meat and
20 poultry processing establishments control those risks
21 in their operations.

22 We also know that we cannot move forward

1 unless all of our food safety partners, including
2 small and very small plants, consumers, employees,
3 industry, all work in cooperation. It's critical.
4 That's why we're dedicated to using resources to help
5 small and very small plants meet their unique needs.
6 We want to insure that we remain a strong and vibrant
7 partner as we move in through the next 100 years of
8 food safety. After all, the state of public health is
9 constantly evolving. We cannot afford the risk of
10 letting ourselves, our partners or our nation's food
11 safety system stagnate. Standing still in public
12 health is just a polite way of saying that we're
13 really moving backwards.

14 So I hope everyone has a successful,
15 productive meeting. I'll look forward to reviewing
16 your final report. I will be here as much as I can to
17 listen. I get more from listening than I do reading a
18 report. So I look forward to the exchange in
19 dialogue. Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. TYNAN: Thank you, Dr. Raymond. I'd
22 like to introduce our next speaker who has some

1 opening remarks, Dr. Barbara Masters, who is the
2 Administrator of the Food Safety and Inspection
3 Service. Dr. Masters.

4 DR. MASTERS: Thank you, Robert, and thank
5 you, Dr. Raymond.

6 On behalf of FSIS, I also want to welcome
7 everyone to this important meeting. I always enjoy
8 these meetings, and I appreciate everyone's
9 participation. This Committee's work and their
10 recommendations are certainly vital to our ongoing
11 efforts at FSIS. In particular, I want to thank the
12 committee for your hard work in recommending that we
13 use a third party facilitator to assist us in getting
14 input from all of our stakeholders.

15 I especially want to thank the Subcommittee
16 for your input as we develop a statement of work to
17 select our third party, and I'm please to report that
18 we have selected a third party company, Resolve,
19 Incorporated, to solicit input from our stakeholders.
20 We have some of our representatives from Resolve,
21 Incorporated in the audience today, and I'd like to
22 recognize those individuals, Cathy Grant and Brad

1 Spangler. Cathy and Brad, can you stand up please.
2 We certainly look forward to working with you and
3 welcome you today to listen to the dialogue and
4 tomorrow we also hope to be joined by Abby Dilly and
5 Paul Demorgan. So we look forward to working with
6 your company. So thank you for being here.

7 We have a great agenda for this two-day
8 meeting, and I want to point out that we're trying a
9 slightly different format from meetings in the past.
10 We're making some progress as we move forward on this
11 road in our journey towards a more robust Risk-Based
12 Inspection System, and again we're moving forward with
13 this meeting.

14 As Dr. Raymond discussed, two of our
15 presentations and the issues that you'll discuss,
16 relate to a more robust Risk-Based Inspection System.
17 The first, measuring establishment risk control for
18 risk-based inspections and our strategic
19 implementation plan from enhancing outreach to small
20 and very small plants. Both of these issues are
21 critical to the success of a more robust Risk-Based
22 Inspection System, and are issues that your

1 Subcommittee will deliberate on later this afternoon.

2 But in addition to these two issues, we have
3 two additional presentations that we want to actually
4 focus on related to our more robust Risk-Based
5 Inspection System.

6 One of these is our public health
7 communication infrastructure in a more robust risk-
8 based environment. We actually are asking the
9 Committee to provide us input on this presentation but
10 we're giving you until June 30th to provide us
11 comments. We're hoping that you'll take into account
12 some of the discussion and recommendations that
13 emanate from the discussion today and tomorrow. We
14 recognize that a reliable and integrated public health
15 communications infrastructure is a foundation for
16 protecting public health. We must get the right
17 information to the right people at the right time to
18 make the right decisions. Having the same data from
19 the border, the field and laboratory personnel at the
20 same time is essential so that everyone can connect
21 the dots and proactively respond to that data rather
22 than waiting to react after the problem has surfaced.

1 As we improve our public health
2 communication infrastructure, we need your input. For
3 example, we would like your input on the type of
4 public health data and information that will help us
5 make critical risk-based decisions. We would like to
6 know what experience others have had in using business
7 intelligence technology to better manage food safety
8 or food defense risk. Based on the input that we
9 receive from you, we anticipate we will bring this
10 topic back as an issue for future meetings for further
11 dialogue.

12 The other presentation that we're actually
13 going to spend the time to talk about from the podium
14 is our FSIS Employee Focus Groups. The purpose of
15 this presentation is to update you on how we're
16 involving our employees in our discussion on our more
17 robust Risk-Based Inspection System.

18 You may recall at our last meeting, that I
19 described the risk-based inspections as a major
20 structure built on a strong foundation with three
21 pillars providing support. The three pillars taken
22 together maintain the System's integrity. Those

1 three, industry, FSIS employees and our consumers. We
2 wanted to make sure that as we solicit input from our
3 stakeholders, that our employees were also well
4 represented. After all, they're certainly critical to
5 the success of our more robust Risk-Based Inspection
6 System.

7 We certainly heard your comments at the last
8 meeting and wanted to insure that we had Agency
9 employees involved in our discussions on a more robust
10 Risk-Based Inspection System. It's probably a good
11 time to mention that we actually have three employees
12 here today to listen to the discussion and also
13 tomorrow, and I'd like to introduce them and have them
14 stand up. First, we have Ms. Alfreda Dennis, who is
15 representing our National Joint Council of Food
16 Inspection Local. We have Mr. Martin Hickman,
17 representing our Association of Technical and
18 Supervisory Personnel, and we have Dr. Patricia
19 Bennett, representing our National Association of
20 Federal Veterinarians, and I certainly appreciate
21 their participation in the meeting, and they'll be
22 sitting in during the discussions and the breakout

1 groups this afternoon.

2 In closing, it is certainly important we
3 communicate openly and often with all of our food
4 safety stakeholders to gain input and support. So
5 again, I'd like the Committee to know how much we
6 appreciate your commitment, not only at these meetings
7 but again as we had conference calls from the time of
8 our last meeting up until this meeting. So we
9 appreciate your recommendations, and I want to thank
10 you in advance for your hard work. These two days are
11 always very action packed and very busy and very
12 fulfilling. So thank you very much for all the work I
13 know you're going to do, and I look forward to a
14 productive meeting. Thank you very much.

15 (Applause.)

16 MR. TYNAN: Thank you, Dr. Masters. There's
17 a couple of things -- I'm on the Agenda right now to
18 talk about the charge to the committee, and normally
19 at this point, I go through the rules of order that
20 have fondly become known as Robert's Rules, but I'm
21 not going to do that today. I think we've been
22 through it enough that, that everybody's probably

1 memorized it. I would refer you though to Tab 3 and
2 the Rules and Committee responsibilities, the
3 Subcommittee information, how we're structuring the
4 Subcommittees today is all included under that tab.

5 I would like to mention a couple of
6 logistical things. For those of you in the public
7 that have come in and represent our employee
8 organizations and Resolve, there should be a
9 registration book out on the table, outside of the
10 door, if you could register there, I would appreciate
11 it very much so that we can have an accurate record
12 for the transcriber as well in terms of making your
13 sure we get your names spelled correctly when we have
14 the transcript and so on.

15 If you intend to make a short presentation
16 during the public speaking portion which I think is at
17 2:00 this afternoon, I would be very grateful if you
18 would put your name down there as well. It'll make it
19 a little bit easier to recognize you and be aware of
20 who's speaking and perhaps how long we need to
21 dedicate to that portion.

22 What I would like to do though, at this

1 particular point, is briefly walk through the agenda
2 so we can talk a little bit about how we're going to
3 structure the meeting. As Dr. Masters mentioned, we
4 are changing the format just a little bit and after I
5 get through here, I'm going to turn it over to Janet
6 Stevens and Marcelo Olascoaga.

7 MR. OLASCOAGA: Olascoaga.

8 MR. TYNAN: I'm sorry, Marcelo. I struggle
9 with that a lot. A very talented guy but I can't
10 pronounce his name.

11 (Laughter.)

12 MR. TYNAN: And they're going to talk a
13 little bit about public health communications
14 infrastructure as Dr. Masters mentioned.

15 At 9:45, you're going to see my bright and
16 shiny face again and we're going to talk about the
17 focus group that Dr. Masters mentioned as well, and I
18 know this will be a disappointment to you, but at
19 10:15, we're going to have a break, and at 10:30,
20 we're going to start talking about some of the
21 briefing and issues papers that are included in your
22 book. These are sort of updates from previous

1 meetings. We're not going to spend anytime making
2 presentations as we will on the two previous topics.
3 So it will just be a matter of if you have questions,
4 we'll have people in the audience from the Agency that
5 can hopefully respond to the questions you have, and
6 if there is no one here that can do that, then we will
7 take the question and get you an answer after the
8 meeting.

9 So that will take us until probably around
10 11:00, at which time we'll introduce the first issue
11 and that will be Measuring Establishment Risk Control
12 for Risk-Based Inspection, and Mr. Don Anderson of our
13 Program Evaluation and Improvement Staff in OPEED, I
14 beg your pardon, OPEER, will be, will be here to make
15 that presentation.

16 We'll have a break for lunch and at 1:15,
17 we'll get back together to talk about the Strategic
18 Implementation Plan for Enhancing Outreach to Small
19 and Very Small Plants. And at 2:15, tentatively
20 assuming that we're running exactly on time, we'll
21 have the public comments and adjourn. And at that
22 particular point, we'll ask the Subcommittees to take

1 the issue papers and the questions that have been
2 posed to them, and the room numbers are there, and
3 we'll get you to those rooms since this building can
4 be a little complicated for those who are either new
5 to it or don't traverse the halls very often.

6 So that will take us through the end of the
7 day. So will the Subcommittees deliberate on the
8 questions and the issues during the afternoon, and
9 then as usual, on Wednesday morning, we'll start with
10 a quick recap. Dr. Masters will talk a little bit
11 about sort of reviewing what we did today, and then
12 we'll have the Subcommittee report outs, and that will
13 take us through we hope until about 11:15, we'll have
14 another public comment period, and then we will be
15 finished for the day. And I see a tent card is up
16 already. Dr. Masters.

17 DR. MASTERS: Robert, since we do have some
18 individuals, particularly our employers who are new to
19 the audience, I'm going to force you to go through
20 Robert's Rules of Order to make sure the public does
21 understand their ability to at least listen in on the
22 Subcommittees' deliberations and interact as much as

1 the Committee Chair allows them to listen in, et
2 cetera, to make sure they know all the public is
3 welcome to listen in on those Subcommittee
4 deliberations.

5 MR. TYNAN: And as I mentioned earlier, that
6 I was going to hold the Robert's Rules until the very
7 end before I spoke about them.

8 Robert's Rules under Number 3, the Rules of
9 Order, the Chair, which the FSIS Administrator is
10 going to be the meeting conductor. The Chair is going
11 to open the meeting and will be the person to
12 recognize those who want to speak. We're going to
13 pose some limits in terms of time. Obviously we have
14 a lot to cover. So we'll have to -- perhaps if you go
15 on too long, we'll have to say time out, and we'll
16 save you for the public presentation portion. A lot
17 of the time Dr. Masters, and I assume she's going to
18 do that again today, will delegate to Robert.

19 All questions, request to speak, will be
20 addressed to the Chair. People must be recognized by
21 the Chair before speaking. Normally, as we always do,
22 we ask you in order to make it an orderly process,

1 that we take the tent cards, stand them up and then we
2 can go around the room in an orderly fashion and make
3 sure that everybody has an opportunity to comment.

4 Presentations on the issue papers will be
5 followed by a short question and answer period so that
6 you can clarify any point that the speakers made. In
7 the interest of time, again we'll have to -- we may
8 have to limit the length of time people speak at that
9 particular portion.

10 Speeches or statements of opinion again
11 should be made during the Subcommittee discussions or
12 during the time set aside for public comments. The
13 Committee members and members of the public will be
14 recognized by the Chair during the public comment
15 periods of the meetings. So a request to speak may be
16 presented to the Chair in advance. So that's why I
17 ask you if you have some particular comments, separate
18 and apart from the discussions we have today, if you
19 have a little speech that you want to make or comments
20 that you want to get on the record, please sign up
21 outside, and we'll recognize you at 2:00 or 2:15.

22 Committee members are expected to attend the

1 plenary sessions of the meetings and the Subcommittee
2 meetings to which they are assigned. Committee
3 members who do not attend the presentation of the
4 issue will participate basically in a Subcommittee
5 meeting, are going to be restricted in terms of their
6 participation in the plenary session. That's simply in
7 fairness to those folks on the Subcommittee who took
8 the time to develop the recommendations. It would
9 seem a little unfair to have somebody kind of come in
10 the following morning and not really have deliberated
11 or contributed to the development of the report.

12 The Subcommittee Chair is designated by the
13 Chair, and as I mentioned, that's in Tab 3 of who the
14 Chair and the Subcommittee members are, and the Chair
15 is allowed wide latitude to control the Subcommittee
16 session. Members of the public may attend those
17 sessions. Employee organization people and the folks
18 from Resolve may attend as well, and it will be at the
19 discretion of the chair how much access to the
20 discussion they want to permit. And again, we will
21 allow wide latitude in terms of doing that.

22 And then as always, the Rules of Order are

1 subject to review at each of our Committee meetings,
2 and if there are some changes that anyone would like
3 to make, we can entertain that at -- whenever you'd
4 like.

5 So are there any questions regarding the
6 Rules of Order? I see somebody in the back. Were
7 you -- okay. Just an animated individual. Are there
8 any other comments or questions?

9 Okay. Let's get into the substance then of
10 the discussion. It looks like we're making a change
11 in the -- as moderator of these meetings, you have to
12 be very flexible.

13 Does anyone have any questions or comments
14 at this particular point in our meeting?

15 Okay. We'll wait just a moment until we get
16 our screen set. Thank you. Can everyone see that in
17 the back? I know it's a little bit lower but it seems
18 to be a little bit clearer in terms of seeing it on
19 the screen as opposed to on the white background that
20 we had. So I apologize. I think, Janet, you had
21 PowerPoint handouts -- no. Okay. Okay.

22 All right. I'm going to turn it over to

1 Janet Stevens and Marcelo, Marcelo O, to talk a little
2 bit about the infrastructure.

3 MS. STEVENS: It's my dream to be on
4 American Idol. I just wanted to hold the microphone.

5 Well, good morning, everyone. Thank you for
6 allowing us to budge into your meeting a little bit
7 this morning. Again, we'll be talking about working
8 together to protect public health, what that means to
9 the public health communications infrastructure.

10 First, I want to remind everyone of the FSIS
11 vision, which is protecting public health for food
12 safety and food defense. Really what does this vision
13 mean for the Agency data and communications systems?

14 First of all, it means giving control of the
15 data and the information, which means controlling the
16 access. Why it's important is because we need to
17 create a single source of the data and of the
18 information because if that single source is not
19 traceable, then the data is not reliable.

20 We also need to provide our stakeholders
21 with the data and information that they need to
22 protect public health, and as Barb Masters put it so

1 well this morning, we need to get the right
2 information to the right people at the right time to
3 enable to them to make the right decisions to protect
4 public health.

5 We also need to insure that the date and
6 information are available when needed, because we may
7 have the right information, but if we don't get it to
8 our stakeholders in order for them to make that right
9 decision at the right time, that window has passed.

10 We also need to better target our Agency
11 resources to manage the data and the information to
12 support this more robust risk-based system. The way
13 we want to do this is to have a more efficient and
14 effective management of strategic alliances with you
15 folks. We also want to best target our resources to
16 protect a more customer driven risk-based public
17 health communications infrastructure.

18 I think this pretty much goes without saying
19 but we need to make sure that the data is secure and
20 is accessible only to the staff and to the
21 stakeholders who should have access to it.

22 And this is mostly our focus for today which

1 is where we want to be able to use leading business
2 intelligence technology to allow for more predictive
3 analysis because, otherwise, what we're doing is we're
4 looking at the past and we can look at the past in
5 real time, but if we're not using that data to be
6 predictive so that we can be less reactive and more
7 proactive, this will enable us to prevent and mitigate
8 risk.

9 One of the ways we're looking to do this,
10 and I'll get into this a little bit later, is
11 something called Assurance Net, and what this tool
12 will do is allow us first of all to look at data in
13 near real time in a more visual way. The way we're
14 looking to do this right now is through more of a
15 dashboard system, just like being in your car, you
16 need all those monitors to know your speed, your oil,
17 the temperature. We need that instant feedback in a
18 more easy to see way instead of trying to look at all
19 of the data and the numbers. We need it to assemble
20 together into a dashboard system to make quicker and
21 better decisions.

22 We also need to look at things that would

1 help us do some trend analysis. It's not enough to
2 know how we're doing right now. We need to understand
3 where we're trending. Are we not too good but getting
4 better? Are we better but it's starting to turn?
5 Where is that little, you know, turning point, that
6 key point that will allow us to go in there and say
7 it's right here, we need to focus our efforts and our
8 resources on because that way it better targets our
9 resources to make informed decisions.

10 We need to remember that business needs
11 drive technology decisions. We need to always
12 remember that so that we build the system and we
13 provide the data in the way that helps support the
14 mission.

15 And how do we get there? One is through web
16 services. I'm sure most of you are familiar with our
17 website. That was redesigned April of 2004. Based on
18 our customer analysis, we are doing very well. We
19 have been nationally recognized for the improvements
20 that have been made. We are currently tops in the
21 Department, and we are actually better than CNN.com
22 and ABC News. I know. We were surprised as well.

1 We also launched Ask Karen and Ask Karen is
2 a consumer-based tool that allows people to ask
3 questions in a natural way like how long can I leave
4 my leftovers on the counter before you can't eat them
5 in the morning? So it's more of a consumer driven
6 tool.

7 We also put out an e-mail subscription
8 service that has been wildly popular. It's about
9 23,000 subscribers in about a year and a half and that
10 helps people to only get the information they need
11 when they need it instead of thinking I need to go
12 check the website, how does this come up, when does
13 the press release come out, things of that nature.

14 We also do this through strategic planning,
15 which is where the management controls and performance
16 measures come into play, and that's the tool you just
17 saw which was Assurance Net. What that tool will do
18 when we launch in June of 2006 is take the first set
19 of management controls and there are a little over 50
20 performance measures of inspection based data and
21 these are combined into what you saw of the dashboard
22 to allow us to monitor what's going on in your real

1 time and able managers to make these decisions and
2 target those resources for the Risk-Based Inspection
3 Program that we see.

4 I'll pass it over to Marcelo who will
5 discuss the enterprise architecture vision.

6 MR. OLASCOAGA: Thank you. It's a pleasure
7 to be here this morning.

8 I'm going to give you a two-minute
9 definition on what enterprise architecture is. That's
10 an industry tool of methodology that's been used
11 widely throughout the industry and now the Government
12 has taken it on and really developed a very
13 comprehensive framework. What it allows us to do is
14 document all of our business prophecies and then
15 understanding that, we can reengineer our prophecies
16 if we need to, streamline them when we need to, and
17 also develop a vision, and that's something that we
18 have embarked on and so far have had a lot of success.
19 In fact, as a new person or a new employee less than a
20 year here at FSIS, I think that the steps that we have
21 taken were just incredible with the support of the
22 Administrator, Deputy Administrator and the Chief

1 Operating Officer, and we have been able to already
2 come up with a vision which is presented right here.
3 It's very high level, but what it does show is that
4 everyone is included. Everyone in the Agency, which
5 is the middle box that you're looking at, is part of
6 this vision, and it's going to be a very integrated
7 system. We are going to get rid of a lot of our
8 stovepipes, and we're going to be able to respond to
9 any issues that come out in the industry or whether
10 it's an economic problem that we may be facing or by
11 closing down plants or some kind of problem that may
12 be widespread.

13 Another thing is that we do show on the top
14 layer, how everyone can interact with us because it's
15 not just us working with the plants. We do have
16 customers. We do have the public that we have to
17 address, and we do have other agencies within the
18 Government that we have to share data with. So by
19 working together, this enterprise architecture is
20 going to allow us to very transparent and very open
21 with our data so that we can work together with any
22 entity, throughout really the world, and that's what

1 we're aiming to do.

2 Now this very complicated spot is very easy
3 but what it really means for all of us is that we've
4 already created at governance process, basic -- this
5 slide, and the one after it, are sort of a trimmed
6 down version of what you just finished seeing but it's
7 a capital investment process. It's what every
8 business does and it's what we need to do in the
9 Government as well, and we have implemented this now.

10 So any idea that may come up, a risk-based
11 system, is something that you're going to be
12 addressing later maybe in your Subcommittee, well,
13 this idea has to be taken through this process to see
14 how we're going to develop it, to really define our
15 requirements and to insure that it aligns with all of
16 our strategic goals within our strategic plan. So
17 everything that occurs, even changes to the system
18 that we do create, have to align to certain goals and
19 we will measure every step that we take to insure that
20 we're meeting everything that has to be met.

21 Now one of the things that we are targeting,
22 which is the low hanging fruit that we will in the

1 next 12 months really capture is eliminating all the
2 stovepipes that exist as far as reporting systems. So
3 we will create what is called the data warehouse. We
4 will create a vast recovery site in case -- so we can
5 have fail over, and what this means is that we're
6 going to have data in one repository that would allow
7 us to basically run complicated algorithms to
8 understand what the trends are, what will happen, to
9 measure all of the performance measures that were
10 established in the strategic plan.

11 To really be more comprehensive and
12 integrated, is really what you're hearing all the time
13 in the Government. We need to get rid of the
14 stovepipes. Well, these are the first steps that
15 we're going to take to do that. And, although it's
16 very high level and almost simplified in this slide,
17 it's a very complex process but something that we did
18 through the governance process and being supported by
19 everyone within the Agency because all of these
20 stovepipes are created within each of the individual
21 programs throughout FSIS and now we will be able to
22 eliminate that uncertainty by integrating all of this

1 data into one repository.

2 And, I think you're going to take over from
3 here. There you go.

4 MS. STEVENS: Thank you. Again, we just
5 wanted to remind everyone of our focus which is
6 protecting public health, which is getting the right
7 information to the right people at the right time to
8 make informed decisions.

9 And again, this doesn't only support the
10 mission. This really equals trust, and I think that's
11 a lot of what this is all about, is just that trust
12 and having a single source of data, having things be
13 reliable, being more proactive and less reactive will
14 get us there.

15 And now the fun part, which is how you can
16 help. And basically we understand that you folks have
17 discussed data needs before at previous meetings, and
18 we wanted to kind of refine this a bit to make it a
19 little bit more targeted response. So the first set
20 of questions we have really revolve around the
21 business intelligence technology such as what type of
22 public health data and information will help us make

1 critical risk-based decisions? And, for example, how
2 can the business intelligence technology, which are
3 those applications that I was talking about that hit
4 that data warehouse, pull from multiple databases,
5 pull together in those understandable dashboards, how
6 can they help to provide more predictive analysis? If
7 you're currently aware of technology that you'd like
8 to bring up and discuss, we welcome your experience or
9 knowledge on that. And, if you're currently using it,
10 how are you using that tool to better manage or
11 communicate food safety and food defense risk
12 internally?

13 We do have a deadline for feedback of June
14 30th, and Robert, as he so wonderfully calls himself,
15 will be issuing an e-mail address where you can
16 provide us that feedback.

17 Right now, we'd like to ask if you have any
18 clarifying questions for us. It's a lot to inhale at
19 9:15 in the morning. Yes, sir.

20 MR. ELFERING: Yes, Kevin Elfering from
21 Minnesota. What actually -- what kind of data do you
22 want to collect? Do you want to collect

1 microbiological data, inspection data, and what all --
2 what are you all trying to accumulate?

3 MS. STEVENS: Marcelo.

4 MR. OLASCOAGA: Thank you. I can start out
5 by saying that everything we need and really go to the
6 questions we're posing now, we need to find out or get
7 advice on what data we need to be more responsive to
8 the industry. So those -- that's the reason for the
9 questioning. The other parts we can handle on our
10 own. As you can see, we are going to be classing a
11 lot of the systems and creating this repository but by
12 receiving advice from the Committee, then we'll be
13 able to understand what additional algorithms we need
14 to develop to answer whatever it is that's taking
15 place in the industry.

16 MR. ELFERING: Perhaps one thing in addition
17 you could provide to us, what data you are gathering
18 right now. Are you getting data from PulseNet for
19 example? Anything that you're collecting will be nice
20 to know what you're already collecting so that if we
21 can think of any ideas of additional data.

22 MR. OLASCOAGA: Sure, we can do that.

1 MS. ESKIN: Sandra Eskin -- what are you
2 collecting now?

3 MR. OLASCOAGA: Well, I think there's
4 somebody better to answer that question, but we are
5 collecting all the information on the samples that we
6 take from all of the plants. We are collecting in on
7 performance measures, what our inspectors are doing,
8 logging in all the time that it takes for them to
9 perform an inspection. We are logging in information
10 that may be related to law enforcement if we need to
11 take action. So, for example, the NRs that were
12 mentioned earlier, all of that is being captured
13 electronically as well, so it's not just paper based.

14 MS. STEVENS: And just to follow up on that
15 Assurance Net which launches next week which has those
16 50 performance measures, the information that it's
17 currently analyzing is going to be information on the
18 HACCP, antemortem, postmortem inspection, food safety
19 assessment, things of that nature pulled together.

20 MR. TYNAN: Dr. Harris.

21 DR. HARRIS: I just had a very simple
22 question. I was going to ask if we could get a copy

1 of the slides as a handout?

2 MS. STEVENS: Yes, we'll provide that.

3 MR. TYNAN: We'll do that.

4 MR. OLASCOAGA: And the questions are in the
5 back of second page of your paper in your binders.

6 MR. TYNAN: I think it's Tab Number 4. I'm
7 sorry. I should have called that to your attention
8 before.

9 Mr. Elfering?

10 MR. ELFERING: Maybe -- one more comment.
11 Maybe one of the things that I think you may want to
12 look at, as far as collecting data, is things like NRs
13 are almost more opinion in a lot of cases, and I don't
14 know if that's always the best data to be looking at
15 rather than something that's a little bit more
16 scientifically sound. That's probably going to be
17 able to give you better predictability or at least
18 reactionary.

19 MS. STEVENS: Thank you for the comment.

20 DR. MASTERS: This is Barb Masters, and then
21 we'll get to you Sandra. I just wanted to comment
22 that a lot of our discussion later today on the

1 measures to control risk will discuss a lot of the
2 types of the data the Agency is already bringing in,
3 and that's why we thought it would be difficult to
4 have a full discussion on this particular topic and
5 likely will be an issue we address later but we
6 thought it would be useful, that's why we thought it
7 would be useful for you to give us some ideas after we
8 have that full robust discussion on the measures to
9 control risk because I think you'll see that when we
10 get into that issue, that most of that is data driven,
11 and it's based on data the Agency is currently
12 collecting. So I think that you'll see once you get
13 into that topic, a lot of the data the Agency is
14 currently collecting drives where we want to go on the
15 measures to control risk and establishment. So I
16 think a lot of that will help you understand why we
17 thought this would be useful to take as a homework
18 assignment. So I think that will answer a lot of your
19 questions.

20 MS. ESKIN: Sandra Eskin. Following up on
21 the question before about what data you're currently
22 collecting, again what you identified is data that the

1 Agency collects, you know, again that we grappled with
2 before, we've discussed in previous meetings and we'll
3 discuss today is the stuff that industry collects.
4 Let me back up. It's not only Agency but if you get
5 public health data from various Public Health
6 Departments, PulseNet whatever. How -- have you
7 thought about what types of industry data you need to
8 include in this system, how to get it, how to present
9 it?

10 MS. STEVENS: Yes, we have. We had a pretty
11 robust I think discussion for several weeks, and we
12 also invite you folks to let us know of the data you
13 find of the highest priority to include first because
14 there a large amount of data out there but we would
15 also ask you to focus on the priority information that
16 is needed to protect public health first because there
17 is a lot of data out there in a lot of different
18 formats. So it would all need to come together in
19 something like a data warehouse.

20 MR. OLASCOAGA: Does that answer your
21 question?

22 MS. ESKIN: Yes and no. Again, the

1 discussions we've had in the past and that we'll
2 continue to have is again the tension between needing
3 data to see -- to identify problems in the priority
4 nature of this data, individual enforcement and that's
5 something that's probably the stickiest part of this
6 whole discussion. So I'm not sure how to proceed.
7 Again, we've discussed it before but I don't know what
8 type of thinking you all have as far as how to get
9 access to that data?

10 MS. STEVENS: I think what we're interested
11 in first is trying to collect the information from you
12 folks so we can get that documented down so that we
13 can -- right now there's a lot of discussion and we
14 want to get this into a format that we can actually
15 start --

16 MS. ESKIN: Meaning here 10, 12, 15, 20,
17 whatever types of data and things we need, and here's
18 where it comes from. Is that what you're suggesting?

19 MS. STEVENS: Correct.

20 MS. ESKIN: Okay.

21 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Govro.

22 MR. GOVRO: Thank you. Mike Govro from

1 Oregon. One of the things you might consider as you
2 collect data is linking this to your training and
3 education efforts in house, and one of the things
4 we've done in Oregon is we gather the data on all the
5 violations that our inspectors note on their
6 inspection reports and then run them in a spreadsheet
7 to see where individuals or areas of the State are
8 different from others, and it allows us to address
9 problems of consistency and internal training so that
10 the program is administered more evenly throughout our
11 State.

12 MS. STEVENS: I think that's an excellent
13 point to have that direct nexus to the training.

14 MR. TYNAN: Again, there is homework. There
15 are questions associated with this topic that we'd
16 like to have some response from you all by the 30th of
17 June?

18 MS. STEVENS: Correct.

19 MR. TYNAN: Is that correct? For the 30th
20 of June. So we'll be setting up a location for you to
21 submit those comments, and we'll be moving along.
22 I'll try to remember to send you a reminder so that it

1 doesn't get lost. I know all of you have other duties
2 besides being on a committee. So we'll try and make
3 sure we help you with that to remind you that the
4 questions and the responses are due.

5 If we're all covered with that topic, we'll
6 go onto the next one.

7 MS. STEVENS: Well, thank you all very much,
8 and we look forward to your comments.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. TYNAN: I'm back again, and I want to
11 talk about a topic that is a very important one as
12 Dr. Masters pointed out in her opening remarks. We're
13 working very hard to get our employee stakeholders
14 involved in the process and get comments and
15 information from all of them.

16 So I want to talk briefly about a series of
17 focus groups that we conducted with our employees.
18 It's a beginning point in the effort to insure that
19 our employees, as well as our external partners, had
20 an opportunity to be aware of and comment on this RBI
21 process.

22 Because this is the first in a series of

1 sessions where employees, it's sort of a broad look at
2 the concept, and basically it's an overview. We
3 enjoyed doing the sessions. We had an interested and
4 engaged group of individuals that participated with
5 us. In fact, actually Alfreda Dennis, who is here
6 representing the National Joint Council, participated
7 in the Beltsville session. So I'm going to put her on
8 the spot, and at some point during the session, if I
9 miss something important, Alfreda, I'm going to ask
10 you to remind me or raise your hand. She may have
11 some additional thoughts on some of these topics.

12 We did get a number of very good comments
13 and thoughts and I wanted to go quickly through to
14 highlight some of the things that we came up with.

15 Now the focus group format, we had four
16 sessions. One in Atlanta, one in Beltsville, and we
17 did two by a net meeting process where we projected
18 the slides and the audio out to our employees at
19 different locations around the country, and I have to
20 say the net meeting worked very, very well. We had
21 about 10 people in each of the sessions, and that's
22 usually about optimal for a focus group kind of a

1 session, and we devoted about 2 1/2 to maybe as much
2 as 3 hours for each of the sessions.

3 So we started with a PowerPoint on risk-
4 based inspection, and it was a version of the
5 presentation that Mr. Derfler did for you during the
6 November meeting, and I believe that there should be a
7 copy of that PowerPoint presentation with the audio in
8 your notebooks, and you should also have a copy of my
9 slides in there as well so that you can -- if you
10 wanted to take some notes as we go along.

11 The CD provided some basic information for
12 our employees. Obviously, this is the first
13 opportunity they've had to hear anything about it. So
14 we presented the CD sort of as background information
15 for about 25 minutes, and then we had a question and
16 answer period that ran approximately 2 hours.

17 We addressed six issues, and the issues are
18 there on the slide. I won't take you through each.
19 We have incorporated also a wrap up question where we
20 asked the employees to give us the most important
21 thought that they heard during the session or maybe
22 that we did not talk about that they thought was

1 important.

2 There were two issues that came up on the CD
3 when we were preparing it which had to do with food
4 security and retail issues, and we did not do those in
5 any of the focus group sessions because -- due to time
6 constraints.

7 On this topic, there was the first issue
8 that we dealt with which was anticipating problems,
9 and that's the question we asked and there's a couple
10 of points there that were brought up. We introduced
11 this topic by telling the people that we believed that
12 risk-based inspection is going to allow us to identify
13 problems that are likely to occur in the process
14 before they actually become serious. So as part of
15 risk-based inspection we will capture and analyze data
16 across plants. We also look to see if there are any
17 patterns, breakdowns, findings or even hints of major
18 problems. And after that introduction, we asked this
19 question about what information should we be capturing
20 so we can easily identify emerging problems.

21 I think the four groups were pretty varied
22 in their responses. There was a general consensus

1 though that FSIS needs to capture more plant records
2 and data. I think sanitation information, both from
3 FSIS and plant records, was stressed by all of the
4 groups, and it was stressed as being underused for
5 identifying problems early.

6 There was also a discussion on getting more
7 facility information, that that was under reported in
8 the view of some of the participants. And they talked
9 in particular that the PBIS has a task for facilities
10 and equipment. That's OCB01 for those of you who are
11 knowledge in those things. And that was mentioned as
12 pretty broad. So I think there was some interest in
13 having that become more specific or that additional
14 instructions be provided on that particular task.

15 There was discussion about obtaining in
16 house lab testing from plants. That was stressed in
17 the focus groups as well. So I think in addition to
18 the testing that's done for FSIS, there's also lab
19 testing that's done independent of that, and that
20 recordkeeping would also be helpful to us as well.

21 I think the last, probably the important
22 point, there was a lot of discussion about in transit

1 shipping and temperature records. Temperature reviews
2 on transportation from the plant to the location in
3 retail where there might be some loss of temperature
4 causing a problem and not being aware of it.

5 We asked a second question in regard to
6 anticipating problems, and the question there is, what
7 risk do the establishments, in the establishments do
8 you believe are not adequately addressed when it comes
9 to food safety. The second question, I think food-
10 borne illness and consumer protection, sort of an
11 umbrella term that some of the folks used were the top
12 two answers of all of the four groups. Food-borne
13 illness meaning -- included sanitation issues, such as
14 employee hygiene, product distribution issues,
15 pathogens such as Campylobacter and salmonella, as
16 well as farm-to-table issues in general. There was a
17 number of comments that talked about trying to improve
18 across the board, not only in the plants but making
19 this more comprehensive as sort of a farm-to-table
20 approach.

21 One of the participants indicated that they
22 felt that salmonella was not adequately addressed, and

1 one of the examples given was an emerging problem was
2 found in ground beef causing food-borne illness, and
3 that it's difficult to regulate since salmonella is
4 not considered an adulteration in raw products.
5 Another person described the problem of salmonella and
6 Campylobacter are being primarily addressed in their
7 poultry plants by regulating the presence of visible
8 fecal material.

9 And again, distribution issues came up as
10 important to a number of the participants.

11 We also talked about the risk-based factor
12 that will be inherent in our Risk-Based Inspection
13 System and if you remember Mr. Derfler's presentation,
14 there were a number of factors that he proposed. I
15 won't go through each of those, but they are listed
16 here on the slide.

17 We obviously asked the question what do you
18 think of those factors and I think in general, all
19 four groups were fairly comfortable with those
20 factors? Do you think that's correct, Alfreda? Do
21 you remember?

22 Yeah, I think everybody pretty much agreed

1 with the factors as they were, and so we went onto the
2 second question which had to do with looking at other
3 factors that we should consider. So the participants
4 expressed concern over how the new roles. So we got
5 into a discussion of our inspection roles in this
6 particular topic, and it was concern that we needed to
7 have clear definition of the roles, the methods of
8 assignments and who makes decisions and that in the
9 employees' minds needed to be in place essentially
10 before risk-based inspection can really get up and be
11 successful.

12 It was also suggested that we need a lot of
13 flexibility and speed in this new system, and that
14 there may be much more -- it may, in fact, require
15 additional staffing as opposed to less.

16 So it was a common concern also that the
17 inspectors were talking about their own resource, but
18 they were also talking a little bit about the plant
19 employees, and I think they thought that a factor that
20 needed to be considered in the new system had to do
21 with the importance of insuring that plant employees
22 are given adequate background screens. So this is

1 sort of a food security issue. And it was pointed out
2 that it is critical for protecting the food supply,
3 that plants must insure that employees are honest and,
4 and have high ethical standards. That came across
5 pretty much I think in all of the focus groups, and
6 the employees also must be trained properly in food
7 safety procedures. So we had sort of an issue of our
8 inspection force as well as the plant employees as
9 well.

10 We also talked a little bit on the third
11 issue which had to do with the work to be done, and we
12 introduced this topic in a risk-based system, we
13 foresee much more flexible allocation of an
14 inspector's time. So we try to free up our inspectors
15 to spend as much time as they need to fully explore
16 their inspectional findings that relate to food
17 safety.

18 We are proposing a decision tree to help
19 inspectors in their work. And so we asked the
20 question, are there additional ways to guide
21 inspectors besides a decision tree? And I think some
22 of the participants stated that they didn't feel that

1 there was anything wrong in the current system, that
2 they were fairly comfortable with the system, that it
3 works well, and in short, we like the system we're in.

4 Many of the participants expressed need for
5 inspection personnel in plants to have more freedom to
6 use their discretion, and they agreed that more
7 flexibility in training to empower the inspectors was
8 needed. I think again the topic of lack of resources
9 or perhaps the need for additional resources came up
10 concerning how we can adequately cover assignments
11 when you have three or four facilities that people are
12 working in.

13 And data again was a recurring issue and it
14 came up in this, and so this ties a little bit with
15 what Janet was talking about. I think the employees
16 have concerns about the data sources and data needs,
17 and I think the folks in the net meeting particularly,
18 felt that there was a need for the best data systems,
19 and they talked a little bit about stovepiping here
20 and another question as well.

21 So some of the participants didn't feel that
22 our systems communicated across the programs, that

1 there needed to be more -- a more integrated data
2 system, more communication and cohesiveness, and also
3 a participant noted that the database system's success
4 in making good decisions is contingent, as we all
5 know, on good data. Do you agree with that, Janet?

6 We also talked on issue number 4, the design
7 of the inspection system, and here we introduced the
8 subject by asking participants to focus on the aspects
9 of the plant's process, where -- control is likely to
10 occur. And we talked here about using a recently
11 developed hazards control guide to help inspectors
12 identify these critical aspects of an establishment's
13 operation.

14 And I should have pointed out, the
15 composition of the group was varied. We had in plant
16 inspection personnel as well as some headquarters
17 personnel and various programs, and I think not many,
18 and I have to say when we asked this question, not
19 many of the participants really had prior knowledge of
20 this hazards control guide in the first two sessions.
21 We described it a little bit better in the net
22 meetings, and I think there was a general agreement

1 that this hazards control guide, which I believe is
2 part of our 5000.1 or 2, Bobby?

3 MR. PALESANO: 5100.2.

4 MR. TYNAN: 5100.2, I'm sorry, was part of
5 that, and I think once we talked a little bit more and
6 explained that particular hazards control guide, it
7 was a little bit more apparent and employees felt it
8 was a little bit more worthwhile and would be helpful
9 to them. That, of course, assumes that they would
10 have a little bit more training and support in using
11 that guide.

12 We also talked as issue number 5, on how
13 risk-based systems should respond to findings, and
14 here we introduced the topic a little bit on -- in
15 terms of how we traditionally do things, evidence of
16 compliance or noncompliance doesn't necessarily affect
17 the intensity of inspection. So noncompliance is
18 always potentially led to enforcement activities, a
19 NOIE or something along those lines, and that would
20 certainly continue under RBIS, but under the system,
21 noncompliance would also lead to a greater level of
22 inspection. So we posed this question about how

1 should risk-based systems respond to the finding, and
2 basically is the approach satisfactory, and I think
3 generally the answer varied a little bit. I think the
4 participants thought the approach was satisfactory,
5 and that RBI would certainly improve inspection
6 overall from their perspective.

7 One of the participants agreed that the
8 approach was satisfactory but they wanted to know a
9 little bit more about what constituted good control
10 versus bad control. So they wanted some clear
11 definitions of how you make decisions on what more
12 intensified inspection was required.

13 One of the participants thought that laws
14 and regulations needed to be revised, and I think that
15 was the question that was brought up when Mr. Derfler
16 was making his presentation back in November. So they
17 have some of the same issues and concerns that you all
18 did.

19 Data came up again. So many of the
20 participants were concerned that RBI was dependent on
21 the quality of the data that's available. So we're
22 back to garbage in, garbage out. As one person

1 stated, a data driven system depends on accurate data
2 with checks and balances.

3 Now this varies just a little bit from the
4 technical aspects of RBI, but it is a very important
5 question from -- I know from my perspective and I
6 think Dr. Masters, certainly from her perspective. We
7 have done a great deal of work with our employees in
8 trying to improve our internal communications to make
9 it a more cohesive workforce, get the information that
10 people need. So we added this question on how we
11 could do continuing communications with our employees,
12 and certainly we have a number of things that we do
13 internally. We have news and notes. I think some of
14 you are probably familiar with that. We have Internet
15 access, intranet access for our employees. We have a
16 Beacon newsletter. So a lot of the information gets
17 out, and I think everybody agreed that those were
18 good, adequate ways for employees to stay informed.

19 But a number of the employees asked for more
20 listening sessions, not listening sessions, but
21 perhaps focus groups that they participate in focus
22 groups as we were doing on RBI, so that they could be

1 kept involved, that there be more town hall meetings
2 perhaps, all hands meetings and, in fact, we're going
3 to be planning an all hands meeting in early June for
4 all of our employees that can access that. So we'll
5 be working on that as well.

6 They pointed out that obviously on the kill
7 floor, they don't have really access or, you know,
8 time to walk off the kill floor to go to a computer.
9 So they were looking for direct mailings as an option
10 there.

11 And they pointed out, too, that we have some
12 work to do internally in terms of our computer system,
13 to make them more accessible to our field employees.
14 We have a dial up system out in the field, and it has
15 been a source when we're doing focus groups on this
16 topic and others, that caused a problem and, in fact,
17 when we did the net meeting, we had a couple of
18 employees that tried to log on and we were 15 minutes
19 waiting, and they were only at 34 percent downloaded
20 of the material that we needed them to be looking at.
21 Fortunately it worked out fine, because it had an
22 audio portion that they could listen in on. So we had

1 to ask them to take notes. So that's an important
2 area.

3 So in short, we were asking for ways to make
4 communications about RBI. I think there was a general
5 agreement, and I think, Alfreda, correct me if I'm
6 wrong, but I think everybody seemed to want more
7 information than less, and I think they all pointed
8 out that while they may not agree with the process,
9 that certainly their ability to help us get there, as
10 well as buy into the process would certainly be more
11 aided by more information than less.

12 I think the last question we had was the
13 wrap up question, and we basically said to everyone on
14 each of the focus groups, what idea or thought that
15 they had heard today, during the session, or maybe
16 that we did not talk about, that was particularly
17 important to them that they wanted to bring up and
18 sort of get on the record if you will, and actually
19 four areas came out.

20 We had inspection resources and we talked a
21 little bit about that. The response is focused on how
22 resources might meet the demands of RBI.

1 We also talked about the communications. So
2 we went back to talk a little bit more about how they
3 would be heard and more listened to by upper
4 management. There was concern the employees be
5 informed on an ongoing basis for the communications
6 was the second one.

7 We also went back to data quality and
8 integrity. So I think what Janet and Marcelo talked
9 about earlier is becoming increasingly important not
10 only probably from your perspective but from our
11 employees' perspective as well.

12 And last, but not least, I think the
13 employees wanted more empowerment of the in plant
14 inspection personnel which should be enhanced by RBI.
15 It gives them a little bit more flexibility in the
16 future.

17 So that's basically the outcome of our focus
18 groups, and with that, I'll turn it over, and if you
19 have any questions.

20 Mr. Elfering.

21 MR. ELFERING: I've got a couple of
22 questions. On the first issue, anticipating problems,

1 when you talk about they're not adequately addressing
2 issues when it comes to food safety, who is not
3 adequately addressing issues?

4 MR. TYNAN: I think the focus of the
5 question was us adequately addressing in our
6 inspection system. The way our current system is
7 working, what is not adequately addressed?

8 MR. ELFERING: And then as a follow up, what
9 is their solution to adequately following up on those?
10 If you don't have a solution, you become part of the
11 problem.

12 MR. TYNAN: Well, I think that was probably
13 getting a little bit more detailed than we anticipated
14 for the focus groups. I think what we were asking is
15 what isn't addressed so that the folks that are
16 developing the system and the concept will incorporate
17 those things and solve some of those problems. So our
18 intent in asking employees was just to see if there
19 are areas that we had overlooked, not to necessarily
20 get the solution at the same time. Does that help?

21 MR. ELFERING: Yeah, I guess maybe the same
22 thing you'd answer then with having more inspectors on

1 issue two. I don't necessarily think that more
2 inspectors are going to increase food safety. Again,
3 no solution on how -- where you would be employing
4 those additional inspectors? Would it be on line
5 inspection, processing inspection?

6 MR. TYNAN: No, but I think that the issue
7 came up a number of times that really is an area that
8 the Agency needs to think through, particularly when
9 you're talking about if we're intensifying inspection
10 and we're asking an employee to go from say Plant A
11 where they're doing well to going to Plant B and
12 perhaps having somebody at Plant C going to another
13 plant and passing on the way. So they were simply
14 saying to us that we need to really consider the
15 resources that are going to be invested in this, and
16 some of them felt that it perhaps would require
17 additional resources.

18 Dr. Masters, I can see you have a --

19 DR. MASTERS: This is just our first
20 opportunity to introduce the information to our
21 employees, and our goal would be to take this
22 information and provide it to our third party

1 facilitator and allow them to try to take the raw data
2 and then take it back with new questions to our
3 employees through whatever they determine the right
4 process to try to then ask the follow up questions
5 because it was the first two and a half hour type
6 sessions that we got the initial responses, and we
7 will use our third party facilitator because this was
8 first attempt even prior to having a third party
9 facilitator in place. So we would envision our third
10 party facilitator to then say, ah-ha, this is an area
11 that we need to go back to our FSIS employees and ask
12 some follow up type questions, to say you believe
13 there's a lot of responses that said you feel like you
14 need more employees. How would you envision using
15 those employees if that was a follow up question that
16 they felt was appropriate and whatever, if they
17 determined the right way to go back to our employees.

18 MR. TYNAN: Does that help, Kevin?

19 Mr. Finnegan?

20 MR. FINNEGAN: Yes. On issue number 6, I
21 would ask you to keep in mind how Agency employees
22 keep informed and ask you keep in mind that the State

1 programs are 28 States. So there's a good access to
2 keep those people informed either through the State
3 Director.

4 MR. TYNAN: And I think there were questions
5 about getting data with the States, working more
6 closely with it. Some of the more -- we tried to
7 capture the more universal type comments but there
8 were other things like that. So that was a concern of
9 our employees as well.

10 MR. FINNEGAN: Sure. I just wanted to
11 comment on that.

12 MR. TYNAN: All right. Thank you.

13 MR. FINNEGAN: And also back to a couple of
14 the other -- I think the first slide talked about
15 records and things. Are we talking about NRs there,
16 written on plans, part of the data?

17 MR. TYNAN: No, I don't think they were
18 talking about NRs because I think that's sort of
19 universally accepted. I think there was a sense that
20 we needed additional plant data either on the
21 facilities, the sanitation. I think there was
22 discussion about the additional lab testing that was

1 necessary and things of that nature. Alfreda, is that
2 sort of an accurate --

3 MS. DENNIS: Yes --

4 MR. TYNAN: Okay. Thank you. Does that
5 help, Michael?

6 MR. FINNEGAN: It does. I just wanted to
7 make a comment. If part of the data is NRs, there are
8 different NRs. Some are -- take for example, a plant
9 has a positive for E. coli O157:H7, that's a little
10 different than a NR written because somebody forgot to
11 put initials in, you know what I mean? We've got to
12 weigh those NRs, ones that have some meanings to them
13 and other ones that are clerical errors.

14 MR. TYNAN: I think that was brought up in a
15 couple of the sessions as well as I recall, and I
16 don't know if it was in the Beltsville session, but
17 there was a distinction between NRs, that they weren't
18 all equal.

19 MR. FINNEGAN: Right, right.

20 MR. TYNAN: So some of the same thoughts
21 that you're suggesting were brought up by our
22 employees as well.

1 MR. FINNEGAN: Thank you.

2 MR. TYNAN: Dr. Carpenter.

3 DR. CARPENTER: David Carpenter. I want --
4 Robert, I want to turn or tie issue one where you have
5 in house lab results to the wrap up where it says data
6 quality and integrity. Does in house lab results mean
7 data that are generated in a consistent type of
8 manner, like using AOAC method or a method that has
9 been sanctioned by Pat Makasky (ph.) and his group or
10 is it just right now pretty nebulous as to where those
11 data come from?

12 MR. TYNAN: It was pretty nebulous. I don't
13 think any of the employees really thought about data
14 in some sort of a certified kind of a format or with a
15 standard operating procedure. I think they were
16 simply saying that that's an area that we need to
17 explore as we develop the concept. Does that help,
18 David?

19 DR. CARPENTER: Yes.

20 MR. TYNAN: Ms. Eskin?

21 MS. ESKIN: Sandra Eskin. I think
22 Dr. Masters actually addressed the point I'm going to

1 make, but I think it bears repeating. I understand
2 the role that focus groups play generally in any sort
3 of policy development. I am concerned that because
4 there wasn't a third party leading these focus groups
5 that the employees were maybe not as forthcoming as
6 they otherwise might have been. So I had that concern
7 initially but when Dr. Masters explained that, in
8 fact, was preliminary, that in fact our third party
9 facilitator will go back in a systematic way. I think
10 that's critical here because again focus groups are
11 closer to anecdotal information than they are to any
12 sort of statistically significance.

13 MR. TYNAN: You're exactly correct. What I
14 didn't point out when we talked about the format
15 though was to be sure that we got honest responses, we
16 told everyone in the groups, and I'm sorry I've
17 violated that with Alfreda, but we told everybody that
18 their participation was anonymous. So we captured --
19 for the face-to-face sessions, we captured everybody
20 by number as opposed to by name.

21 MS. ESKIN: Sure.

22 MR. TYNAN: So that, so that they were

1 welcome to say what ever they wanted and when we were
2 developing a summary and that will be final hopefully
3 this week.

4 MS. ESKIN: Where were they done though?
5 Where were they conducted? In --

6 MR. TYNAN: One was conducted in Atlanta.

7 MS. ESKIN: No, no, I mean --

8 MR. TYNAN: In the District Office.

9 MS. ESKIN: Okay. Again, to get the larger
10 context there. I understand the anonymity but when
11 it's an FSIS employee who is doing the questioning and
12 it's in an FSIS facility, there always is the concern
13 that they're not going to be as forthcoming but again
14 since this is really a preliminary discussion, I jut
15 want to make sure that we all understand that and,
16 it's the first step before the third party --

17 MR. TYNAN: No, no, I understand. Well, we
18 did try to make it as objective as we possibly could
19 but I recognize what you're saying.

20 MS. ESKIN: Inherently subjective --

21 MR. TYNAN: That's why Resolve is back
22 there. They're going to help us with that.

1 Dr. Masters.

2 DR. MASTERS: And I appreciate Ms. Eskin's
3 comment. I just want to reemphasize that there was a
4 time lag between the November NACMPI meeting and the
5 time we were able to get Resolve involved, and we felt
6 it critically important to get some information out to
7 our employees. And so we felt like if we waited until
8 we got Resolve involved, we would have had a second
9 NACMPI meeting and would have had no information for
10 employees. So that was why we felt it critical to
11 provide the information from the first, and I think
12 Robert addressed most of the information on the first
13 NACMPI meeting, and so I want to reemphasize what
14 you're saying which is we will handle all this
15 information, the raw data over to Resolve and turn
16 over our process to Resolve to get all further input
17 from the employee groups.

18 So we should have stated that up front to
19 say this is preliminary. It was all pre-third party
20 facilitated, and so everything from here forward with
21 our employees will be done by a third party. So I
22 think it was just an important effort on our part to

1 get our employee groups involved, and it was our
2 attempt to at least catch them up on the information
3 that had been shared with this group so that they at
4 least would say why is there all this information out
5 in trade association journals --

6 MS. ESKIN: Right.

7 DR. MASTERS: -- and why are we being left
8 out. You know, my third pillar is Dr. Raymond's third
9 leg to his stool and, you know, those -- that
10 structure is going to collapse, the stool is going to
11 collapse and we just felt that strongly about getting
12 them engaged, and so we should have said that up front
13 and I appreciate your comments.

14 MS. ESKIN: Yes, and again, I have no
15 problem with obviously involving employees. They are
16 probably the ones most directly affected by what we're
17 talking about. Maybe it's something as simple as not
18 calling them focus groups. I don't know what else to
19 call them because focus groups is a term of art, and
20 whether it's listening sessions or discussions or
21 whatever.

22 MR. TYNAN: Well, I can't say that I made it

1 an art form. That would not be true. But we did have
2 a good session, and I do think we do think we got a
3 lot of very candid comments, and I think everybody
4 understood that there was not going to be any reprisal
5 for not liking something about the system. So I think
6 it was fairly objective and as Dr. Masters says, we're
7 going to leave Resolve to do the rest.

8 Other questions regarding focus groups? Oh,
9 I'm sorry. Ms. Grondahl.

10 MS. GRONDAHL: Thank you. I'm just
11 wondering if you have any plans for additional focus
12 group sessions, and if so, if there's been any
13 consideration to include State inspection employees?

14 DR. MASTERS: At this point, the work with
15 all of our stakeholders will be done through Resolve,
16 and as -- I don't think you were at our last meeting,
17 Andrea, and -- were you, and all of that work will be
18 done through Resolve and, yes, the State employees
19 were certainly on our list of those stakeholders that
20 we think critical to be involved.

21 The approach that Resolve takes is yet to be
22 determined. We'll be meeting with them later this

1 week, and I think that they are looking at a variety
2 of ways to reach out to our stakeholders but certainly
3 State employees will be one of those fruits that we're
4 looking at, making sure we have them involved, and I
5 appreciate Mike's comment to make sure that we make
6 sure that any information we share we give to the
7 State Director.

8 MR. TYNAN: And as Dr. Masters mentioned
9 earlier, we have two of the Resolve folks here,
10 Ms. Grant and Mr. Spangler, and you're welcome at the
11 break, which we're going to take in about two seconds,
12 to chat with them and voice some concerns at this
13 point. We will be trying to meet with them, I think
14 the NACMPI Subcommittee to help us with the original
15 statement of work. We're going to meet with Resolve
16 probably at the close of business tomorrow, and then
17 we're also going to have them meet with our Steering
18 Committee later on in the day. So we're going to try
19 and get them lined up as quickly as we can so that
20 they can get off and running on this process.

21 With that, if there's no other questions
22 regarding the focus groups, I'm going to suggest we

1 take a break, and if we could get back together, since
2 we're now a little bit ahead of schedule, maybe about
3 20 after 10:00, and I will call you back to order when
4 that occurs.

5 Okay. Thank you very much.

6 (Off the record.)

7 (On the record.)

8 MR. TYNAN: I'd like to get started with
9 this portion of the meeting. If everybody could
10 finish up their coffee and come on in if you're still
11 out there snacking away.

12 In the Agenda for this morning, we're at the
13 point where we're going to talk a little bit about the
14 briefing and update materials, and unlike the two sort
15 of presentations we did before, this is material that
16 we send you. It should have been in your notebook and
17 is here simply for just open discussion and questions
18 if you have any regarding any of these particular
19 topics. We should have folks from the program that
20 should be here to answer questions. As I mentioned
21 earlier, if for whatever reason they weren't able to
22 make it at the appointed time, we'll try and get an

1 answer to your questions after the fact.

2 I think the first one that -- briefing paper
3 that I have and would ask if you had any questions
4 regarding, has to do with the mark of inspection and
5 applying the mark of inspection to product tested for
6 an adulterant, and I think I -- I'm sorry. I'm on
7 page -- on Tab 8. I apologize.

8 Mark, do you have a question?

9 MR. SCHAD: Yes. It might be a little bit
10 too early just because the guidelines were issued in
11 September 2005, but just looking at the bar graphs, it
12 looks like more small and very small plants are
13 holding product than they were in the past. And I was
14 going to ask the question, is the Agency satisfied at
15 this point with the progress that has been made?

16 MR. TYNAN: Let me see if we have somebody
17 in audience who is going to address this issue? Come
18 on up. This gentleman told us when he came up that he
19 has laryngitis. So I may have to interpret for him.

20 MR. LEHMAN: I'm sorry. What was the
21 question?

22 MR. SCHAD: I know the guidelines, the

1 industry guidelines were just sent out to the plants
2 in September 2005 but I was looking at the bar
3 graphs --

4 MR. LEHMAN: Yes.

5 MR. SCHAD: -- and I know this wasn't a
6 statistical analysis or anything, at least not what I
7 see in the report, but it looks like the small and
8 very small plants are holding more product than they
9 have been in the past.

10 MR. LEHMAN: Yes.

11 MR. SCHAD: And I wanted to know if the
12 Agency was satisfied with the progress so far?

13 MR. TYNAN: Excuse me. Before you do that,
14 Mark, would you like to introduce yourself?

15 MR. MICHAEL: Oh, yeah. Matthew Michael.
16 I'm the Director of the Program Evaluation and
17 Improvement Staff. I believe I'll defer to
18 Dr. Masters about whether or not the Agency is
19 satisfied. I'll agree, there has been a trend in
20 every category where product has been held by every
21 size plant, every year since 2003, with one exception
22 which we think is a data error and not really a break

1 in the trend, and as we said in our summary points,
2 the vast majority of product is being held with
3 between 80 percent and 100 percent of product being
4 held in 2006, and really 100 percent of all the
5 product held by large plants every since 2003.

6 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Schad, do you have --

7 DR. MASTERS: At this point, the Agency will
8 continue to watch and insure those trends continue and
9 insure that small and very small plants in particular,
10 since the large establishments have consistently been
11 holding product, to insure that trends continue and
12 insure that products are held because that is
13 certainly the goal of the Agency, to insure that
14 products are being held.

15 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Schad, do you have a follow
16 up question? I can see one forming?

17 MR. SCHAD: No, that's fine. I just thought
18 of one other question I had. This data is from the
19 sample form that's filled out when the sample is taken
20 because I know there is a question on there, is the
21 product being held?

22 MR. MICHAEL: Yes, yes.

1 MR. TYNAN: Dr. Harris?

2 DR. HARRIS: As I recall, one of the key
3 concerns that the Agency had was, was the number of or
4 incidents of recalls attributable to product not being
5 held when a sample was pending. Is that data been
6 looked at? Is that improving as well or can you
7 update us at all on the trend or if there is a trend
8 there?

9 MR. MICHAEL: I believe that trend has been
10 improving. There's been very few recalls this year so
11 far for FSIS deposit product. I don't have the number
12 at hand.

13 MR. TYNAN: Dr. Harris, you okay?
14 Mr. Kowalcyk?

15 MR. KOWALCYK: Yeah. I have one question
16 about the date you're presenting here. Will the
17 Agency be reissuing this data once a year is completed
18 because right now we're looking only at the first
19 quarter, and it's compared years -- full years against
20 first quarter, and I guess to kind of really get a
21 true measure, will the Agency be coming back to this
22 Committee with results at year end as well?

1 MR. MICHAEL: Yes, we're planning on
2 continuing looking at this data. We wanted to
3 establish a baseline or context to look at the overall
4 trend and then next year see if we could find an
5 impact -- correlate an impact of the guidelines on
6 holding, holding product and that's why we looked at
7 the first quarter of 2006. We didn't see any break in
8 the trend there, but it's very early but, yes, we will
9 continue looking at this data and applying it, yes.

10 MR. KOWALCYK: Thank you.

11 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Govro?

12 MR. GOVRO: Yes, I have a comment on the
13 update on training and outreach if we're finished with
14 this subject. If there's other comments, I can wait.

15 MR. TYNAN: Okay. Hang onto training and
16 outreach for just a moment. Any other questions on
17 this particular paper? Yes, Mr. Finnegan?

18 MR. FINNEGAN: Yeah. On graph 2, you have
19 percentage of ready-to-eat products sampling O157:H7.

20 The Agency samples ready-to-eat products for E. coli
21 O157:H7 due to cross-contamination or -- I mean if
22 you have a -- step, the E. coli is dead. I can see

1 listeria, possibly salmonella, but I --

2 DR. MASTERS: We sample ready-to-eat
3 fermented sausages for example for E. coli O157:H7.
4 That was Barb Masters.

5 MR. TYNAN: Other questions on this
6 particular paper? Thank you, Matthew.

7 We're going to proceed through these in
8 order if you do not object to that. If you have
9 another way you want to approach it, that's fine.

10 We have Legislative Update on the list and
11 that should be under Tab 9, and I saw Ms. Picard there
12 before. Yeah, come on up. We have questions on the
13 Legislative Update. I brought Lisa all the way up
14 here for nothing.

15 Mr. Elfering, did you have a question?

16 MR. ELFERING: I guess I'd be remiss if I
17 didn't at least bring up the issue of the funding for
18 State inspection programs. As probably all of you
19 know, State inspection programs in the past have been
20 funded up to 50 percent of their inspection programs
21 and we found out kind of midyear that that's not going
22 to be happening in this Federal fiscal year, and if

1 that is going to be looked at, as that will be the
2 future, that 50 percent funding will not be available
3 for State inspection programs or is that something
4 that the Agency is working very diligently on
5 rectifying. So that at least the State programs will
6 be able to predict how much funding they will have.
7 For example, this year not finding out until half the
8 year is over, they're going to be scrambling and
9 probably have to make some significant cuts from their
10 programs this year by not finding out until really
11 half the year is over.

12 DR. MASTERS: The Agency as Mr. Elfering has
13 indicated held State level in funding as to what they
14 provided since 2005, and so we recognize and
15 appreciate the difficult -- difficulties that they're
16 having in trying to look to where they're going to
17 have to have fiscal restraints in their spending as
18 FSIS is also going to bat this fiscal year. However,
19 we are going to be working diligently as Mr. Elfering
20 suggests to make sure -- make certain that in future
21 years, we'll be working with the States as we tried to
22 do this year, to try to make sure that we honor their

1 requests for additional funding. So we'll continue to
2 work and hope that that is not the case in future
3 years.

4 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Elfering, do you have a
5 follow up question?

6 MR. ELFERING: I do have a follow up.
7 Dr. Masters, I've just been hearing rumors on budget
8 issues that there was just an article that I read the
9 other day that there is some discussion of furloughing
10 federal inspectors. Could you maybe put our concerns
11 to rest on that issue?

12 DR. MASTERS: Absolutely. This is Barb
13 Masters again. The Agency at this time has absolutely
14 no plans to furlough our employees. We also face a
15 very tight budget year, and we are working very
16 diligently through a lot of responsible budget actions
17 to insure that public health is protected, but we are
18 looking at hiring freezes and those kind of positions
19 outside of the front line inspection force as well as
20 travel restrictions on non-front line inspection
21 activities but obviously if we were not able to meet
22 our needs at the end of the year, we would have to

1 look at more drastic measures, but at this time, we do
2 not see that in the future. So at this time, the
3 Agency has no plans to furlough our employees.

4 MR. TYNAN: Dr. Carpenter, you had a
5 question? I know the spotlight is on you apparently.

6 DR. CARPENTER: Only for what? The next
7 half hour. On the second page, we talked about
8 laboratory. Obviously I have to bring up laboratory
9 issues. You talk about increasing funding for FERN
10 and eLEXNET and also a repository of analytical
11 methods. Is that going to be the responsibility of
12 the Athens Lab to create this repository or is that
13 going to be more diffuse than that?

14 MS. PICARD: Let me find out if I can get a
15 specific answer for you on where and who is going to
16 be handling that repository.

17 DR. CARPENTER: Okay.

18 MS. PICARD: I'll follow up with you later
19 this morning.

20 DR. CARPENTER: Thank you.

21 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Govro?

22 MR. GOVRO: Can you describe the nature of

1 the \$105 million in new user fees?

2 MR. TYNAN: I'm sorry. Say the first part
3 again, Mike?

4 MR. GOVRO: The \$105 million mentioned here
5 that are new user fees that are proposed. What, what
6 types of fees are those and who will they be assessed
7 to?

8 MS. PICARD: Those users fees are not
9 currently in the bill that is before the House this
10 morning. So they are not.

11 MR. GOVRO: So then let's get to the numbers
12 here. \$862.9 million is what's requested and \$105
13 million of that is proposed user fees. Do you
14 understand that?

15 DR. MASTERS: The 105 in the President's
16 Budget that went forward, Mike, the user fees would be
17 those above and beyond the first shift that's provided
18 by FSIS, that would be paid by the industry for
19 inspection beyond that covered by the first shift by
20 FSIS.

21 MR. GOVRO: Okay.

22 MR. TYNAN: Other questions on the

1 Legislative Update? There being one, thank you, Lisa.

2 Okay. Now we're onto issue number 10 which
3 has already been raised which has to do with the
4 Update on Training and Outreach, and we have two
5 individuals that can speak to that. Mr. Govro, you
6 have a question? Ms. Kelly or Dr. Kelly and
7 Ms. Cutshall, did you want to?

8 DR. KELLY: A question?

9 MR. GOVRO: Actually I just had a question.
10 Mike Govro, Oregon. In Oregon, a professor at Oregon
11 State University, Dr. Donna Beegle, did a study on
12 communication differences between people from
13 different cultures, specifically oral and written
14 cultures, and talked about how they perceive messages
15 that are given to them, and the difficulties that
16 people from oral cultures have in receiving messages
17 that were designed and delivered by people from
18 written cultures who think quite a bit differently,
19 and that's particularly the case in a workforce with a
20 lower level of education, and it's particularly
21 important in the food service industry where there's a
22 lot of turnover, and it's a fairly low paid work

1 force, and I just wanted to direct your attention to
2 that, because I think it would be fairly significant
3 in communicating with line employees in a processing
4 facility. And I can get you the name of the study. I
5 don't have it on me at this time, but I'd be happy to
6 get that for you.

7 MS. CUTSHALL: This is Mary Cutshall, and I
8 think that's a very good point, one that needs some
9 looking at and some of the things that we've worked on
10 this year has been trying to reach out to employees.
11 As you know in past years, with small and very small
12 plants in particular, one of the things that we've
13 tried to do is translate a number of materials. One
14 of the things that's different, particularly to your
15 issue, is that we're developing materials both orally
16 and in writing for a population that's growing among
17 working in plants and that's the -- population. So
18 we've actually started down that road to attempt to do
19 that, and I think the point is a very good one.

20 DR. KELLY: Yes, and I would be very
21 interested in a copy of that article. Anytime we're
22 preparing workforce training materials and I'm sure

1 we'll be working together on the outreach materials,
2 the small and very plants, we think about the way
3 people learn which is some people learn better through
4 reading and visual representations. Some people learn
5 better through what they hear. Other people actually
6 have to get their hands on it and do it before they
7 actually really understand it, and we try to
8 incorporate all of those features into all of the
9 training that we do, but training is always a work in
10 progress, and we welcome any idea about things that we
11 could do to reach people better. Thanks.

12 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Elfering?

13 MR. ELFERING: Just in looking at this --
14 all of the issues that we have to deal with, it's ever
15 changing, have you put any educational materials
16 together for your employees on Avian Influenza,
17 knowing the differences between high path, non-H5,
18 non-H7, low path Avian Influenza? You know, the
19 poultry industry has been testing for Avian Influenza
20 for a number of years. I know our poultry industry,
21 the turkey industry rather, has been testing for
22 probably more than 25 years. We find Avian Influenza

1 every year, but it's all low path, actually probably
2 typically swine influenza that is being picked up by
3 poultry, and before too long, the broiler and egg
4 industry is also going to be testing for Avian
5 Influenza, and I think it would really be important
6 that your employees -- they're going to be the
7 communicators out there, anybody who works for USDA is
8 perceived to be an expert in everything as it relates
9 to animal disease and human health issues, and I was
10 just curious if you put any information together for
11 employees on AI?

12 DR. KELLY: I can at least begin by saying
13 that we have contributed people to a working group
14 that have begin to put materials together. We have
15 worked with people outside of FSIS and, in fact, we
16 have even worked internationally to get digital images
17 and a variety of kinds of things to put together, to
18 pull together. I don't believe everything is
19 finalized but I think we're well on our way.

20 DR. MASTERS: Yeah, this is Barb Masters. I
21 think it's important to recognize that all of our
22 public health veterinarians are trying to recognize

1 the symptoms and signs of Avian Influenza in the
2 poultry flocks, and what we're looking at is what
3 materials we need and what we can do to enhance and
4 update that material for them.

5 So, yes, our veterinarians, public health
6 veterinarians have been trying but we are looking at
7 what we might be able to do to provide some additional
8 materials to them to enhance and update and refresh
9 their learning and education on that information.

10 MR. ELFERING: Maybe as a follow up, this is
11 Kevin Elfering again. We are developing some -- we
12 actually have put together a couple of informational
13 brochures for veterinarians and companion pet owners
14 and we're also -- for small, small scale flock owners,
15 I'd certainly make those available to you as nothing
16 more than a resource. So I'll get copies of those to
17 you, or else we're just putting the final touches on
18 one related to food safety as well.

19 DR. KELLY: Thank you.

20 MR. TYNAN: Thank you, Kevin. Other
21 questions regarding the training update?

22 Thank you, Dr. Kelly. Thank you,

1 Ms. Cutshall.

2 Under Tab Number 11, we have an update paper
3 on the Cooperative Agreements Assisting Small and Very
4 Small Plants and, Dr. Syed, are you here?

5 DR. SYED: Yes.

6 Are there questions on the update paper on
7 the Cooperative Agreements?

8 Dr. Syed, that was a very well written
9 paper. Fine job. Thank you for coming up.

10 Under Number 12, I beg your pardon -- yeah,
11 under Number 12, we have the National Advisory
12 Committee for Microbiological Criteria for Foods, and
13 we have Gerri Ransom here that can perhaps answer your
14 questions. Mr. Elfering?

15 MR. ELFERING: -- a number of food-borne
16 illness cases associated with some chicken entrée
17 product and the Advisory Committee made some
18 suggestions, and companies who produce these products
19 had to submit new label sketches to USDA by May 1st,
20 and I'm just curious to know where that's at, if
21 you've received a lot of labels and have any new
22 labels been approved and when would we expect to see

1 new product labels out on the retail shelves? We're
2 up to 17 cases now of food-borne illness associated
3 with various species of salmonella just in Minnesota
4 associated with these products?

5 MS. RANSOM: Okay. I can update us on the
6 Advisory Committee but not on the policy aspects.
7 Maybe Dan can --

8 MR. TYNAN: We also have Dr. Englejohn who
9 has joined us and maybe can respond to that question
10 for you, Kevin.

11 DR. ENGLEJOHN: Thank you. And again, I'd
12 just like to say that it was the Minnesota Department
13 of Health and Agriculture that was instrumental in
14 getting this issue before the Agency and before the
15 Committee, and so we -- it was something that was
16 timely. It needed to be dealt with.

17 To answer your specific questions, we did
18 set some dates by which we needed the industry to
19 respond to modifying labels for entrée products
20 particularly those of poultry that appear to be ready
21 to eat but that can contain raw poultry product.
22 There are three dates by which industry is responding

1 right now in terms of the type of labeling. Labeling
2 directly for products going directly to consumers had
3 to be at least identified and, and establishments need
4 to make information known about how they were going to
5 modify their labels to address whether or not the
6 products are, in fact, not ready to eat, and
7 explicitly what they're going to be doing about
8 validating their cooking instructions by May 1.

9 Another set of labeling relates to those
10 labels for products that are -- for products going to
11 this school lunch program. These would be products
12 involved in the Food and Nutrition Services Commodity
13 Purchase Program, and there's a different approval
14 process by which they need to review those labels
15 prior to them being submitted to FSIS. So we set a
16 date of June 1 for those labels.

17 And then for those labels going direct to
18 products that go to institutions, such as institutions
19 that prepare the food for the consumer, we set a date
20 of July 1, and it turns out that that is the largest
21 segment of the industry with regard to product
22 labeling, and we expect there to be roughly 5,000 of

1 those labels that will be coming in.

2 To go along with this, the Agency issued
3 letters to everyone that we knew produced these
4 products, identifying to them that they needed to
5 modify their label to make the name of the product
6 explicitly identified as a non-ready-to-eat product,
7 to identify that for safety, the product should be
8 cooked to the minimum temperature of 165 degrees as
9 measured by thermometer, and that the cooking
10 instructions would have to be validated.

11 We did issue temporary labels for many of
12 these products, and that temporary label by regulation
13 is allowed for up to six months. And so from the
14 perspective of the industry, the Agency will be
15 issuing or expects to issue an FSIS notice in early
16 September that would provide verification instructions
17 for inspectors to verify that the labels have been, in
18 fact, modified and addressed the labeling features
19 that we issued in the letter.

20 So to make a long story short, there are in
21 excess of 5,000 labels that are affected. We will be
22 issuing specific verification instructions to our

1 employees to verify that all the labels for these
2 types of products have been, in fact, modified and
3 addressed, product name and validated cooking
4 instructions.

5 MR. ELFERING: This is a follow up. This is
6 Kevin Elfering again. FSIS still has a fact sheet on
7 their website that gives recommendations for cooking
8 poultry, and one of them is to not use a microwave for
9 cooking raw poultry, especially frozen. That seems to
10 be in conflict with validating cooking instruction
11 where microwaving still would be an acceptable
12 practice on the label. What are your thought about,
13 you know, in one, in one regard you're saying don't,
14 don't use a microwave to cook raw product but yet
15 still allowing the label to say that this product
16 would be considered safe if it's microwaved.

17 DR. ENGLEJOHN: The National Advisory
18 Committee for Microbiological Criteria for Food
19 specifically addressed that issue in the sense that it
20 was determined by the Committee that microwaving could
21 be safely accomplished and deliver a safe product,
22 that it had to be done in very specific ways and there

1 had to be specific information provided to the
2 consumer. It was included in the report to say that
3 it's not advisable to microwave products in a frozen
4 state, a raw product in a frozen state. So they did
5 not explicitly state that it's not feasible from a
6 scientific perspective.

7 From the Agency's perspective, we have made
8 it known that we think that the burden on industry to
9 demonstrate that they have validated cooking
10 instructions is far greater for an establishment who
11 is going to use and recommend that a microwave be used
12 for these types of products that appear to be ready to
13 eat but contain frozen or uncooked product in it that
14 are in a frozen state. Part of the validation for the
15 cooking instructions as recommended by the Committee
16 and as the Agency is pursuing, is that there has to be
17 information available to the manufacturer that
18 demonstrates that the manufacturer has some knowledge
19 that the consumer is aware of the type of product
20 they're producing, that the cooking instructions are,
21 in fact, practical, and I think that's an important
22 word.

1 As you pointed out in the information that
2 you shared with the Committee, cooking product from a
3 frozen state in a microwave has varying degrees of
4 results, depending on the power of the microwave,
5 depending on the user. In many cases, it's children
6 or elderly or individuals who are looking for a
7 particular palatability or organoleptic quality as
8 opposed to truly using a thermometer to measure for
9 safety. And so we did make clear that our expectation
10 for any label that would come in on these types of
11 products that would include a recommendation that the
12 product could be microwaved would have to have some
13 fairly compelling data on file demonstrating that they
14 have practical, feasible cooking instructions.

15 We'll assess that. If we find that the
16 product is -- that these issues are not be adequately
17 addressed, then the Agency would further contemplate
18 other policies that we would need to pursue with this
19 type of product. One of which we made known to the
20 industry was that we clearly do not want any
21 additional outbreaks associated with this kind of
22 product. This was the third outbreak that we know of

1 that was rather major associated with the product, and
2 that an alternative could, in fact, be considered,
3 that raw product can't be used, that it would have to
4 be precooked. And so that would be our -- some of the
5 thinking that we would go into in terms of policy for
6 the future if, in fact, we find that there isn't a
7 good response on industry on addressing validated
8 practical cooking instructions.

9 MR. TYNAN: Additional questions regarding
10 the Micro Committee paper?

11 There being none, I want to thank Gerri.
12 Gerri, thank you for coming up.

13 MS. RANSOM: Thank you.

14 MR. TYNAN: I think on Tab 13, we'll move to
15 Tab 13, which has to do with Post-Harvest
16 Interventions to Reduce Salmonella in Poultry. We
17 have Dr. Patty Bennett who is here and who is going to
18 talk about that or respond to any questions you have.

19 We're getting off easy at this meeting I
20 think. Questions on Post-Harvest Intervention?

21 Okay. There being one, I'm going to let
22 Dr. Bennett go. If you have any questions, you can

1 catch her at lunch. Okay. Thank you.

2 Okay. We have -- before I bring the next
3 speaker up, I'm going to ask the question first. Do
4 we have any questions on State Reviews under Tab
5 Number 14? An Update on State Reviews. Dr. Harris?

6 DR. HARRIS: No one needs to come up. This
7 is a very quick straight forward question. Are we
8 still on schedule to be completed for all 28 by the
9 end of '06?

10 DR. MASTERS: Barb Masters. Yes.

11 MR. TYNAN: Dr. Harris, do you have a follow
12 up? That was a -- any other questions regarding State
13 Reviews?

14 I think last but not least on briefings and
15 updates, we have the Update on the Technical Service
16 Center. Mr. Elfering, and I'll see if Lynvel here?

17 DR. MASTERS: No.

18 MR. ELFERING: Actually, just a very quick
19 question. We still hear periodically that there are
20 discrepancies from people in District Offices and the
21 Tech Center, that information that has come in out of
22 the Tech Center is not always in agreement with some

1 of the interpretations done in the District Offices,
2 and I'm just wondering if you're hearing anything on
3 those issues, and if there's been anything done to
4 rectify it.

5 DR. MASTERS: While Phil's figuring out the
6 microphone, I will comment that one of the things
7 you'll be seeing in the Strategic Implementation Plan
8 on Small and Very Small Plants, I think is Phil is
9 trying to provide some leadership over that.
10 Certainly from the time I started, at the Tech Service
11 Center, consistency is always an issue when you have
12 that number of employees trying to answer questions,
13 and so that's always a leadership challenge when
14 you're trying to provide leadership for that number of
15 employees but under Phil's direction, he's working
16 with Dr. Roth and Matthew Michael who you met as a
17 leader of the Program Evaluation Staff, and they are
18 doing an evaluation of our Technical Service Center,
19 including interviewing our employees in the field,
20 also the folks at the Technical Service Center, and
21 also they're going to be doing a Federal Register
22 notice to get public comments on the Technical Service

1 Center services.

2 Additionally, another component of that is
3 they're starting to post commonly asked questions on
4 the website and that helps to see in one location all
5 the commonly asked questions and that helps to get
6 that consistent answer by posting those questions in
7 one location. Additionally, they're starting to do a
8 process of collecting questions and answers at the
9 Tech Service Center and collect those in a database at
10 the Tech Center. So I think Phil's trying to address
11 that in multiple ways at the Technical Service Center.

12 DR. DERFLER: I don't really have anything
13 to add. The only thing I'd add to that is among the
14 commonly asked questions are questions having to do
15 with recently issued directives and notices, and so
16 we're collecting the questions that we get about them
17 and we're posting them. There's a link on the Tech
18 Center website and they're also listed underneath the
19 specific directive or notice that they address.

20 MR. TYNAN: Other questions on the update on
21 the -- I'm sorry. Mr. Link.

22 MR. LINK: Charles Link. Just on the IKE

1 area, the comment, I'm just curious as to are you
2 getting comments and how is that whole system working
3 o United States?

4 DR. DERFLER: We are getting comments. What
5 we do is we post a draft, Interactive Knowledge
6 Exchange, to provide an opportunity for comment on it.

7 We then considered those comments in final and post a
8 final version. There are some comments that we get,
9 and we use them in putting together the final version.

10 MR. TYNAN: Other question regarding Tech
11 Service Center?

12 Again, some of our folks, if there's
13 questions that come up during the breaks or at
14 lunchtime that you want to pose, if the folks are not
15 here, we'll try and get the answer to you at a later
16 time.

17 I think it's important to probably the meat
18 of our meeting, which has to do with the actual issues
19 for discussion that you will be doing in your
20 Subcommittees this afternoon. And there are two. And
21 the first is measuring establishment risk control for
22 risk-based inspection. There is a paper under Tab 6,

1 and I have Mr. Don Anderson from our Office of OPEER
2 that will be -- that's the Office of Program
3 Evaluation, Enforcement and Review, that will be doing
4 the presentation to kind of pose the discussion just a
5 bit. And we're getting some light on the screen. Can
6 everybody still see it or do we need to move for just
7 one moment.

8 MR. ANDERSON: I hope you can see that okay.
9 I know it's getting some sunlight on it there. Thank
10 you very much, Robert.

11 I'm Don Anderson. I believe that FSIS has
12 made some good progress on several fronts in advancing
13 risk-based inspections. We're going to talk about a
14 specific area today of risk-based inspection, but I
15 think an extremely important one, and that is how FSIS
16 can measure how well establishments control the risks
17 in their operations.

18 Last November FSIS reminded the Committee
19 that under traditional inspection, you have two
20 responsibilities that we have to meet. We have to
21 conduct carcass-by-carcass inspection on slaughter
22 lines and we also have to conduct inspections in

1 processing operations at least once per shift. And
2 also as explained in November, okay, there is no plan
3 to change either of those requirements.

4 Rather, we intend to add a new dimension as
5 to how we do our inspections and that is to do
6 inspection on more of a risk basis. So it's an
7 additional dimension.

8 We are going to be considering, or we think
9 we'll be considering several different types of risk
10 factors to make our resource allocation decision.
11 We'll look at hazards. We'll look at likelihoods of
12 hazards. We'll look at the exposure potential in
13 establishments.

14 What we want to focus on today is how well
15 establishments control the risk in their operations.
16 So it's a particular part of these risk-based
17 inspections.

18 As Dr. Raymond said this morning, we want to
19 make sure that we're using data the best we can to
20 make use of our inspection resources in the most
21 effective ways that we can. So today's discussion is
22 about risk-based inspection in both slaughter and

1 process establishments and processing only
2 establishments.

3 Today we have approximately 5500 active
4 federally inspected establishments that are under
5 HACCP requirements. So there's about 5500 plants that
6 we're talking about today, and approximately a quarter
7 of those are combination slaughter/processing
8 establishments and approximately three-quarters are
9 what we refer to as processing only establishments.
10 And we are talking about how we allocate resources in
11 all 5500 of those establishments but we're not -- we
12 are not talking about how we allocate inspection
13 resources to the slaughter line inspection. That's
14 not a topic for today. That doesn't change under what
15 we're talking about today. Rather, we're talking
16 about risk-based inspection of processing.

17 Furthermore, we're not talking about how we
18 do inspection in egg products establishments. We're
19 talking about federally inspected meat and poultry
20 processing establishments only.

21 You see on this slide what we consider to be
22 the several important components of what we anticipate

1 to be a Risk-Based Inspection System. We're going to
2 talk a little bit about each of these now, food safety
3 system implementation, food safety system design,
4 pathogen control, in-commerce findings, enforcement
5 actions and then we've got sort of a catchall other
6 considerations that we don't think necessarily fit
7 nicely into one of those components. We understand,
8 we acknowledge that there may be a little overlap
9 between some of these components. We think that's
10 probably okay. We think it's more important that we
11 capture all of the data and all of the information
12 that goes to risk control and if there's some
13 overlapping factors, that's okay. We want to make
14 sure that we don't want to miss anything important,
15 and we'll have a question for you about that later.

16 Okay. Let's talk first about the first
17 component, food safety system implementation. Our
18 measurement objective here, what we're trying to do,
19 is measure how well and maybe how consistently if you
20 want to think of it that way, an establishment
21 controls risks in its own operation. Okay.
22 Noncompliance records or NRs, which have been referred

1 to several times in the discussion today already,
2 document all noncompliance that inspection program
3 personnel observe, whether they're food safety or
4 other consumer protection. Risks will not change
5 under risk-based inspection. We will continue to
6 document all regulatory noncompliance.

7 However, we do not believe, the Agency does
8 not believe, and this is what was brought up earlier,
9 that all NRs are equally indicative of how well
10 establishments control risks in their operations. And
11 so what we're currently doing is discussing what types
12 of noncompliance, what types of regulatory deviations
13 do we think are more important or better indicated
14 than others of how well establishments control risks
15 in their operations. We're trying to look at what
16 types of noncompliance are more important than others,
17 and if you think some are more important than others,
18 how can we weight the additional weight to those
19 noncompliances that we think are more important than
20 others in producing a measure of how well
21 establishments control their risks.

22 The second component, which was also talked

1 a little bit about today, is food safety system
2 design. Dr. Raymond again emphasized earlier this
3 morning how important it is to some of the Agency
4 initiatives we have to try to improve this, how
5 important it is for all establishments, regardless of
6 size, to have robust designs. Okay. Effective food
7 safety risk management again is essentially embodied
8 in prerequisite programs, sanitation standard
9 operating systems and HACCP systems.

10 All else equal, we believe that
11 establishments that have better, more robust system
12 designs, are going to be better able to control the
13 risks in their establishments.

14 Currently today, FSIS' best window or best
15 look at how well establishments -- how robust the
16 establishments design -- food safety system designs
17 are, are what we call food safety assessments. We
18 conduct food safety assessments and establishments on
19 an ongoing basis, and we think that they are the best
20 way to get a good look at how well designed food
21 safety systems actually are. So what the Agency is
22 discussing now is how best you can capture the

1 information from food safety assessments or from other
2 sources to get at the robustness or effectiveness,
3 kind of intrinsic effectiveness of the design of the
4 food safety system.

5 The third component is pathogen control.
6 There's also been a little bit of discussion about
7 this this morning. The Agency has several pathogens
8 and testing programs or microbiological testing
9 programs I should say, in federally inspected
10 establishments. We do conduct pathogen testing
11 programs of several different types of ready-to-eat
12 products. We conduct listeria testing of ready-to-eat
13 products. We conduct salmonella testing of ready-to-
14 eat products. And the question came up, do we conduct
15 E. coli O157:H7 testing in ready-to-eat products, and
16 the answer is yes, in certain of those beef and --
17 products we do. I think the last time I checked,
18 there were several hundred establishments in which
19 we're conducting E. coli O517:H7 tests in ready-to-eat
20 products. There are several thousands establishments
21 actually that have -- that are subject to some of our
22 ready-to-eat testing requirements.

1 FSIS, of course, also conducts E. coli
2 0157:H7 testing in certain types of raw ground beef
3 products, and there are currently about 1600
4 establishments that are subject to those testing
5 requirements.

6 And finally, we conduct salmonella testing,
7 salmonella verification testing in approximately 2,000
8 establishments that do some combination of
9 slaughtering boilers, cattle, market hogs, soon to be
10 turkeys and also establishments that product ground
11 beef, ground chicken and ground turkey. So there's a
12 lot of data from t hose 2000 odd establishments on how
13 well they control pathogens we think in that
14 salmonella testing data.

15 So what FSIS is doing is trying to solicit
16 different ways that we can factor the results of our
17 testing programs into our measure of how well
18 establishments control risks. We consider that to be
19 a very important component of risk control.

20 The next factor that we want to talk about
21 are in-commerce findings. Products that are
22 potentially deleterious to public health food

1 sometimes in our commerce, and when they do, we
2 sometimes see, frequently see product recalls and/or
3 consumer complaints, or there may be other events or
4 incidents that will bring to the Agency's attention,
5 okay, that there are potentially deleterious products
6 of in-commerce.

7 So let's see. In about the last year there
8 were approximately 40 health related recalls and there
9 were several thousand consumer complaints. We have a
10 recall database. The Agency has a consumer complaint
11 monitoring system, and again we're looking at ways at
12 a minimum to bring data in from recalls and bring data
13 into our system from consumer complaints so that we
14 can include both types of findings in our measure of
15 how well establishments control them.

16 Enforcement actions that occur are normally
17 the result of either food safety assessment. We
18 mentioned food safety assessment a few moments ago.
19 Enforcement actions typically result either from food
20 safety assessments or from kind of a culmination, if
21 you will, the logical culmination of implementation
22 problems that are documented through serious types of

1 noncompliances. However, there are occasional
2 instances when enforcement actions are taken against
3 establishments for reasons other than those, and
4 although it's not a very common occurrence, we do
5 believe that it may be important to enhance inspection
6 in establishments in which those types of enforcement
7 actions are taken, and if we can't -- if we're not
8 capturing them somewhere else, we want to make sure
9 that we capture enforcement actions in such instances,
10 and so we'll be looking at ways to do that.

11 Finally we have as I said kind of a catchall
12 area that we refer to as other considerations, and
13 these are sorts of findings or data elements that
14 aren't necessarily part of our traditional data
15 system. For example, federally inspected
16 establishments that product and ship beef trim or
17 other intact beef components to other federal
18 establishments that in turn produce raw ground beef,
19 consider those types of establishments, and if we get
20 a positive E. coli O157:H7 sample from a raw ground
21 beef product, and we find that suppliers, if there are
22 certain perhaps suppliers of establishments that test

1 positive providing beef trim to those establishments.
2 They show up in what we call a steps database which
3 is our system E. coli O157:H7 positive supplier
4 database. I know that's a mouthful. But basically we
5 think if an establishment is showing up as a positive,
6 as a supplier, the E. coli O157 grinder, then we would
7 like to recognize that and bring that into our measure
8 of how well those establishments are controlling
9 risks.

10 We may also want to enhance inspection, of
11 course, in establishments that ship products that
12 yield positive pathogen tests in agricultural
13 marketing service school lunch program -- testing
14 program for example. So there are just a couple of
15 examples of the other types of data that we think we
16 should bring into our measure of how well
17 establishments control risks.

18 And now let's turn to the questions that
19 we'd like each Committee to consider this afternoon.
20 The first question is are these all the appropriate
21 objective for measuring risk control? Should any
22 objectives or corresponding features be deleted? Or,

1 should any be added? If you would jump the slide 4
2 for a moment.

3 These are the components we're talking
4 about. We would like you to consider this afternoon
5 whether these are the right things that the Agency
6 should be looking at and considering in our measure of
7 how well establishments control risks. So that's the
8 first question that we'll ask you to consider. If
9 you'll go to 12.

10 The second question, once you've identified
11 what you think are the important components that we
12 should include in our measure of risk control, then
13 ask yourselves this please. Are some of these
14 components more important, that is, are some of these
15 factors better indicators than others of how well
16 establishments control risks? And it's a two part
17 question because if you think some are more important
18 than others, should we give some of those components
19 more weight in our measure of this control than other
20 components? So that's question number two.

21 And lastly, we would like to know what the
22 Committee thinks about including in our measure of

1 risk control, kind of acknowledging if you will on our
2 measure of risk control, that certain establishments
3 have very effective implementation or very effective
4 system design. If an establishment for example, a
5 food safety assessment indicates that an establishment
6 has an especially robust design, food safety system
7 design, perhaps we should acknowledge that in our
8 measure of risk control so that we don't do as much
9 inspection in that establishment as we might
10 otherwise. So that's the third question that we'll
11 ask the committee to consider this afternoon.

12 So I'll pause and see if anyone has any
13 questions at this time.

14 MR. TYNAN: Questions from the Committee?
15 Dr. Carpenter who was first.

16 DR. CARPENTER: David Carpenter. I want to
17 go back to pathogen controls. You talked about
18 salmonella verification testing. That means a number
19 of things to me. So if you could just elaborate.
20 Does that mean that you're going to look at the
21 ability to detect salmonella in the product in the
22 environment or does it mean that the test is adequate

1 for finding salmonella in any product using a
2 standardized methodology, or does it mean that
3 salmonella is an appropriate indicator organism to say
4 that you're really cleaning up this, this operation?

5 MR. ANDERSON: Well, I think those are all
6 three good questions, and I know we're capturing
7 those. I think that's something that we should
8 discuss. I do know that the agency does both product
9 testing and environmental testing, at least we do
10 environmental testing in certain establishments, and I
11 think that we will discuss whether we should include
12 both of those.

13 I can't speak at this time to the
14 verification of methods and those sorts of things but
15 I think that's a very good question because what is
16 important is the data that we're relying on and I
17 measure this default was validated. We want to use
18 validated, of course.

19 DR. MASTERS: David, I'll add to that, and I
20 think those are good questions and ones we would want
21 your input on. I think those are important things for
22 us to talk about and consider, and at this point, what

1 we had wanted some input on is are salmonella control
2 in raw products, is our salmonella testing one we
3 talked about, when Don talked about our salmonella
4 testing in 2000 plants. He was referring to our
5 pathogen testing that -- pathogen reduction testing
6 that we do as an Agency, that we're doing in the
7 products to meet our pathogen reduction to form a
8 standard that we're doing as part of our HACCP
9 regulations that we put out, and that was the testing
10 that he was referring that we're doing in our own
11 laboratory. That does not preclude us from discussing
12 and talking about the types of questions that you're
13 putting on the table. So I think there some types of
14 discussion that should take place this afternoon if
15 that's helpful.

16 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Govro?

17 MR. GOVRO: Mike Govro, Oregon Department of
18 Agriculture. I'm looking at what you've written down
19 here from the standpoint of someone who deals more
20 with FDA programs, milk, shellfish, food manufacturing
21 and probably the greatest portion of my time is in the
22 retail program, and in the retail program, it's fairly

1 risk focused, and we look at the five identified
2 factors CDC has identified as the risk factors, and
3 they actually said these five things are the ones that
4 are most closely associated with food-borne illness.
5 I think they've even got percentages and ranked them,
6 and this kind of looks back to your question of wading
7 the NRs, and I think that would be a good way to go
8 about it, and I'm just wondering if FSIS has done
9 anything similar, has information from CDC that has
10 identified practices in meat plants that are
11 specifically related to food-borne illness and final
12 product particularly ready-to-eat products or the
13 production of adulterated products and if you think
14 that information would be obtainable and useful.

15 MR. ANDERSON: I don't know that the Agency
16 has. Maybe someone else can speak to that. I am
17 somewhat familiar with the FDA's priorities or weight.
18 One of the things I want to remind us is that what we
19 talked about mostly is, is different types of data
20 that we might bring into a measure of establishing
21 risk control. If I remember FDA's criteria properly,
22 they also look at some of the so-called inherent risk

1 factors, and those are things that we are talking
2 about including in our Risk-Based Inspection System
3 but what we talked about, and so maybe we're kind of
4 thinking -- talking a little narrowly here, but we're
5 talking about bringing into a measure of risk control
6 certain types of data, but there will be other types
7 of data that go to other aspects or risk, that will
8 also factor into this risk-based inspection, and I
9 know that some of the FDA factors are --

10 DR. MASTERS: And, Mike, I can certainly
11 tell you we've been working with CDC closely and I'm
12 not aware of this specific document, but I can assure
13 that we've met with CDC. Dr. Raymond happens to be
14 bringing with him public health background and has
15 been meeting with Dr. Gerberday (ph.) and so it's
16 something that we can certainly put on his agenda, and
17 so we'll certainly pursue trying to get our hands on
18 that document. So I appreciate your bringing that up.

19 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Kowalcyk?

20 MR. KOWALCYK: I have a couple of questions.
21 One's related to the ranking of the or weighting of
22 the NR report, and it also involves the pathogen

1 control measures. What resources has the Agency put
2 up against these tasks? I mean what is the Agency's
3 thinking in the way of who in the Agency is going to
4 be charged with looking at this data to see if an
5 appropriate wading scheme can be developed as well as
6 applying what's really regulatory sampling for
7 pathogen control measures in a risk-based system like
8 this? What are the Agency's plans? I mean these are
9 big issues to tackle. So I'd like to get an idea of
10 what the Agency's looking to do internally to answer
11 these questions.

12 DR. MASTERS: To jump in here a little bit,
13 Don. We currently have a Steering Committee and a
14 workgroup that has begin to work on these issues which
15 is where this particular document has come from, and
16 so as Don indicated in the beginning there, there are
17 a few issues that came out of the last NACMPI meeting
18 and this is one from which he is the lead on the
19 Steering Committee and a lot of the work that will
20 come forth and come to this Committee as well as to
21 our third party will come from. Obviously the Agency
22 has to generate ideas so we can bring them forward,

1 and so there's a Steering Committee that is currently
2 generating these ideas so that we can bring them
3 forth, and that's kind of the division that we have at
4 this point, is having this Steering Committee that's
5 made up of predominantly our Headquarters employees
6 out of our policy group but there's representatives
7 from all eight program areas that sit on the Steering
8 Committee, that they would generate ideas and when
9 they're ripe enough to bring forward to this Advisory
10 Committee and to our third party group that we will
11 bring them forth so that we can get input before we go
12 too far that they're not able to step us back for
13 those kind of things. So we felt like we had reached
14 the point at which we could bring this one forth to
15 the Committee and to the third party. So this is the
16 first one that we've brought forth to the Committee
17 and will be moving forward with.

18 MR. TYNAN: Michael, did you have a followup
19 question?

20 MR. KOWALCYK: No.

21 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Finnegan?

22 MR. FINNEGAN: Yes, I have a couple of

1 questions. Here on the components of risk control
2 measures consider only significant food safety NRs.
3 Are the very nature of NRs going to be changed like a
4 major/minor critical type thing or how do you -- do
5 you know what the true food safety NR like O157:H7
6 positive from a clerical, or do you have some kind of
7 a system to determine that?

8 MR. ANDERSON: I think that -- again, those
9 are good questions but I don't think what we're
10 talking about at this time would involve actually
11 changing the way that inspection personnel document
12 noncompliance. Regulatory noncompliance, as I say,
13 will continue to be documented.

14 What we're, what we're trying to do in our
15 various working groups and what we're asking the
16 Committee to actually consider this afternoon, is
17 whether indeed some types of regulatory noncompliances
18 are more indicative of risk control problems than
19 others, and if so, which ones those are or how can we
20 go about identifying which ones those are so that we
21 can, can give greater weight into our measure of risk
22 control, those types of regulatory noncompliances.

1 MR. FINNEGAN: Okay. And how about those
2 food safety assessments? I've seen EAI0 reviews that
3 were I mean very small plants, the one I'm thinking in
4 particular, slaughter only one day a week and all they
5 did was, you know, cut and grind raw product. I mean
6 that was like 26 pages. You know, is there some kind
7 of a system where you can just highlight the food
8 safety, food safety critique rather than have all them
9 pages that somebody's going to have to go through?
10 Just to narrow it down, simplify it, streamline it.

11 MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I think the answer's
12 yes. We, we -- food safety assessments are documented
13 I believe on Forms 5000-8 I think is the current
14 documentation form. Mr. Palesano is affirming that.
15 So we have a form that captures the results of food
16 safety assessments and a lot of that information is in
17 narrative, but there also are some sort of findings
18 and categorical findings at the bottom of the 5000-8.
19 Again, we're considering how we can use information
20 either from the existing 5000-8 or from some modified
21 version of that but we think it's very important to do
22 what we need to do to capture the salient information

1 from the food safety assessment process. If we're
2 capturing the salient information today, that's fine,
3 and we'll use that information as appropriate in our
4 measure of risk control. If we're not capturing that
5 information or all the information that we need to,
6 then we want to make sure we devise a way of doing
7 that. So that's something that we would like your
8 suggestions on, -- suggestions on.

9 MR. FINNEGAN: Right, I agree that the food
10 safety assessment is a very good tool. I was just
11 thinking of some way to streamline it a little bit to
12 get to the pertinent facts.

13 MR. ANDERSON: Absolutely. We think that's
14 critical, yes.

15 MR. TYNAN: Ms. Eskin?

16 MS. ESKIN: Under the list of risk control
17 measurement objectives, you have a heading other
18 enforcement actions.

19 MR. ANDERSON: Yeah.

20 MS. ESKIN: I'm looking at the document in
21 our folder, and it says prior enforcement actions
22 resulting from causes not captured by the other

1 components. Could you elaborate? I'm assuming those
2 all have some -- these enforcement actions that have
3 some food safety implication, but can you give
4 examples of what that might be?

5 MR. ANDERSON: Examples of such food safety
6 assessment?

7 MS. ESKIN: No. Of --

8 MR. ANDERSON: Excuse me. Of --

9 MS. ESKIN: -- other enforcement actions,
10 what would be an example of --

11 MR. ANDERSON: I think there are a couple of
12 examples that have come up. One is that enforcement
13 actions are sometimes taken when inspection personnel
14 observe extreme humane handling violations in
15 establishments, we'll take enforcement actions for
16 that. There are other examples that other -- there
17 have been cases where enforcement actions have been
18 taken against the establishments because there's been
19 cases of inspector intimidation if you will. What
20 we'll have to do, one of our challenges will be to
21 identify what types of enforcement actions -- what
22 we're trying to isolate are those type of enforcement

1 actions that have a bearing on how establishments
2 control this to make sure we have captured them.

3 DR. MASTERS: Sandra, to get to your point,
4 we were looking for those that relate to food safety,
5 and in this case, we're looking for those, as Don
6 mentioned earlier. Most enforcement relates to either
7 failure to execute the program over time which would
8 have been documented NRS or to the design of the
9 program which would have been documented through a
10 food safety assessment.

11 However, because we're not consistently in
12 every plant every day on the design of a program,
13 there might be a circumstance that a plant shipped
14 product that had E. coli O157:H7, for example. We go
15 in to do the food safety assessment and see that they
16 were not cooking their product at a particular
17 temperature. We go ahead and suspend the plant before
18 we complete the food safety assessment. So we don't
19 have a documented food safety assessment. They were
20 implementing their product as it was designed. We
21 don't have a documented food safety assessment in the
22 system, and so we don't have that particular

1 component. So there's an example where we would not
2 have a food safety assessment. We don't have NRs
3 because the plant was doing a good job of executing
4 the program as it was written but because we found
5 when we initially went in a not well documented
6 program, we would have to go ahead and take the
7 enforcement actions for the safety of public health,
8 and over time we would ultimately get that food safety
9 assessment but for public health and welfare we felt
10 the need to go ahead and suspend operations so they
11 could get a well designed program in place.

12 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Govro?

13 MR. GOVRO: Mike Govro, Oregon. Another
14 question related to a different -- between the
15 emphasis that FSIS and what happens at the retail
16 level, an emphasis in the food code. And it has to do
17 with employee hygiene, illness, exclusion of ill
18 workers, and there seems to be a different. I looked
19 up in I think it's 5001, Bill sent me a reference to
20 that, in your briefing paper here, it talks about
21 consumer safety inspector performing a variety of
22 verification procedures which is was a little bit

1 unclear to me as to what that entailed. So he sent me
2 this document, and in reading through it, on page 1-
3 20, it says if inspection program personnel have
4 questions about an employee having an infectious
5 disease, he or she should discuss this with plant
6 management. Inspection program personnel are not
7 trained to diagnose infectious diseases which is quite
8 a different from the emphasis at the retail level
9 where there are four, and I think now five identified
10 major illnesses, both managers and inspectors are
11 required to know what they are, what the symptoms are,
12 and management are required to exclude employees who
13 are ill with those illnesses. And so what I'm
14 wondering is, is are these illnesses not a concern in
15 USDA plants, particularly producing ready-to-eat
16 products. Should we worry about it like we do at the
17 food service level or perhaps should there be some
18 more emphasis on that aspect of it?

19 DR. MASTERS: This is Barb Masters, and I
20 think that's a good point, Mike. However, from a FSIS
21 perspective, we have traditionally put that burden
22 back on the regulated establishments but I think it's

1 certainly something you should be welcome to raise at
2 the Subcommittee, but we don't want to leave anybody
3 with the impression that there's not a concern within
4 FSIS or the regulated industry but typically this
5 burden has, and by regulation, the industry is to
6 preclude anyone with symptoms or signs of illness that
7 would cause concerns and industry has taken that
8 responsibility and borne that responsibility.

9 MR. TYNAN: Other questions for Don
10 regarding the establishment risk control?

11 Well, with that, I would suggest we perhaps
12 close out this particular issue. We're early on our
13 agenda. I think we were pointing on lunch at 12:00.
14 Maybe we could take a bit longer and go until 1:00 and
15 come back and we will begin issue number two. Is that
16 agreeable to everyone? Okay. I'm looking for a
17 motion to adjourn for lunch? I didn't hear one, but I
18 know you all are going to do it anyway. So -- all
19 right. Thank you very much. We'll see you at 1:00.

20 (Whereupon, a luncheon recess was taken.)
21
22

1 success for all meat and poultry establishments, and
2 we believe that making the nations food supply safe is
3 essential for public health but it also makes good
4 business sense for the industry and practice.
5 Effective HACCP implementation is critical to public
6 health, and we have a role in our society to make sure
7 that establishments have the tools that they need to
8 maintain a safe food system. So with that as a
9 background, another piece of information I'm sure you
10 all are aware of it that there's a large number of
11 small and very small plants, small and very small
12 being according to the definition of the Small
13 Business Administration, they're scattered throughout
14 the United States. This map shows you a current
15 distribution and shows you where they're concentrated
16 and where they are scattered.

17 They're a very important part of the
18 nation's food supply. As Dr. Raymond mentioned this
19 morning, anytime you're eating a meat or a poultry
20 product, you may or may not know where that product
21 came from. You may not know, it may be coming from a
22 small plant. Many small and very small plants are

1 suppliers or end up interacting with in some way with
2 the large plants and products are intermixed and
3 intermingled and goes many places. So they're a very
4 key component of the nation's food supply.

5 FSIS engaged in some listening sessions
6 recently, outreach and listening sessions, with small
7 and very small plants. Some of you participated in
8 those at least from a point of view of being there to
9 host the session or to join us, to listen to some of
10 the things that small plant owners and operators had
11 to say. Bobby Palesano, who is here with me today is
12 the co-leader of the Task Force, attended a couple of
13 these sessions. We had sessions throughout the
14 country, Montana, California, Texas, Pennsylvania,
15 Massachusetts. We heard a lot of different things
16 from the small plant owners and operators. We're very
17 interested in hearing about their needs, about their
18 challenges, about the kinds of things that they would
19 like to see from us in terms of assistance.

20 In addition to that, as background and
21 somewhat as a catalyst to this, in December, the
22 International HACCP Alliance hosted a meeting to do

1 some strategic planning to identify the needs of the
2 small and very small plants. Dr. Masters attended
3 that. Dr. Raymond attended that. Bobby Palesano and
4 myself attended. Joe Harris was there. I may be
5 missing some of you who are here who were there. It
6 was a group of people who represented several
7 Government agencies. They as well as academia and we
8 had some very small plant owners who were also present
9 to react and to provide some input to that.

10 What we learned through the listening
11 sessions and through the needs identification process
12 that we went through in Dallas, is in general, I mean
13 we could give you a long list of things we learned,
14 but in general, what we learned is our strategy up to
15 this point has been focused on helping small and very
16 small plants with developing their HACCP plans, in
17 other words, with an execution side of the HACCP rule.
18 However, the kind of things that people are needing
19 today are in a different direction. They're in the
20 direction of designing a HACCP plan. So what we
21 learned is that we needed to focus our outreach
22 strategy on supporting the scientific basis for

1 developing and maintaining a HACCP plan.

2 We all know that the environment we work in
3 is one that's very dynamic. We continue to learn
4 through science and through practical experience, a
5 lot of different things, and that means that the plans
6 and the ways that we're implementing our food safety
7 systems are going to have to change as we get more
8 information. We know that the Agency's policies have
9 changed. Therefore, we know that plants are going to
10 need to change to address new information, things that
11 happen with pathogens and so forth.

12 So the Agency stepped back, looked at what
13 we had gathered, the information that we had gathered
14 and the things that we have learned, and in response
15 particularly to the Dallas meeting, Dr. Masters asked
16 us to form an internal Task Force. Bobby is co-
17 leading that with me. There are a number of people in
18 the room who are on the Task Force who are here that
19 you could talk with. Mary Cutshall, Cheryl Hicks I
20 saw. There may be others that I'm just overlooking at
21 the moment.

22 But the Task Force represents all eight

1 program areas in FSIS and our charge was to look at
2 the needs that are posted on the International HACCP
3 Alliance website from the Dallas meeting, and to
4 develop a strategic implementation plan to outline the
5 things that FSIS will do. At the Dallas meeting it
6 was recognized that industry may be doing some things
7 as well, but as a Task Force, our focus is on the
8 things that FSIS will do in response to these needs.

9 Essentially in your materials, what you'll
10 see is a copy of the plan and the plan is organized
11 around seven basic themes. So first I'm going to run
12 through those basic themes, those seven basic themes
13 with you, and then I'll give you some examples of more
14 specific action items associated with those themes.

15 The first theme that you see here if you
16 can't see through the sun and the shadow is the
17 strategy of a one-stop customer service. What we
18 found when we met as a Task Force with all those eight
19 program areas, is that each program area actually
20 contributed some part in serving the needs of the
21 small and very small plant owner and operator.

22 I will tell you that my dad is a small

1 business owner. He's not a meat or poultry plant
2 operator, but he's a small business owner, and I can
3 only imagine how frustrating it might have been for
4 him to have eight different offices to call to try to
5 get information. So when we saw that as a group, we
6 realized that that had to be a real key component of
7 what we were doing. We know that the small plant
8 owners and operators don't have a lot of time. We
9 need to make it as easy as it can be for them to
10 access information if they're reaching out and they're
11 trying to learn and trying to improve their food
12 safety system, and their food defense systems as well.

13 So we're working to draw together all the
14 information so that someone in FSIS does the legwork.

15 If a plant owner and operator needs information, they
16 don't have to call eight different offices. They call
17 one place or they e-mail one place and someone who
18 intercepts the call or the e-mail does the legwork to
19 get that information for the small plant owner and
20 operator.

21 Technical resources is another key theme
22 that came up over and over again. For example, those

1 of you who are really familiar with FSIS know that we
2 have a mountain of material that sometimes is
3 difficult to wade through, difficult to try to figure
4 out. I have a need. How do I match my need with all
5 of these things that FSIS has to offer. So technical
6 resources, and in some cases we're finding that we may
7 have a mountain of things, but there may be something
8 missing. There may be one thing that a small plant
9 owner or operator needs that we just don't have. So
10 that's another theme.

11 Education and training is a theme. It has
12 to do with the fact that the small plant owners and
13 operators may not be able to afford to give a lot of
14 access to resources, and as Dr. Raymond mentioned this
15 morning, we're going to try to reach out to them
16 through a variety of methods to make sure that they
17 have the type of education and training that would be
18 of benefit to help them improve their food safety and
19 defense systems.

20 The other four strategies, one has to do
21 with partnerships. We already had in place
22 partnerships with Extension, with State, with

1 academia, but we wanted to revitalize those
2 partnerships and perhaps even extend those
3 partnerships even further, to get people more actively
4 engaged and engaged in this effort that focuses on
5 scientific basis for this food safety system. I think
6 it was mentioned this morning that we're looking at
7 partnering with the World Development Agency, that we
8 may be able to route small plant owners and operators
9 to the Rural Development Agency to let them know that
10 if they need to make facility changes or equipment
11 upgrades, there may be some type of way that they
12 could get low cost loans through that Agency.

13 So we're looking at how we can expand our
14 partnerships outside of FSIS, to help small plants
15 owners and operators, to get people engaged in this
16 more fully.

17 Another theme that we felt was an important
18 strategy was needs assessment. Those of you who have
19 done these assessments know that in some ways it's
20 like peeling an onion sometimes. You get a big
21 picture, and that's really kind of where we are right
22 now. We have a big picture. We know that there are

1 needs, but when we actually try to go out and pinpoint
2 some of those needs, what we find is that we need more
3 information to actually really be sure that we meet
4 that need. So we need to do those needs assessments
5 regularly in an ongoing way so that we don't find
6 ourselves, you know, five to seven years out again
7 saying, oh, we need to, you know, look at this and
8 make some changes again. So needs assessment is the
9 fifth theme.

10 The sixth theme was evaluation. We have a
11 lot of resources. We have a lot of activities that
12 are going on right now but we don't have a lot of data
13 that shows this. Where are we really reaching people.
14 You know, as I said, we have this mountain of
15 materials but small -- very small plant owners in the
16 listen sessions are saying, we need something. So we
17 need something with our evaluation that defines where
18 is it that we're hitting the targets, where are we off
19 base, and how can we bring all that together better.

20 And last, leveraging resources. At this time,
21 under the constraints that we're operating under, we
22 decided we're not going to reorganize at this point.

1 We're simply going to work together in program areas.
2 As we discuss some of the issues, one of the things
3 that we learned is different people might have
4 actually been working on some of the same kinds of
5 things in different offices. So we're trying to
6 leverage that, put that together, so that people are
7 working together, ending up probably with better
8 products. So we're trying to eliminate any
9 duplication, and then bring some synergy together with
10 all these different program areas.

11 So those are our seven strategies. Here are
12 some highlights, some features, some of the things
13 that we're working on right now to specifically bring
14 those strategies to life.

15 One of those strategies that Mary Cutshall
16 and the CIPO (ph.) staff are working on is working on
17 the web page, consolidating all the information that
18 the Agency has that would benefit the small and very
19 small plant. We found again that that information was
20 scattered all over the website, and that some of the
21 information on the website could be reformatted to
22 focus more on their needs, and Mary's already begin

1 some of those efforts right now at low or no cost, and
2 she's making plans for some of the things that have
3 bigger costs for the future.

4 The website is listed here, and later this
5 afternoon when we get into our working groups, those
6 of you who are working on this issue, if you're
7 interested in going to the see that website, we'd be
8 very interested in having your comments on how we
9 might be able to make that better.

10 We also have a toll free number that you're
11 going to call to get support. That is at the
12 Technical Service Center. We have not actually gone
13 through the long and bureaucratic process of forming a
14 staff that's going to deal with this, but we have
15 created what we call an ad hoc group. We've taken the
16 first steps. There is a group of people that is
17 devoted to meeting the needs of the small and very
18 small plants, and we're working on that right now, so
19 that they're going to be the ones that someone's
20 calling to make sure that the caller doesn't have to
21 call eight places. They know where to call and they
22 can get the information or they know when the e-mail

1 comes in, how to get that information for the small
2 plant owner and operator.

3 We're planning at some point we're going to
4 have some additional listening sessions. We would
5 still invite people to share ideas, to share their
6 input. It's important for us to continue with those,
7 and some other examples of things that we're doing is
8 action items. We're creating a clearinghouse for
9 questions and answers. That was one of the things
10 specifically mentioned at the International HACCP
11 Alliance as one of the needs. People are saying there
12 are questions all over the place, answers all over the
13 place, let's be able to go to one place so we can look
14 at that, and we're working on doing that to get it
15 posted on the website.

16 We have some plans to begin with joint
17 training that would include plants and inspectors.
18 This summer, at some point, you'll be seeing us
19 working into some regulatory workthroughs, to meet
20 that action item.

21 In addition, we're looking for validation
22 support to meet the specific small and very small

1 plant needs. We're hearing from small and very small
2 plants that there may be some types of products that
3 they don't have, the type of information they need for
4 the processes that they have to provide validation
5 support.

6 So in big picture terms, what are the
7 outcomes that we're looking for? Well, in general,
8 we're looking to make sure that the small and very
9 small plants have a full range of scientific and
10 technical support and assistance that they need to
11 compete by demonstrating that they have safe and
12 effective HACCP systems and that we have some results
13 that show that we have enhanced food safety and food
14 defense protection.

15 Now we'll just walk through the questions
16 that we're going to cover in the breakout group this
17 afternoon. We've got four of those questions.

18 Our first question is what suggestions do
19 you have for how FSIS through the International HACCP
20 Alliance could locate industry representatives who are
21 willing to share expertise and other technical
22 resources and assistance with very small plants? In

1 other words, how can we engage the industry through
2 the International HACCP Alliance in helping with the
3 small and very small plant needs.

4 Our second question is what suggestions do
5 you have for how FSIS could obtain data on the types
6 of support that small and very small plants need for
7 their food safety systems? This goes back to that
8 statement earlier about peeling the onion. Right now
9 we're hearing that people need some type of support
10 and when we actually ask, we're having difficulty
11 getting some specifics on that. So it would really be
12 helpful to us if you could help us with that question.

13 The third question is what suggestions do
14 you have for how FSIS could best work with a users
15 group consisting of all partners to provide feedback
16 on the usefulness of existing tools and services to
17 pilot new activities or materials and to make
18 recommendations on how to improve the outreach
19 functions to better meet the needs. In other words,
20 we would like to test run some of our things that we
21 are getting ready to introduce, or we would like to
22 test some of our modifications. Obviously since we

1 have a raft of resources and we think they're really
2 good, maybe it's something simple like people just
3 don't know they exist or they don't know where to find
4 them, but maybe there's something more fundamental.
5 So we need some feedback from a users group like that.

6 Our last question is what suggestions do you
7 have for how FSIS can obtain data on the types of
8 support -- we just went through that question.

9 Our last question, a very generic
10 question -- I just wanted to make sure everybody's
11 awake. I think we are awake. What other suggestions
12 do you have for FSIS in strengthening our strategy for
13 outreach to small and very small plants. So in other
14 words, just in general, we're interested in all of
15 your idea about this.

16 So with that, I will -- that's the end of
17 the formal presentation. Bobby and I will take some
18 questions. Dr. Elfering?

19 DR. ELFERING: Back HACCP implementation,
20 there was a system that was set up where every State
21 had a State contact and a State coordinator for HACCP.
22 Did it work and would it work again to kind of re-

1 implement that system where you had some contact
2 people in every State and maybe some coordinators? Or
3 maybe it didn't work very well. I don't know. I know
4 that, you know, pre-HACCP implementation, we used to
5 get a lot of calls and maybe it was just not a very
6 good system.

7 DR. KELLY: I will just start the dialogue,
8 and I think that when you're -- the time period you're
9 talking about, it did work, and I think that we are
10 interested in revitalizing that network. As I
11 mentioned, we are moving away from the strategy that
12 we started with to something new which means that it's
13 time to revitalize, time to make those contacts again,
14 time to engage in that, and other people may have some
15 comments.

16 DR. MASTERS: This is Barb Masters and,
17 Kevin, I would that there are still contacts in each
18 of the 50 States and those are still posed on our
19 website and we still utilize those contacts and
20 coordinators, and I think what Karlease is saying is
21 true. They were very effective at the implemented
22 HACCP, and I think we move through the process of

1 implementation and we became more comfortable and we
2 were all more confident with implementation, we all
3 kind of moved away on relying on those contacts and
4 coordinators, and we are looking at re-energizing
5 those contacts and coordinators and your input on how
6 effective you thought they were in the beginning. We
7 found it to be a very effective resource. They still
8 exist and I think we're very open to the idea of re-
9 energizing and re-utilizing those coordinators as they
10 were utilized in the beginning of implementation.

11 MR. ELFERING: This is Kevin Elfering again.

12 One of the reasons I asked because I was one of
13 the -- I'm the State contact, and I guess we don't
14 know that it's still being utilized, and it would be
15 great. I mean we used to get a lot of calls. I still
16 get a call every once in a while. So I think it might
17 be another resource for you to be able to increase the
18 outreach to some of these very small plants.

19 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Schad.

20 MR. SCHAD: Yeah, I just wanted to make a
21 comment on that idea. I think it is and can be very
22 effective but I think that would have to be part of

1 the clearing house on the Qs and As, so the answers
2 across the country were the same no matter what
3 coordinator you spoke with.

4 DR. KELLY: Other questions?

5 DR. RAYMOND: I don't have a question but I
6 have a comment. One of the things that I kind of like
7 reflect on when we did these listening sessions and
8 did the HACCP Alliance, the International HACCP
9 Alliance meeting, we found a lot of fingers were
10 pointing at the Agency. Why are we having trouble
11 with some of the very small plants not having robust
12 HACCP plans and, you know, the diverse answers to the
13 same question for instance, and it's fairly simple to
14 correct by having a Q and A. There were things that
15 we just weren't doing well. There were times that I
16 think we felt that everybody -- maybe didn't feel, but
17 we failed to remember that not everybody had a QA
18 person full-time or half a person full-time, and just
19 hadn't taken it into consideration.

20 So I guess the point I want to make is we're
21 doing everything that we think we can do. We want you
22 to tell us what we've forgotten to do to try to

1 revitalize this outreach, but I realize that there
2 will still be some very small plants and some small
3 plants that will not come to the table, that will not
4 watch a DVD or a CD-ROM, and those are the ones that
5 we will begin more enforcement, more food safety
6 assessment but we will make this effort so no one can
7 say we didn't try. So it has to be a two way street.
8 The small and very small plants that aren't up into
9 the 21st Century must make that effort. We'll do
10 everything we can to reach out to them and work with
11 them but we cannot do it alone.

12 MR. TYNAN: Ms. Eskin?

13 MS. ESKIN: Yes. Can someone in the Agency
14 remind me, and I guess the rest of us, of the
15 definition of a small and very small plant and give us
16 some idea again of what percentage of the market, with
17 slaughter or processing, whether it's volume of sales,
18 whatever criteria are used just to understand what
19 kind of impact they have?

20 MR. PALESANO: This is Bobby Palesano. I
21 will start with part of your question at least. We --
22 actually the SBA definition of plant size is those

1 establishments with over 500 employees are large. So
2 the small plants run from less than 500 down to 10,
3 and the very small are less than 10. There are some
4 dollar figures involved in that also, and I don't have
5 those off the top of my head but I'd be glad to get
6 those for you.

7 MS. ESKIN: Thank you.

8 MR. PALESANO: To follow up a little bit
9 more on some of your other concerns, is I think it is
10 quite well known that the large part of the production
11 of meat and poultry products come from large
12 facilities even though the largest percentage of
13 establishments are small and very small plants,
14 Sandra, and if that's not enough information, I'll be
15 glad to give you more information. Another thing,
16 Sandra, is a lot of the small and very small are under
17 State inspection programs also.

18 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Finnegan?

19 MR. FINNEGAN: Yes. To me a good, a good
20 source for the very small plants is when they come in
21 and do an EIAO review. In doing that, the EIAO
22 reviews will document that they lack supporting

1 documentation, for example, or a CPP which validates
2 their HACCP plan. They know what they need. Can
3 these EIAO guys, are they allowed to or capable of, to
4 just give supporting documentation if they have it to
5 fit their particular product?

6 DR. RAYMOND: That's part of the mindset
7 that I mentioned in my opening remarks. Prior to
8 today, they weren't really encouraged to provide help.
9 They were there to do an inspection, and the mindset
10 will change. Karlease and others are going to spend
11 what, three days next week training trainers who will
12 then train the EIAO officers on how they can help
13 facilitate the plants moving into the 21st Century.
14 They will be there not just to do the EIAO jobs as we
15 know them now, but also to help and assist them with
16 the documentation or what is needed, and that will
17 take sometime to change the mindset like that. That's
18 difficult. And some people will need more help
19 changing their mindsets than others.

20 DR. MASTERS: Let me clarify though a little
21 bit, Mike. If they're actually in the middle of an
22 assessment and find a specific CCP that's not meeting,

1 they will not personally go find the CCP information.
2 What they will do is they will point them to
3 resources that are available because it's the plant
4 that will have to make the particular determination as
5 to what applies to their process because they will not
6 know the ins and outs of their process like the
7 plant's owner as you well know, but they will be in a
8 position to help point them. If they're aware of
9 resources, for example, on E. coli O157:H7, documents
10 that exist, then they will help point them to those
11 resources, and those are the kind of tools that we
12 want them to help make available so that they can say,
13 I'm aware that there are some documents available that
14 I want to point you towards, and they'll help point
15 them towards those kinds of resources.

16 MR. FINNEGAN: Great. I think that will be
17 an excellent resource, I really do.

18 MR. TYNAN: Mr. Kowalcyk?

19 MR. KOWALCYK: Yeah, I have one question
20 about obtaining data from the small and very small
21 plants. Has the Agency entertained the idea of
22 possibly sending out not necessarily scientifically

1 designed, but some type of questionnaire to get a
2 pulse for where the small and very small plants are
3 struggling with complying with the regulations, to try
4 to identify any common themes that certain plants of a
5 certain size can meet the requirements and they're
6 struggling with understanding them or just
7 communication of the rule, as well as getting feedback
8 from them with respect to what support they would want
9 from the Agency as far as helping them learn the rules
10 and regs. Has the Agency considered anything like
11 that?

12 DR. KELLY: I can at least start the answer,
13 and that is certainly we have considered it but the
14 Office of Management and Budget has some pretty strict
15 rules on gathering data that make it somewhat
16 difficult for us to actually go straight out with a
17 survey of that kind.

18 The listening sessions I believe have been
19 very fruitful and that's one reason why we want to
20 continue those, and obviously we want to gather
21 information from anybody who's accessing the services
22 that we have. We try to be as creative as we can

1 knowing that to some extent our hands are a little bit
2 tied with going out with a survey. Maybe some other
3 people want to add to that.

4 DR. MASTERS: Mike, a couple of things, this
5 is Barb Masters, that you'll see in our Strategic
6 Implementation Plan that came out of the International
7 HACCP Alliance meeting that I think get at some of the
8 same issues that you're suggesting is I think you'll
9 see that we suggested that we would look at trends of
10 pathogen testing results which would suggest that
11 they're not meeting pathogen sampling. That would be
12 an indicator that they might have a food safety system
13 that's not designed to allow them to meet pathogen
14 testing results.

15 We suggested that we would look at
16 noncompliance records, specifically in small and very
17 small plants, that might indicate that they're not
18 meeting a particular area of food safety plans. So we
19 said we would look at those trends. We would
20 definitely look at EIAO, our food safety assessments
21 in the small and very small plants, specifically to
22 see if there were any trends coming out in that area

1 that might allow us to come up with those same kind of
2 determinations. We indicated that we would look at
3 recall data to see if there were any trends. So those
4 are some of the trends that we thought we would
5 analyze for small and very small plants, trying to get
6 at some of the same issues.

7 We also pointed out that it would be useful
8 for some of our trade associations, and that's kind of
9 one of the first questions that we were asking of the
10 Subcommittee, is we were hoping that some of the trade
11 associations, and particularly through the
12 International HACCP Alliance, might take on the
13 objective of working with the small and very small
14 plants to do some of these kind of surveys for us, and
15 we were hopeful, and that was one of the discussions
16 that surfaced at this meeting, that we might be able
17 to partner with some of the trade associations to do
18 these kind of surveys because it's all very necessary
19 and essential. Thank you. Good question.

20 MR. TYNAN: Other questions from the group?

21 There being no other, we'll close this issue
22 out. Thank you, Dr. Kelly. Thank you, Mr. Palesano.

1 And I'm going to ask our A/V guy if he could
2 help me just a minute. We're going to go into the
3 public portion, and we'll need that microphone back
4 over here.

5 What we're going to do now, on our Agenda,
6 we have a public comment portion that allows folks
7 that have been sitting in the audience to make some
8 comments. As I mentioned earlier, we asked that those
9 folks that did want to make a comment sign up on the
10 sheet. I have a number of folks that are prepared to
11 make remarks. I'll call your name. I'm not sure what
12 order you signed up but we'll all have an opportunity
13 to get our two cents worth in, and if at the end,
14 there's somebody that omitted to sign up or has had
15 second thoughts about that, we'll give you the
16 opportunity as well.

17 And the first person I would call that
18 signed up is Dr. Craig Henry. And, Dr. Henry, if you
19 could identify yourself and your organization, that
20 would be great.

21 DR. HENRY: Absolutely. Thank you, Robert.

22 Good afternoon. I am Craig Henry. I am the

1 Senior Vice President and Chief Science Officer for
2 the Science and Regulatory Affairs Group the Food
3 Products Association. I'm going to read this verbatim
4 for the sake of transcription and time but first let
5 me say that the Food Product Association is the
6 largest trade association serving both the food and
7 beverage industry in the United States and worldwide,
8 and our laboratories, scientists and professional
9 staff provide technical and regulatory assistance to
10 member companies and represents the food industry on
11 various scientific and public policy issues.

12 The FTA commends FSIS and USDA officials for
13 again placing this most important issue on the Agenda
14 of the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry
15 Inspection.

16 FTA is a founding participant in the Risk-
17 Based Inspection Coalition, which is a broad-based
18 industry coalition composed of 10 associations whose
19 members represent the vast majority of meat and
20 poultry products produced in the United States. The
21 RBI or Risk-Based Inspection Coalition supports risk-
22 based inspection as a means to enhance food safety.

1 FTA and the Coalition believe that it is
2 proper for FSIS to focus the allocation of its
3 inspection resources based upon risk.

4 We wish to reiterate our support for Agency
5 involvement of the National Advisory Committee on Meat
6 and Poultry Inspection in this open and transparent
7 process to engage all stakeholders in the pursuit of
8 our mutual goal of enhanced food safety by properly
9 focusing obviously limited inspection resource as well
10 as industry resources on the most significant food
11 safety issues.

12 As the Committee deliberates on this
13 important issue, we encourage the Agency to pursue an
14 aggressive timeline with key benchmarks to achieve
15 during the tenure of the current administration and
16 reasonably complete Risk-Based Inspection Program that
17 allocate resources based on risk.

18 The Coalition emphasizes again that to be
19 successful, a risk-based inspection effort must focus
20 on risk-based sampling and testing programs as well as
21 risk-based allocation of the inspection resources.

22 The Agency continues to make significant

1 strides on risk-based policies, to reduce the
2 incidence of listeria monocytogenes in ready-to-eat
3 products and more recently on policies to reduce the
4 occurrence of salmonella in poultry. However, the
5 proper alignment and allocation of inspection
6 resources is equally critical to improving food
7 safety.

8 We compliment the Agency for making the
9 Enforcement Investigation Analysis Officers, EIAOs,
10 available to establishments to answer questions and
11 provide input on ways to improve food safety programs.

12 As stated by the Coalition in earlier
13 comments, measures in success should include the
14 following: reduction in product recalls for food
15 safety reasons, better compliance with food safety
16 requirements along with fewer enforcement actions for
17 significant food safety issues and reduction in food-
18 borne illness outbreaks and sporadic cases to the
19 extent we are able to measure them.

20 FTA compliments that Agency for pursuing a
21 third party contractor, Resolve, to assist in
22 obtaining input from all stakeholders. We look

1 forward to working with the contractor and providing
2 stakeholder input on what risk-based inspection will
3 need to be for a successful program to enhance food
4 safety.

5 As the Committee deliberates on its new
6 assignment to provide recommendations to the Agency on
7 measuring establishment risk control, for risk-based
8 inspection, we trust that the recommendations
9 developed by the coalition and forwarded to the Agency
10 last December will be taken into consideration.
11 Hopefully by now it is recognized by all that an
12 unweighted use of a number of noncompliance records is
13 not an appropriate measure for the intended purpose.
14 Indeed, the coalition has recommended that
15 modification to the NR system may be required to make
16 it a significant element in any measurement system
17 for food safety risks.

18 In conclusion, again we commend USDA for
19 continuing the process that once successfully
20 completed will benefit FSIS, industry, and most
21 importantly, the consumer as it focuses everyone's
22 efforts on the areas with the greatest potential for

1 positive impact on public health. Thank you.

2 MR. TYNAN: Thank you, Dr. Henry.

3 The next individual we had sign up is
4 Mr. Tony Corbo. Tony, if you'd come up and identify
5 yourself and your organization.

6 MR. CORBO: Tony Corbo from the consumer
7 group, Food and Water Watch.

8 I have a question as it relates to the FY
9 2007 Appropriations Bill that's being debated right
10 now on the House floor. The language that is
11 contained in the Report that the House Appropriations
12 Committee sent to the floor indicates that the
13 Committee is going to provide the full amount to cover
14 pay costs, an increase of \$16,625,000 for risk-based
15 management and control of salmonella, an increase of
16 \$2.6 million and information technology support
17 inspection, an increase of \$1.886 million. And it has
18 additional funding for food defense.

19 Following that, there's this statement. The
20 Committee directs that within the amount provided for
21 food safety and counter terrorism activities, priority
22 should be given to maintaining existing personnel and

1 operations that are critical to insuring the safety of
2 domestic and imported food rather than funding new
3 functions, grants or agreements.

4 Now the total amount that the house is, is
5 proposing is \$853 million. It's \$9 million less than
6 the total budget that you all went up to the Hill
7 with. So that included the \$105 million requested for
8 user fees.

9 So my question is, is the amount that is in
10 the bill that's on the House floor going to cover both
11 the existing inspection functions and any risk-based
12 inspection activities that you all envision for this
13 coming year?

14 DR. MASTERS: I think all the deliberations,
15 Barb Masters, that we've been talking about, Tony, at
16 this time and in this Committee as we mentioned at the
17 last meeting, we envision doing within our existing
18 resources. I think we've been talking about gaining
19 your input on doing things within our existing
20 allocations, within our existing resources and we're
21 gaining input from this committee to try to do things
22 more effectively and efficiently within our existing

1 resources and gaining ideas from this Committee. And
2 if they suggest to us that we need to go further than
3 that, then obviously we'd have to go back in future
4 years to Congress with those future ideas. But ideas
5 we're bringing forth through this Committee and
6 through Resolve at this point, are with existing
7 allocations and with existing resources.

8 MR. CORBO: So in light of the duress that
9 you're under right now, you don't, you don't foresee
10 having to curtail any of the activities that you
11 foresee with risk-based inspection?

12 DR. MASTERS: Again, at this point, we're
13 looking at working with this Committee on ideas that
14 we might be able to implement under existing
15 allocations or existing resources or existing
16 authorities, and if we can gain ideas that we could
17 move forward with sooner rather than later, then that
18 would be great. If they give us ideas that we need to
19 go back to Congress with, then we would do that as
20 well, but we're obviously at the beginning stages of
21 moving forward.

22 MR. CORBO: Thank you.

1 MR. TYNAN: Thank you, Mr. Corbo. The next
2 name that we have signed up for comment is Felicia
3 Nestor. Ms. Nestor, if you wanted to say who you're
4 with.

5 MS. NESTOR: I'm also with Food and Water
6 Watch. I have a couple of comments.

7 The first that's in my mind, I think that
8 the monetary cutoff for very small plants is \$250,000
9 if I'm not mistaken.

10 There's been a lot of concern here about the
11 NRs and how well the NRs are going to reflect the food
12 safety profile of the plant. I just wanted to mention
13 a number of things that I'm aware of since I have so
14 frequent contact with the inspectors in the plants
15 that might impede the possibility of trying to figure
16 out how well these plants are performing.

17 First of all, the Agency supposedly has a
18 policy of NRs being written on every single
19 noncompliance. I hear from the field that inspectors
20 are frequently dissuaded from writing an NR until they
21 spot a trend, and I recently saw a question about a
22 BSE issue and an answer from the Tech Center saying,

1 you know, if it's the first time, forget about it, you
2 know, you may want to wait until you see a trend.

3 Also if I'm not mistaken, I could be wrong
4 here, but someone can correct me if I'm wrong, prior
5 to HACCP the 7s on the line were able to participate
6 in writing the PDRs. So what the 7s would see would
7 get recorded. Under HACCP, it's my understanding that
8 7s are no longer allowed to write the NRs. They have
9 to inform a GS-8. So the foreign sector, only the
10 foreign sector can write the NR, and the foreign
11 sector can only write a NR on what or she sees. So if
12 the foreign sector is not there at the time the kidney
13 comes out of the animal that's 30 plus, and the GS-7
14 tells the 8 that it happened, there's not going to be
15 an NR on it. Those are only two examples, but I think
16 the Agency should look very closely at other things
17 that are impeding the recording of all the
18 noncompliances.

19 And another thing is we've got inspector
20 shortages and we have had for years. Yeah, we're not
21 going to have any furloughed, but there are other
22 decreases in inspections. It's my understanding, and

1 I've heard from several District Offices, that they've
2 been told for years that they're not allowed to hire
3 the number of inspectors that are slotted for that
4 district. There's an unofficial ceiling. So we
5 don't -- we're not fully staffed in any district as
6 far as I know. And I certainly invite any, you know,
7 if I'm wrong, you know, please tell me and I'll go
8 back to my sources and ask where the problem is here.

9 Also Barb Masters says we have a hiring
10 freeze. I don't know how long that hiring freeze is
11 going to go on for, but we know that there's
12 attrition. I mean the workforce is, a lot of them
13 were hired in the seventies. A lot of them are
14 eligible for retirement. So if we have a good number
15 of inspectors retiring and no one being hired, you
16 know, we're going to have less inspectors.

17 We know that for years inspectors have been
18 doubled and tripled up in the metro areas. Previously
19 FSIS used to record if they couldn't perform an
20 inspection task, the inspector would record the reason
21 why that task wasn't performed and one of the codes
22 was inspector shortage or vacancy. In other words, I

1 couldn't get to the plant. So if we have inspectors
2 doubled and tripled up, and they are just barely able
3 to do some of the 03 tasks, the food safety tasks in
4 these plants, you know, we should be able to confirm
5 that from the data that, you know, this plant has not
6 had full inspection and perhaps the reason that there
7 are no NRs in this plant is because it hasn't really
8 been inspected very frequently.

9 I wonder how you answer the question.
10 Perhaps some of the plants that are performing very
11 well, perhaps they're performing well because they've
12 had a very strong inspection presence for years and
13 what's going to happen if you pull the inspector out
14 of that plant if the plant starts slipping, and then
15 you don't have the inspector present to be able to
16 determine. So I think the Agency should address that
17 issue. There's got to be some kind of a fail-safe way
18 of, you know, spotting the red flags as they go up.

19 The other thing I wanted to say is I'm happy
20 that a member of the NJC was invited to attend this
21 meeting. I mean I think it's really important that
22 the frontline personnel who put these regulations into

1 place every day are here to hear what's being
2 discussed and also to provide input about what's
3 happening on the frontline. I'm hopeful that maybe in
4 the next meeting or perhaps within the next few
5 meetings, the NJC can find a place at the table.

6 And, one final thing. Barb, you were
7 talking about the three pillars, we've got industry,
8 we've got consumers, we've got the Agency. And as a
9 person who worked with whistleblowers for many years,
10 I found it really invaluable to be able to talk to the
11 frontline inspectors and find out how the regs are
12 actually being enforced, and I think that that
13 information has provided valuable input to the
14 consumer community. I think the Agency is not always
15 hospitable to inspectors when they, when they want to
16 let the consumers know something that the Agency is
17 going to keep behind the scene. There's an inspector
18 who is going to be negotiating a disciplinary charge
19 within the next few days, and the reason he got the
20 charge was because he forwarded me an e-mail from the
21 Tech Center, and he's up on charges because he sent it
22 to a known consumer advocate. Now that doesn't sound

1 like an Agency that wants to involve consumers and
2 wants to pursue a transparent process. This was on
3 the non-amenable species, and the e-mail was the one
4 where the Tech Center said, yes, perhaps dogs and cats
5 could be mixed in with amenable products and they
6 wouldn't have to be inspected first. I think that's
7 something that consumers would want to know. And so,
8 you know, I don't think that this inspector -- I think
9 that that e-mail probably was discussed between the
10 Agency and the industry. I think consumers should be
11 in on it as well. Thank you.

12 MR. TYNAN: Thank you, Ms. Nestor. I should
13 point out, too, just as a reminder to everybody, that
14 in addition to the National Joint Council, we do have
15 representatives from our association of technical and
16 supervisory professionals, and they have a number of
17 people that work in field locations. We have Olga
18 Morales who is sitting in this afternoon for ATFP, and
19 she's a recent graduate of EIAO positioned in Puerto
20 Rico, and we have Patty Bennett who is representing
21 the NAFE, and they certainly have a large number of
22 people that are in plant locations as well. So we're

1 trying to reach out to all of our employees in that
2 regard but thank you, Ms. Nestor.

3 The last person I have that signed up is
4 from our international community. It's Dr. Wolf Meyer
5 (ph.), and I hope I pronounced that correctly, sir,
6 with the European Union, and if you could be certain I
7 caught that correctly.

8 DR. MEYER: Right. Thank you. Thank you
9 very much. My name is Wolf Meyer. I'm with the --
10 Health and -- of the -- Commission.

11 I'm amazed to see how similar the questions
12 are here as we are asking in Europe and it's certainly
13 not a coincidence because the food trade goes over a
14 large part, and the food industry is operated on a
15 global scale and so are the risks we have talked in
16 these authorities and worldwide.

17 So I think there's also scope of reach out
18 to risk management on a global scale and follow this
19 trend of USDA in the United States. And what I
20 mention is in terms of the communication. I think
21 there would be a lot to be gained in terms of risk
22 management, increasing food safety -- risk, if we

1 could resolve issues around data exchange, information
2 exchange between the authorities, on market surveys,
3 on findings, but if we can allocate inspection
4 resource to where maybe somebody else has identified
5 it.

6 Secondly, we should be aware that in changes
7 in inspection procedures, even in -- we have to
8 communicate because the importing country might feel
9 that if these procedures are followed -- I think
10 there's a lot to be gained also if we try to develop
11 changes in inspection procedure, jointly and keeping
12 dialogue and communications.

13 As I said, we have basically the same
14 questions in Europe as we do here. So I think that
15 it's a true window of opportunity to, to exploit these
16 sort of -- situation and opportunity of change and
17 manage it in the way that we have communication with
18 each other and dialogue.

19 Maybe also there's a lot to learn from other
20 countries like --

21 That's what I wanted to say. I thank you
22 for this opportunity to be here, and I hope that we

1 can continue the dialogue.

2 MR. TYNAN: Thank you, Dr. Meyer.

3 I'm going to -- for those of you who may
4 have come in a little bit late, perhaps did not have
5 an opportunity to sign up, is there anybody else that
6 would like to make a comment at this point?

7 DR. RAYMOND: Bob, if no one else is getting
8 up, I'd --

9 MR. TYNAN: I think Dr. Raymond would like
10 to make a comment.

11 DR. RAYMOND: Yeah. In response to a couple
12 of the, of the public that have commented, Dr. Meyer
13 and I have had a conversation aside over the lunch
14 break, and I couldn't agree with him more that there's
15 no point in every country taking a look at risk-based
16 inspections by themselves and reinventing the wheel
17 and going through the same -- mistakes and so forth,
18 and we definitely can benefit. I have met with
19 representatives of the European Union just last week,
20 and we had this discussion, and I did tell them at
21 that time, that our proposal that's on the table today
22 is not ready for, you know, prime time, and compared

1 with other countries yet. That's why we're here today
2 and tomorrow. We'll be meeting with consumers and
3 industry next week, and then our third -- neutral
4 third party, of course, will be taking this out on the
5 road show and looking for more comments. And then at
6 some point in time, we would love to share our plan
7 with other partners including our trading partners,
8 particularly our trading partners, and those who maybe
9 have taken steps already towards risk based.

10 Barbara and I and others met with the
11 Netherlands two weeks ago with our counterparts and
12 listened to what they're doing in the Netherlands and,
13 you know, there's some interesting things out there
14 and there's some exciting things out there. So,
15 Dr. Meyer, I appreciate your comments and they're duly
16 noted, and we will follow up on this when this product
17 is a little bit more ready for prime time, number one.

18 Number two, with the concerns of
19 international trade, I don't think we're talking about
20 anything here today that will influence a negatively
21 or positively international trade. We're just trying
22 to make the food products that we have in this country

1 safer. We're not talking about less than date
2 inspection. That's been brought up by comments by the
3 public today. No one has mentioned less than date
4 inspections on the Food Safety Inspection Service
5 Team. That's not where we're going. We're talking
6 about resources currently available to us and moving
7 them around to where they're most effective and to
8 where we can continue to improve our, our product.

9 And then lastly, the comment about not being
10 open and transparent. I don't know the particular
11 incident that was mentioned. Even if I did, I
12 wouldn't comment on it in public but with Dr. Masters
13 and I assuming our roles last summer, if you did not
14 know, I'll let everybody here at the table know that
15 we have instituted monthly meetings with consumers and
16 monthly meetings with industry. Barbara and her team
17 meet with consumers for an hour. Office Food Safety
18 meets with consumers for an hour, both on the same
19 day. A lot of those are by telephone calls so not
20 everybody has to fly into D.C. We've done that.

21 We've also made Barbara's and mine and
22 Dr. Mann's and Mr. Quick's schedules. They're on the

1 web. You can see our daily appointment schedules.
2 We've done that. We've tried to be open and
3 transparent. I think, I think we're making an honest
4 efforts. We'll make mistakes along the way. You'll
5 have to, you know, I apologize for those ahead of
6 time, but I think for the most part, this
7 Administration has been much more open than in the
8 past. That's why the third party's coming on board to
9 help continue that process thanks to your
10 recommendations at your last meeting and, in fact,
11 recommendations followed at the last meeting on who we
12 should even entertain, you know, to submit
13 applications from, and we appreciate that input from
14 the Subcommittee of this Committee.

15 So we'll continue to try to be as open and
16 transparent. When you catch us not being, just let us
17 know.

18 DR. MASTERS: This is Barb Masters. Just a
19 couple of things before we move to Subcommittee. I
20 know several of you in the audience as well as the
21 Committee have asked for copies of all of the
22 PowerPoints. We will get the Committee copies of the

1 PowerPoints to try to work with this afternoon. We
2 will make all of the PowerPoints available on our
3 website so that those of you in the audience can have
4 access to those after the meeting. So we will make
5 those available to you speaking of transparency, so
6 they will be available.

7 And also I just wanted to comment and
8 Felicia brought it up on the hiring freeze. I want to
9 make it very clear, I used the term that we have a
10 hiring freeze on non-frontline positions and I
11 probably should make that very clear so everyone
12 understands what non-frontline positions are. We have
13 got a hiring freeze on those positions outside of our
14 field. So here in Headquarters, District Offices, so
15 anything that is not related directly to inspection.
16 So I want to be very clear on that so everybody walks
17 away from the table on the same page. So I want to
18 clarify that, so everybody leaves the table at the
19 same place. So I appreciate your indulgence in that.

20 So I look forward to -- I'll try to walk
21 back and forth between the two Subcommittees. Before
22 Robert turns you loose, I appreciate all the good

1 input that we got during the public comment period,
2 and we'll look forward to everyone's work this
3 afternoon. So thank you.

4 MR. TYNAN: Before we go, I would direct you
5 back to Tab 3 in your notebook, and I think on the
6 first page, we have the Subcommittee breakdowns, and I
7 think the Subcommittee that will be looking at
8 establishment risk control, Ms. Eskin has been
9 designated the Chairperson of that group, and they
10 will be meeting in Room 0161 in the South Building,
11 and we'll get somebody to guide you there. I can see
12 you're relieved already.

13 And then the second Subcommittee will be
14 chaired by Dr. Joe Harris, and he'll be looking at
15 strategic implementation plan for enhancing outreach
16 to small and very small plants.

17 I have on the clock on the wall a little bit
18 after 2:00. I would suggest perhaps this be sort of a
19 rolling break, and if the Chairpersons are both
20 amenable, we would suspect that everybody should be in
21 the conference room at 2:30 or later. No later than.
22 We can -- excuse me a second while I sidebar. Okay.

1 2:30 is it.

2 So for Subcommittee 2, it's Room 1160, and
3 again if you need some guidance in getting there, Joe
4 will make sure you have someone to help you get down
5 there.

6 And with that, with that I move we adjourn
7 for the session and allow the Subcommittees to do
8 their work.

9 Are there any last minute questions or
10 issues before we go?

11 There being none, thank you very much for
12 spending the time with us this morning.

13 (Whereupon, at 2:10 p.m., the meeting was
14 concluded.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the attached proceedings
in the matter of:

NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
MEAT AND POULTRY INSPECTION

Washington, D.C.

May 23, 2006

were held as herein appears, and that this is the
original transcription thereof for the files of the
United States Department of Agriculture, Food Safety
and Inspection Service.

Sean Becker/Jack L. Becker,

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