

National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection

Update on Training and Outreach

Purpose

Over the past two years, FSIS has issued numerous policies to strengthen public health, including those addressing *Listeria monocytogenes*, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), *E. coli* O157:H7 and fecal contamination. These changes have had a significant impact on the FSIS workforce as well as implications for changes in industry practices. Thus, FSIS was faced with the challenge of training its workforce and for providing updates to industry, states and academia, so that the policies and changes in food safety verification activities were widely understood and implemented appropriately.

To address this challenge, FSIS training and outreach staffs collaborated to work hand-in-hand to transfer the training that was used to update our workforce on emerging policies into the hands of industry, states and other partners in food safety and public health. We used a variety of efforts to ensure that the message FSIS delivered both inside and outside the Agency was consistent. To date, this approach has been well-received.

Discussion

We tailor our training and outreach to all the audiences we address. Some examples include:

- In addition to the Federal Register notices, we posted new regulations and the supporting directives, notices, and compliance guidelines on the FSIS web site.
- Upon issuance of the policy change or update, training was provided to the FSIS workforce in the form of an interactive, narrated CD-Rom, which contained flow charts, illustrative video clips, copies of Agency issuances (regulation, directive, notice, compliance guideline), a summary of the directive and quizzes.
- The FSIS Constituent Update, a weekly source of information on FSIS news and issuances, is sent to all interested constituents, including industry trade associations.
- Outreach was conducted with a series of workshops scheduled at strategic locations throughout the United States to share information with owners and operators of small and very small plants, states, and other partners in food safety and public health. Notices of these workshops were announced in letters to establishments, posted on the FSIS web site, and published in the Agency's weekly Constituent Updates with instructions for registration. Agency subject matter experts presented information at the workshops with question and answer periods.

- Materials were provided to workshop participants in the form of workbooks which contained the regulations, directives, notices, supplemental guidance materials, and PowerPoint presentations. The CD-Rom used to train the FSIS workforce was also included.
- Web cast technology was used at some workshops to reach a wider audience of participants.
- Q&As from the public outreach meetings were transcribed and posted on the FSIS web site.
- Copies of the workshop workbooks and training CD-Rom were sent to State Directors of meat and poultry inspection programs.

Overwhelmingly, the reaction to the workshops has been very positive. The workshops were well attended and the participants actively engaged in the question and answer session with FSIS subject matter experts. FSIS has plans for additional policy updates to improve public health protection in 2005. Therefore, the need to conduct training and outreach activities will continue to be significant.

Updates on Present Work and Committee Recommendations

Since the November 2004 meeting of the Committee, FSIS has taken on new challenges. The Agency has issued new instructions to inspection personnel on food security. We have also initiated a series of food security workshops around the country.

FSIS has been working hard to improve internal communications. We have formed an Internal Communications Board, which has representatives from all program areas. This spring and summer, we will conduct focus groups to assist in identifying the needs of Agency personnel and further enhancing internal and external communications.

We have also undertaken a needs assessment to look at outreach to underserved populations and methods we can use to reach them more effectively. We hope to have this completed and a plan in place by fall 2005.

We have been using and continue to use the model the committee suggested for sequencing training/outreach. First, train our personnel, and then provide outreach and guidance to industry and constituents.

We continue to use our University and extension partners, multiplying our outreach. So far this year we have cooperative agreements with 14 schools to provide a wide range of classes. We also have published a Federal Register Notice soliciting partners for outreach projects.

We continue to coordinate outreach through the Office of Public Affairs, Education and Outreach, Strategic Initiatives, Partnerships and Outreach staff to ensure consistency. We also have made sure that the Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officers (EIAOs) are aware of our resources. In fact, we are preparing a business card CD that talks about

FSIS outreach and available materials used to inform our constituents. We have used the food security workshops as an opportunity to work with trade association meetings to present outreach.

We continue to utilize technology such as web casts to provide information. We will soon be launching our intranet site, have greatly improved the information on our internet site and are working on the virtual resource center. This new initiative will be a repository of materials generated within FSIS as well as through our cooperative agreements and will provide broad access to food safety and security information and training.

The Office of Policy, Program and Employee Development continues to consistently provide Q&As on each new regulatory initiative and emerging issues. These are available on our web site.

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