

# National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection

## Update on Training and Outreach

### Purpose

Over the past years, FSIS has issued numerous policies to strengthen public health and food defense, including those addressing *Listeria monocytogenes*, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), *E. coli* O157:H7, food defense, fecal contamination. These changes have a significant impact on the FSIS workforce as well as implications for changes in industry practices. Thus, FSIS is 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 are widely understood and implemented appropriately.

To address this challenge, FSIS training and outreach staffs collaborate to work hand-in-hand to transfer the training that is used to update our workforce on emerging policies into the hands of industry, states and other partners in food safety and public health. We use a variety of efforts to ensure that the message FSIS delivers both inside and outside the Agency is 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 post new regulations and the supporting directives, notices, and compliance guidelines on the FSIS web site.
- Upon issuance of the policy change or update, training is provided to the FSIS workforce in the form of an interactive, narrated CD-Rom, which contains 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 is conducted with a series of workshops and web casts 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 are 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 present information at the workshops with question and answer periods.

- Materials are 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 is also included.
- Web cast technology is used at some workshops to reach a wider audience of participants.
- Q&As from the public outreach meetings are transcribed and posted on the FSIS web site.
- Copies of the workshop workbooks and training CD-Rom are sent to State Directors of meat and poultry inspection programs and to our network of coordinators.

Overwhelmingly, the reaction to the workshops and web casts has been very positive. The workshops are well attended and the participants actively engage 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 and 2006. 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 defense. We have also initiated a series of food defense 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 conducted focus groups to assist in identifying the needs of Agency personnel and further enhancing internal and external communications. The report based on the focus group findings has been sent to the Administrator.

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 have completed a background study, correlated information derived from workshops and web casts, interviewed representatives of various ethnicities and completed a preliminary report.

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 published a Federal Register Notice soliciting partners for outreach projects. Based on the response to the notice, FSIS funded 31 cooperative agreements covering four program areas of emphasis and outreach.

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 and are re-energizing our efforts to work with small and very small plants. We completed and will be distributing a business card CD that talks about FSIS outreach and available materials used to inform our constituents. We have used the food defense workshops as opportunities to outreach to trade associations.

We continue to utilize technology such as web casts to provide information. We have launched our intranet site, have greatly improved the information on our internet site and have developed content in our Internet virtual resource center. This site is a growing repository of materials generated within FSIS as well as through our cooperative agreements, and will provide broad access to food safety and defense 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.

### **Contact Persons**

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