

National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection

Legislative Update for FY 2007

Purpose

The following is a summary of the Food Safety and Inspection Service's (FSIS) fiscal year (FY) 2007 budget request.

Discussion

FY 2007 Request

For FY 2007, FSIS requested funding of \$862.9 million, a net increase of about \$33.5 million from the enacted level for FY 2006. Of the total, \$105 million is proposed to be derived from proposed new user fees from the industry.

In order to fulfill the Agency's statutory obligations to provide continuous inspection of meat, poultry, and egg products, the budget request includes an increase of \$16 million to provide for the 2.2 percent pay raise for FSIS employees to assure that the Agency is provided sufficient funds to maintain programs.

The budget request includes \$2.6 million for risk-based inspection. This funding will be used to prepare inspection program personnel for team inspection strategies and increased verification and microbiological testing. The funding will also be used to advance risk-based inspection in processing establishments through reprogramming databases to better assess plant data to determine where to sample based on risks to public health and the use of new technologies to increase the effectiveness of the risk-based inspection that inspectors perform including such things as rapid tests for residues and microbes. The funding also supports the development of risk-based verification strategies for meat, poultry, and egg products in commerce that will complement inspection activities performed in-plant and the use of data to base policies and regulations for inspection on information obtained that defines measures taken by establishments to reduce foodborne risks and the efficacy of measures implemented to reduce risk. Part of the budget request includes \$602,000 for risk-based *Salmonella* control. As part of the comprehensive *Salmonella* Initiative announced in February 2006, the funding would allow FSIS to do serotyping more quickly, initiate a Food Safety Assessment at a high risk establishment before an outbreak occurs, conduct more testing in areas where a cluster of high-risk serotypes are identified, and continually feed data concerning patterns to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and State public health officials.

The budget also requests a \$15.8 million increase for the Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative. A major component of the budget request (\$13 million) would be allocated for enhancement of the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN), a joint laboratory

partnership project between FSIS, the Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and selected State public health laboratories. This funding will help provide participating laboratories with the necessary training, laboratory equipment, and supplies to handle the surge capacity needed for a more robust laboratory network in the event an attack, act of nature, or hoax affects the food supply. With the \$13 million budget request for FY 2007, FSIS will be able to enhance the capabilities and capacities of the 18 laboratories currently under cooperative agreements with the Agency, as well as add cooperative agreements with five more laboratories. By the end of FY 2007 with the requested funding, a total of 23 State labs will be operational in FERN. The funding request also includes a \$2.5 million increase for FERN's two data systems: the electronic laboratory exchange network (eLEXNET) and a repository of analytical methods. The requested funding will be used to make eLEXNET available to additional FERN laboratories and other analytical, food-testing laboratories and to enhance the repository and populate it with numerous methods that will be obtained from analytical laboratories.

Also included is a \$600,000 request for the integration of FSIS data systems into the Department of Homeland Security's International Trade Data System (ITDS). Establishing this electronic linkage with ITDS will provide FSIS with a stronger ability to screen and verify the security of products imported into the United States in an efficient way.

The budget request also includes an increase of \$1.9 million for Agency efforts to support the President's Management Agenda in the area of information technology. Efforts to improve communication and information technology will allow all electronically stored information from all FSIS personnel to be integrated and available in real-time so inspectors have ready access to information necessary to protect public health. Specially, for inspector communication enhancements, such as PDA-type hardware for inspectors, the Agency is seeking \$615,000. A final aspect of the information technology improvements is the transition to a three-year life cycle for microcomputers delivered to the field inspection workforce. The original estimation of a five-year life cycle is not practical given the rapid pace of technological changes. To implement a three-year life cycle FSIS has requested \$1,271,000.

FY 2007 Subcommittee Markup

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies held a markup for the FY 2007 budget request on May 3, 2006. According to highlights released by the Subcommittee, FSIS is funded at \$853 million, \$24 million above FY 2006 and \$96 million above the Administration's request. The bill does not include \$105 million in new user fees proposed by the Administration. The measure also prohibits funding for implementation of the USDA rule which would allow poultry from countries eligible to export poultry to the United States to be processed in China and exported to the United States. (China is not eligible to export poultry to the United States from domestic birds slaughtered in its domestic plants.)

The House Committee on Appropriations has scheduled the full committee markup for May 9, 2006.

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