

National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection Update on Training and Outreach

Purpose

Over the past years, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (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 and specified risk material. 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 to 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. We want to continue this process.

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 website.
- 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, and 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, webcasts and net meetings, 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 with instructions for registration are announced in letters to establishments, posted on the FSIS website, and published in the Agency's weekly Constituent Updates. Agency subject matter experts present information with question and answer periods.

- Materials are provided to workshop participants in the form of workbooks which contain the regulations, directives, notices, supplemental guidance materials, and PowerPoint presentations. The CD-Rom used to train the FSIS workforce is also included.
- Webcast and net meeting technology is used at some workshops to reach a national audience of participants.
- Q&As from the public outreach meetings are transcribed and posted on the FSIS website.
- 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, net meetings and webcasts 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. Therefore, the need to conduct training and outreach activities will continue as FSIS issues policy updates to further protect public health.

Updates on Present Work and Committee Recommendations

Since the November 2005 meeting of the Committee, FSIS has taken on new challenges. The Agency has issued new instructions to inspection personnel on food defense. We have initiated changes to our *Salmonella* sampling in conjunction with two public meetings. We have also held four listening sessions for industry across the country.

FSIS has been working hard to improve internal communications. Our Internal Communications Board continues to work to implement recommendations that resulted from last year's employee focus groups. The group is also planning to look at ways to improve external communications.

We have completed phase two of 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 webcasts, interviewed representatives of various ethnicities and issued two reports. We will also be including some optional questions for visitors to our web site to help us hone our understanding of our diverse audiences.

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. 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. In addition the Agency formalized a method to review and award all cooperative agreements through the Administrator's office.

We also have made sure that the Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officers (EIAOs) are aware of our resources. We completed and will be distributing a business card CD that talks about FSIS outreach and available materials used to inform our constituents.

We continue to utilize technology such as webcasts to provide information. We have a vastly improved intranet site and have greatly improved the information on our internet site. The Business and Partners page is a growing repository of materials generated within FSIS as well as through our cooperative agreements, and provides 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 website.

The Office of Public Affairs, Education and Outreach continues to collaborate with all our program areas to provide training and outreach both internally and externally. Some of the projects completed this year include:

Three training modules for field operations;
SIPO promotional video (now available on the web and CD but coming soon in business card format);
A CD of the post-harvest Salmonella meeting with Q and A's;
A CD on control of Listeria at retail;
A CD for new plants coming under inspection; and
A soon-to-be-released CD and workbook on moving to Alternative 2 for Listeria control for small and very small plants.

We continue to send out thousands of HACCP and food safety publications. The Agency has a strong commitment to continue this work and strive for improvement.

Many of the outreach activities listed above are incorporated into the Agency's implementation plan for enhancing outreach to small and very small plants.

Contact Persons

Mary Cutshall, Director
Strategic Initiatives Partnerships and Outreach Staff,

Office of Public Affairs, Education and Outreach
Phone: 202-690-6520
Email: mary.cutshall@fsis.usda.gov

Dr. Karlease Kelly, Chief Training Officer
Office of Policy, Program and Employee Development
Phone: 202-720-4104
Email: karlease.kelly@fsis.usda.gov