

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

<h1 style="margin:0;">FSIS DIRECTIVE</h1>	5620.1	1/11/10
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USING askFSIS

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to instruct inspection program personnel (IPP) on how to use the askFSIS application for viewing commonly asked questions and the answers to those questions, and on how to submit questions to askFSIS. The answers provided in askFSIS are statements of official policy. The askFSIS application provides IPP with a timely way to raise, and obtain definitive information about, discrete concerns that they have about a notice or directive. The concerns raised by IPP in their questions provide data that the Agency can use to help identify the Agency's policy development needs with regard to inspection-related issues. The application is accessible from any computer with Internet access and has the capacity to maintain lists of all user's questions in the user's account.

KEY POINTS:

- *Provides users guidance on searching askFSIS for answers to questions.*
- *Provides users guidance on accessing askFSIS, including resetting passwords and user names.*
- *Explains how collected data is analyzed and used to develop new answers.*

II. CANCELLATION

FSIS Notice 10-09, Using askFSIS, dated 2/3/09

III. [RESERVED]

IV. [RESERVED]

V. BACKGROUND

A. On August 16, 2007, FSIS launched askFSIS, a Web-based application, designed to help answer technical and policy-related questions from IPP, industry, consumers, other stakeholders, and the public. The interactive application provides in-depth answers to technical questions. The askFSIS application contains a knowledge base of questions

and answers that is searchable and allows visitors to seek answers to questions about such diverse topics as exporting, importing, labeling, sampling, and other inspection-related policies, programs, and procedures. The askFSIS application is able to notify users when posted answers are updated.

B. This application displays a summary list of questions linked to answers. If the information desired is not found, users are invited to submit a new question that may be directed to a specific division within the Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD). In submitting questions, users select a product and category after entering a question (see Section VIII.) Based upon the product and category that the user selects, the application directs questions to one of the following divisions of OPPD:

Division	Area
International Policy Division (IPD) - Exports and Imports	Exports, Imports
Labeling and Program Delivery Division (LPDD)	Labeling; Amenability Determinations
Policy Development Division (PDD)	All Others
Risk and Innovations Management Division (RIMD)	Sampling

C. The division provides the response, which askFSIS then sends to the user’s e-mail address. Some of the questions and answers are selected for posting.

VI. APPLICATION LOGIN

A. The askFSIS Web page <http://askfsis.custhelp.com> is available through the Start button on FSIS computers (Start/FSIS Applications/Internet-Intranet/askFSIS) or via a link on the FSIS Web page at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/> under the “I want to...” box on the right navigation bar. After accessing the askFSIS Web page, users should login to the application. New askFSIS users that want to submit a question will be asked to create an account with a username and password. Users cannot submit questions to askFSIS without an account. New users should select the “Create a New Account” button, fill-in the requested information, select “Create Account” and follow any on-screen prompts.

NOTE: There are no extra security requirements for askFSIS passwords.

B. After creating an account, the user can submit questions and obtain answers not found in the public knowledge base.

VII. SEARCHING THE ONLINE KNOWLEDGE BASE

A. Users of askFSIS may search the list of posted questions and answers using the keyword search feature. The user enters key words, e.g. meat, *E.coli* O157:H7, recalls and clicks on the search button, and the askFSIS application returns a list of questions and answers that it finds. Users may click on a link located to the right of the Search by Keyword text to open Search Tips. Clicking on the link provides tips that will help a user

fine tune a search. For examples of time-saving search tips see Appendix (askFSIS Search Tips) at the end of this directive.

B. Although the knowledge base is searchable without logging into the application, if the user logs into the application, other features (such as the ability to submit questions to askFSIS) are available.

VIII. SUBMITTING QUESTIONS

A. If the user cannot locate an answer to his or her question after using the search feature, the user may submit a question using the “Submit a Question” tab that appears at the top left of the screen. Because the knowledge base has a broad availability of answers to commonly asked questions, however, the “Submit a Question” tab is not visible or available until a search is performed. The user will select the “Submit a Question” tab and type in a subject and question.

B. The user also is required to “select a product” and “select a category” from a drop down list after entering and before submitting the question. The product and category the user selects determines which FSIS staff responds to the question (i.e., IPD, LPDD, PDD, or RIMD).

C. Before the application allows the user to submit the question, it generates a list of answers based on key words in the question. If this generated list of answers does not respond to the user’s question, the user may submit his or her question by clicking on the “Finish Submitting Question” button.

D. When a user submits a question, the askFSIS application sends an automatic response with a reference number to the user’s e-mail address. This automatic response provides important information about response times to questions received. Users may find that it may take more days to receive an answer to a question than had been the case prior to askFSIS. Given the broad availability of the question and answer, however, FSIS considers it appropriate to take extra care in responding to the questions. Answers are delivered to the user’s email address and to the user’s askFSIS account.

E. Users may update their questions with additional information through their login “My Questions” tab by clicking on the text of the question and selecting “Update Question” at the bottom of the screen. Follow-up questions may be updated and resubmitted at any time and are automatically directed to the staff member who will provide or has provided the original response. New questions on different topics should be submitted separately instead of updating an existing submission. Submitting separate questions increases the efficiency of the system and improves data analysis.

IX. MANAGING USER ACCOUNT

A. Users must login to manage their askFSIS account. The login window is available

under the “Login” tab or the “My Questions” tab. Located under this tab, the user may

1. View any set “Notifications;”
2. Make updates or changes to its “Profile;” or
3. “Change Password.”

B. If a user wants to view any notification, each message can be viewed in the “My Questions” tab by selecting “Notification”. Users have an option when viewing any answer to select “Notify Me by E-mail if this Answer is Updated”. When this button is selected, the application will display a message that the “Notification Request Submitted Successfully.” Users may delete any notification by opening a particular answer and selecting “delete” at the bottom of the screen.

C. If a user needs to change search preferences, notification preferences, account user name, or any contact information, the user can update the information by clicking on the “Profile” button on the “My Questions” tab.

D. If a user wants to change their password, select the “Change Password” button in the header of the “My Questions” tab when logged on to askFSIS.

E. If a user forgets their password, select the “Login” tab and then “Account Assistance” button in the middle pane window titled “If you forgot your Username or Password...”

F. Selecting “Account Assistance” will then allow the user access to either

1. “Retrieve Your Username,”
2. “Finish Account Creation,” or
3. “Reset Your Password”.

G. Both the user login name and password are case sensitive, so the user will need to type its user name in the correct case (e.g., lower, upper, or a mixture). FSIS employees using their government issued computers must use the correct FSIS email format (first name.last name@fsis.usda.gov) when creating an account.

H. If you need to reset your password, the application sends a link after entering your username. If you forgot your username (i.e., do not know if it is upper, lower, or a mixture of cases), you will need to enter your e-mail address in the “Retrieve Your Username or Finish Account Creation” block. The application then sends you an e-mail with your account username and registered e-mail addresses.

I. When logged on, the askFSIS application maintains a history of the user’s questions and answers in the “My Questions” tab that may be retrieved later. The application will store the questions submitted by the reference number. The “My Questions” tab can then be used to review previous questions and answers, update answers, or designate

that an answer is no longer needed. Users select the question by clicking on the text. This displays the question and answer and an “Update Question” button at the bottom of the text. When “Update Question” is selected, a new screen opens allowing users to add information or to check a box if “I no longer need an answer to this question.” Users then select “Submit Update to Question” to complete the process.

X. DATA ANALYSIS

In order to assess the needs of users of this system, the OPPD will analyze the questions received through askFSIS. The analysis will assess level of use, types of users (e.g., IPP, states, consumers, and industry), and other matters that reflect the effectiveness and perceived usefulness of the system. Information related to particular directives and notices on specific topics will be collected and analyzed for trends and for correlation to other FSIS data for statistical significance. Analysis will inform FSIS if the system is achieving the Agency’s goals for the system.

Refer questions regarding this directive to the Policy Development Division through [askFSIS](#) or by telephone at 1-800-233-3935.



Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development

Appendix (askFSIS Search Tips)

Narrow your Search	Select products and categories from the drop-down menus to narrow your search. <i>Example:</i> Select General Inspection Policy (Product), Slaughter and Livestock (Category and Subcategory) from the appropriate drop-down menus BEFORE searching SRM.
To require words	Use a plus (+) symbol before a word to find only documents containing that word. <i>Example:</i> Type +wildlife +bear to find documents that contain both words wildlife and bear .
To exclude words	Use a minus (-) symbol before a word to exclude documents containing that word. <i>Example:</i> Type wildlife -moose to find documents that contain the word wildlife but not moose .
Use uncommon words	Use uncommon words to retrieve documents with more focused results.
For your information...	
Word stemming	All search techniques search for different word forms such as singular, plural, or different verb tenses. <i>Example:</i> Search for reflect to find documents that contain reflection, reflections, reflected, reflecting or reflects .