

National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection

Working Together To Protect Public Health: The Public Health Information Infrastructure

Purpose

A reliable, integrated, and usable public health communications infrastructure is the foundation for protecting public health. Critical to the success of this effort is getting the right information and data to the right people at the right time to make the right decisions. All Agency program areas and partners will need to work closely together to achieve and maintain this system. It should integrate the needs of the Agency's internal and external stakeholders and customers¹ by:

- providing reliable, real-time and securely accessible data and communications any place, any time;
- providing auditable information and intelligence analysis for decisionmakers, especially to support risk-based inspection, food defense, and predictive (rather than solely reactive) analysis with proactive alerting when performance measures are exceeded;
- supporting timely, consistent, customized, and reliable internal and external communications with our stakeholders, especially during times of emergency or food supply contamination/adulteration; and
- using current and approved business needs to drive technology decisions and create tools and services to best meet our customers'/stakeholders' needs.

Background

A more robust, risk-based inspection system and customer-driven communications system will ensure that our Agency's resources are used in the most effective and efficient way possible to help us meet future food safety challenges, some of which are either evolving or unknown today. An optimal risk-based inspection system is what FSIS is striving to achieve. Ensuring the safety of America's meat, poultry, and egg products requires a strong infrastructure. The risk-based approach is designed to both find problems that have occurred and anticipate problems to ideally minimize risk. This can be achieved efficiently and effectively by aligning Agency resources with the corresponding level of risk based on current and historical data. The Food Safety and Inspection Service's (FSIS) move toward a more robust risk-based inspection system and a reliable and useful communications system has driven the development of: a redesigned, eGov-supporting, customer-driven public web site (nationally recognized for its customer satisfaction); an easily accessible, information-rich, and dynamic intranet; a PartnerWeb export extranet partnership with the Agricultural Marketing Service; an enterprise architecture based on mission-related lines of business; and a system of management controls and performance measures monitored through a customized, near real-time dashboard-driven business intelligence application (AssuranceNet).

New Systems and Processes

¹ Current stakeholders/customers are defined as:

- **Internal FSIS/Mission Area:** Under Secretary, Deputy Under Secretary, Administrator, Deputy Administrator, Associate Administrators/Deputy Associate Administrators, field supervisors, inspectors, public affairs specialists, Technical Service Center staff, food defense committee, lab technicians, scientists, analysts, international affairs specialists, lab technicians, audit/compliance staff, and technical support staff.
- **Internal USDA:** Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Office of Communications, Office of the Chief Information Officer, public affairs specialists, other food safety/defense and public health specialists/analysts/scientists in Animal Plant Health Inspection Service/Agricultural Marketing Service/Foreign Agriculture Service, audit/compliance staff, and technical support staff.
- **External:** Food safety/defense and public health specialists in Centers for Disease Control, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, international/state/local/tribal governments, state ag directors, agreement partners, industry groups, businesses/industry, Congress, media, and the general public.

Several systems have launched in 2006. The first version of AssuranceNet, currently set to launch in June 2006, pulls inspection data from five databases using the data warehouse. This new application will allow agency staff, managers, and auditors to monitor how establishments, circuits, and districts are meeting over 50 performance measures in near real-time. All offices are slated to monitor their performance measures through this system over the next 12-18 months. A new process for monitoring customer interactions was enacted at the Technical Service Center (TSC). In addition to customer and information data culled and analyzed from the agency web sites, virtual representative tool, email boxes, customer satisfaction survey, and Hotline, the TSC has begun collecting, categorizing and analyzing customer queries for analysis. Patterns that emerge are reviewed to improve customer service and are also used as an early alert system for issues.

Future Systems and Processes

FSIS is migrating to a document management system and data warehouse to support AssuranceNet and other multi-database information monitoring and tracking systems. The Agency is working to improve current IT data and information for its customers by instituting an enterprise architecture (EA) governance process. EA is an ongoing effort to enable the Agency to support its current state, as well as transition to its target technical environment. This EA governance process, which includes the Capital Planning and Investment Control (CPIC) processes, strategic planning processes, and FSIS Systems Development Life Cycle (SDLC) methodologies, is a significant component of the public health communications infrastructure. Agency management controls and monitored performance measures underpin EA and allow for strategic decisions to be more traceable, measurable and easily auditable. FSIS' EA documentation includes a transition plan by which the Agency seeks to continue to achieve its overarching mission, goals, and objectives in support of protecting public health.

FSIS is shifting toward documenting management controls and performance measures, supporting the President's Management Agenda and eGovernment, and defining business needs to drive technology systems and support strategic decisionmaking, planning and communications. An important tool for these activities is the Food and Agriculture Bio-surveillance Integration System (FABIS). FABIS will be the framework for Agency program areas, Departmental mission areas and other selected partners to integrate and analyze domestic and international surveillance and monitoring data collected from various human and animal health systems. Using FABIS, FSIS employees and other selected partners will be able to share data and communications information with appropriate internal and external stakeholders in real-time.

Discussion

To ensure that the system supports the Agency's customers and stakeholders, we request feedback from the committee on the following questions:

- What types of data or information will help us make critical risk-based decisions? What exists now and who owns it? What needs to be collected, but isn't and who would own that? How would you prefer this data/information to be accessed (pc/cell/other handheld device/secure/wireless/active push (like email alerts)/passive pull (checking a system or site), etc.)?
- What constraints (time/resources/technology/policies) exist now that need to be considered? What constraints (time/resources/technology/policies) do you see in the next 1-3 years that need to be considered?
- What are the major (current and future) public health needs? Who are public health's major consumers/target audiences and what are their needs?
- Describe your ideal outcome (what does success look like to you? What are the performance measures for success), preferably intentions-based or role-based; such as, how can all

stakeholders (Federal/state/local/industry) work together to achieve the ideal? For example, in case of a major outbreak or natural disaster, the medical community..... Or, when a suspect animal or part is observed, an inspector should.... Or when a product has been intentionally compromised by an agent, government entities should be able to....)

- Prioritize these needs based on a risk-based framework. Scale: 1 (low) - 3 (high). Label the item as FSIS or non-FSIS for data owner.

Deadline for feedback: June 30, 2006.

Contacts

- Janet B. Stevens, PMP
Director, Management Controls Technology Staff
Office of Program Evaluation, Enforcement & Review
Director, Web Services Staff
Office of Public Affairs, Education & Outreach
Janet.Stevens@fsis.usda.gov
- Marcelo Olascoaga
Chief Information Officer, Office of the Chief
Information Officer
Office of Management
Marcelo.Olascoaga@fsis.usda.gov