UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MEAT AND POULTRY INSPECTION

PLENARY SESSION

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TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 16, 2004

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The Advisory Committee met in Salon A in the Hilton Old Town, 1767 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia, at 8:30 a.m., Dr. Barbara Masters, Acting Administrator, Food Safety and Inspection Service, presiding.

PRESENT

BARBARA MASTERS	Chair
GLADYS S. BAYSE	Committee Member
DAVID F. CARPENTER	Committee Member
JAMES H. DENTON	Committee Member
DARIN DETWILER	Committee Member
KEVIN M. ELFERING	Committee Member
SANDRA B. ESKIN	Committee Member
MICHAEL W. GROVO	Committee Member
JOSEPH H. HARRIS	Committee Member
JILL HOLLINGSWORTH	Committee Member
MICHAEL E. KOWALCYK	Committee Member
CHARLES M. LINK	Committee Member
MARK P. SCHAD	Committee Member
MICHAEL GOVRO	Subcommittee Chair
GLADYS BAYSE	Subcommittee Member
DARIN DETWILER	Subcommittee Member
JILL HOLLINGSWORTH	Subcommittee Member
MARK SCHAD	Subcommittee Member

ALSO PRESENT
ROBERT TYNAN
ELLYN BLUMBERG

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

(8:50:45)

MR. TYNAN: I usually like to be right on time. The first thing in the morning I try to do is turn on the light on the podium and it doesn't work. So hopefully that's not an omen for the rest of the meeting.

If - for those of you who don't know me I'm Robert Tynan. I work in the strategic initiatives partnerships and outreach staff of the office of public affairs, education and outreach. So I got all that out, that's our plug for the day. I want to welcome you to our November meeting of - of a - 2004 of the National Advisory committee on meat and poultry inspection. As always, I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to come to Washington, D.C., I know you all have extremely busy schedules, and for you to take time out for us is - is very much appreciated by the agency and by all of us involved in this committee meeting. First thing on the agenda this morning - I have a - our Under Secretary for food safety, Dr. Elsa Murano and she is going to start with some opening

remarks.

MS. MURANO: Well good morning and welcome to Washington, or should I say welcome to Alexandria. I live about a couple of miles from here so I'm actually welcoming you to my home town, I guess. I don't know if you've been to Alexandria before, Old Town - I think most of you maybe have because there's been meetings of this committee here before, so I certainly recommend that you avail yourself of the fine dining establishments that we have in this area. Well on behalf of Secretary Vanima I'd like to thank everyone for coming and obviously for your interest in food safety and that's what brings all of us here. I also want to extend my sincere appreciation to those of you who serve on this committee as Robert said, I certainly agree with him in appreciating your dedication to giving us your input on how we can continue to enhance public health. Well many of you - if not all of you - have made this cause your life's work and it is your career, frankly. So your willingness to work with others, whether its government, industry, consumers or academia on this

important issue that's what's going to help all of us reap the benefits through a safer food supply. You also need to know that the recommendations from this committee over the past several years combined with implementation of science-base initiatives by FSIS have lead to successes in our joint quest to improve the safety of meatball training products. We're able to gauge that progress and declare some success in - in a few ways. One is by looking at what's happened with product recalls over the last few years. If we look at the number of recalls since the mid-1990s these have been increasing steadily, 27 recalls in 1997, to 44 in 1998, to 58 in 1999, to 76 in 2000, to 87 in 2001, culminating in 113 recalls in 2002. I'm here to tell you that we have broken this trend. We have cut the number of recalls by 40% to 68 in 2003 and so far this year in 2004 we have conducted just over 40 recalls. Obviously we're on a mission to reduce these even further and with this reversal in the trend - in the trend line from one of an incline to a decline, I think that we're on the right track, obviously. Now if we specifically look at class one

recalls, those are conducted because there is a significant risk to public health. These have also now declined to 31 so far this year, which compares to 46 class one recalls at this in 2003. Secondly, if we look at the volume of recalls since the mid-1990s these had also been increasing, from 40 million pounds in 1999 to 61 million pounds in 2002. So just like with the number of recalls this upward trend was reversed in 2003 with a dramatic decline to about three and a half million pounds, and so far in 2004 we have recalled about a million fewer pounds than last year. So we have about two and a half, 2.7 million pounds recalled. Again we need to reduce this even further, but we are now in a downward not an upward trend and that's important.

Third and perhaps even more dramatic is the fact that this year 2004, believe it or not marks the second year in a row that we don't have a multimillion pound recall of meat or poultry in the United States. I think you will remember names like Thornapple Valley, Hudson, Sara Lee, and ConAgra. Well for the last two years we haven't had to add another name to

that list, and I think you'll agree that that cycle of single multimillion pound recalls has been broken for two years in a row. Well these declines and the number and the volume of recalls is one of several indicators that highlight the dramatic improvements that can be achieved in our food safety system when government, industry, consumers, academia, - all of us work together and use science as a guide.

Another measure of progress came from - of all places - a Gallup poll. We just had an election and I think we're all sick of polls, but this one released in August found that more than 85% of Americans are now confident in the federal governments ability to protect our food supply and also in the safety of that food supply. Finally and certainly most significant is a report published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention earlier this year in which they reported declines and illness caused by E. coli O157:H7, salmonella, campylobacter and ursinia.

Salmonellosis cases decreased by 38% according to CDC and those caused by E. coli O157:H7 dropped by 36% in one year. The CDC itself attributes these

results in part to our science-based policies here at USDA. Now one reason they cannot attribute all declines, or for that matter any increases in food-borne illnesses to our policies is that their data, as I think all you know, does not specify the products involved in each illness. With salmonellosis outbreaks in tomatoes, illnesses due to E.coli O157:H7 acquired from petting zoos and new vehicles of infection identified by CDC for listeria such as cut melon and humus, obviously not having product attribution data reported by CDC is a source of frustration for us. Well through our office of public health science, we're working with CDC to help determine how we can help them do this in the future. I will add that I was glad to see this morning, if you look on your tables there - a report with the blue cover that a representative from CSPI brought for us this morning - outbreak alert, I think they call it, and there they use a different methodology but they report on outbreaks of food-borne illness and they do try to attribute it to products. So it may not be perfect but at least it's one attempt in that

direction and it's important for us to - to do that if we can. Well obviously there's still more work ahead of us. We're by no means resting on any laurels - outbreaks still occur and each year brings a potential of the number of illnesses increasing. So in order to break that cycle of food-borne illness, I believe that we need to continue focusing on being proactive. What I mean by this is that we need to work with the scientific community to develop mathematical models that will help us predict problems through trend analysis.

The first step to accomplishing this is by having the most complete and accurate data on risks to health transmitted through the products that we regulate at USDA. While FSIS has become much more science and data oriented in the last few years, we need the input from all reliable sources so that we can build the most complete picture on where these hazards are found and the affect of various factors on their survival and growth. Right now we don't have access to such data, and what we do have only shows us a partial picture of the whole.

Second and most important is the fact that having complete data is not enough by itself. It should not be used solely to determine what to do in the short term with that data. The data should also be the basis for forecasting and trend analysis much like the weather service utilizes its own data. Weather forecasters have improved their ability over the years to determine a storm's magnitude and path through advanced analysis of their data, and we must do the same. So one of the issues this committee will be examining over the next couple of days is how to develop a data repository to help us have access to the most complete data possible, and second how that data should be analyzed in order to proactively anticipate where risks are higher. I cannot say enough how important this is to the agency.

In Washington, we make decisions with the best available data and best available information, and if this data or information is incomplete, because it's just based on the data that we collect ourselves and not the full range of available information, we still need to make the decisions. So you see these

decisions are only as good as the data from which they are made. Obviously as I spoke to you this morning, already we have made some very good decisions and they have culminated in those significant decreases and recalls and in food-borne illnesses, but we need to realize that with complete utilization of data we can build models that will help us forecast problems far in advance thereby fixing potential problems before they happen. And we must also realize that if our data is limited, then any mathematical model that is built will not be robust enough to accurately predict where the risks are greatest and so our goal of anticipating problems will not be fully realized. But, we at USDA, at FSIS owe it to consumers to use the best data so that we can improve public health through safer food and as we all know protecting public health by insuring safe and wholesome food is not accomplished through one isolated action or through just one organization. That's why you all are here because we are really - all of this - all of us in this together.

We need to challenge ourselves and each other

and hold ourselves accountable for improving food safety. It's not the job of just one of these groups of people, all of us have to look at ourselves as public health stewards, and never rest in our mission to make the supply even safer.

Now one final note before I close. As you all know my days is undersecretary for food safety are coming to a close. In a little over two weeks, I think, I'll be returning to Texas A&M University to continue to work on my passion for education and for research not only in food safety but in the agricultural sciences as a whole. I'll be able to operate in a true farm-to-table fashion, which I can't really tell you how exciting that is to me. So with time running short I - I didn't want to miss this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for all of the hard work that you have done for us - for this agency, and I truly mean what I've said to this committee in past meetings which is that the personal sacrifices that you make of your time have gone a long way in helping us develop and implement policies that have improved public health. The

advancements that I mentioned earlier clearly show that your commitment to food safety is paying off for consumers worldwide. So thank you again for your devotion to this cause. I look forward to seeing the results of the next couple of days, and again it's been my - my pleasure, my privilege, my honor frankly to serve American consumers as undersecretary for food safety. I may have not done a perfect job, in fact I know I haven't, but I've done the best that I could. So with that I will turn it back to Mr. Tynan and I will tell you that a finer group of people I don't think I will ever find at FSIS than the management team that leads this agency now. So with that, thank you Robert and thank you all for coming.

MR. TYNAN: Thank you, Dr. Murano we definitely will miss you and we leave you with the words, "Get 'em, Aggies."

DR. MURANO: Any Aggies in the audience?

MR. TYNAN: There we go, you should have jumped for a cheer, Lee, on that one. I have the pleasure also now of - of introducing to you our acting administrator, Dr. Barbara Masters, who has some

remarks to make as well.

DR. MASTERS: Thank you Robert, and I apologize for running late. I had a run-in and some people say it was with the horse and other people say it was with the wall that I actually hit and I'm learning to appreciate the time it takes to get around in Washington, with the cane and I apologize it does take a little bit longer. So I appreciate your patience with me. I'm really pleased to be here this morning and I want to welcome you as well to our meeting that we have. It's my second meeting with you the National Advisory Committee as the acting administrator and I really am encouraged by the dedication and enthusiasm that you bring to this meeting. Clearly the week before our holiday Thanksgiving that you give up your time to come and share with us - the agency really does to me indicate your dedication to food safety, that you're willing to bring your time and your energy to this meeting, and I really also appreciate your dedication to this productive forum that I know we're going to have over the next day and a half. So thank you so very much.

Having now served as the acting administrator for nine months I can tell you I realize more than ever, in spite of all the successes that Dr. Murano talked about that we have so many challenges ahead of us and I remain committed more than ever to working to protect public health through sound public policy and public health from a national perspective. I believe that this forum is a very significant part of being committed to that process. I think that this two-day meeting that we have is a really good opportunity for me, and I really look forward to getting to know some of you as individuals even a little bit better.

I've had an opportunity over the last nine months, to travel a little bit and I've gotten to visit with some of you. I got to spend some time with Mr. Elfering out in his office and I look forward to over the next couple of days getting to know some of you a little bit better as well.

I'm excited to hear some of the ideas and information that you're willing to share with us about food safety. Your work and recommendations that you provide to our agency are so vital to our efforts in

maintaining our success as a public health agency. We look forward to your suggestions and I can assure you that we take them very seriously as an agency as we make our policy decisions. We also take this opportunity as an agency very seriously when we spend time with you to share input back to you and share with you some of the decisions that we've made. And I think you'll find this opportunity as we share, we're going to be going back as you suggested that we should, to share with you some information from previous meetings as was a recommendation at your last meeting to provide some updates on some work that we've been doing over time since this committee as a group had been put together. So I look forward to that opportunity to share some of the work we've been doing as an agency over the time that you've been together as a committee. I think it is a good forum for us to have some dialogue as a group and I look forward to that. I think we have a pretty exciting agenda.

As always we keep you busy for the time that you're here. No sense having free time, right, in Washington, and I'm pleased that we're going to have

the opportunity to go through the forum. I think the changes that we've made in the agenda, based on your feedback, are very good. I think our last meeting was very successful and I'm pleased that we're able to use that same format and I want to thank our strategic initiatives, partnership and outreach staff for being on the job and getting your materials to you ahead of time again.

Also my compliments to them because I think that last time that paid dividends and the output that you were able to give to us and I think that - that led to a very successful meeting and so I encourage them with much prompting to make sure that was able to be accomplished again for this meeting. Because clearly the work that we were able to accomplish last time, I think, was gained by you all having the materials ahead of time so that we could have very constructive dialogue in our sessions in the afternoon. So my compliments to them and I think the agenda format really is conducive to a good dialogue when you have that material ahead of time. So I appreciate the dialogue that you all have been willing to say to us

"Hey, change the format. It's not working." So I hope you'll continue to be willing to say to us and that we'll be willing to listen to make adjustments to our schedule as we need to, to make sure that these meetings are productive.

As Dr. Murano mentioned, one of the agenda items that we'll be working on is in fact data integration. Clearly from an agency perspective as we do more and more with data, we need to look at what data is available, how we can gain access to more data, how we can use that data in a more predictive fashion - and we certainly welcome the input of this committee as to - we look forward to looking for that data and repositories for that data so that we can make certain that we're reaching out and getting all the data that we can and using it in the most constructive fashion possible.

We've begun to do a lot more work with data, but again we believe there's more data out there that we can use in a lot more positive fashion. We have some ideas and we'll be glad to share what - the ideas we have with you but we believe there's a lot more ideas

that you can share with us as well. So we think there's a lot of dialogue then go back and forth in the area of data.

Another topic, certainly one that's near and dear to my heart, having been one of the folks that was a pioneer, was at the Technical Service Center. I was one of the individuals that was one of the very first folks that was assigned to the Technical Service Center. The Technical Service Center has evolved over time. When we first put the Technical Service Center in place, it was there for a very specific purpose. It was there to help our agency and the industry implement HACCP. Well we've moved beyond the implementation of HACCP and we are now in a very different position.

We, as an agency, have in fact moved our Technical Service Center to our office of policy along with our training center because we have seen the evolution of where we're at with our agency and with our Technical Service Center and we are looking to this committee to make certain that we're using our Technical Service Center in the best way possible. As

we go through this evolution, we want to be certain that we're getting the most out of our Technical Service Center. Not only for our agency and the industry, but we believe there's things that we can be gaining from the Technical Service Center for academia and for consumers as well, and we value your input as we go through this evolution with our Technical Service Center.

Finally an area that we as a management council have made our number one priority is training and outreach not only for our own employees but we have begun to do a lot of work and making sure that we're doing training and outreach for small, very small plants and doing partnership with the industry as a whole. Just last - two weeks ago I guess it is now, we did the session in College Station with the international HACCP alliance with the industry - we had about a 150 participants that came and attended a session where we walked through our materials from some of our training courses just so the industry is aware of what we're doing. But we want to hear from you all. What else can we do in partnership because

we believe we have some responsibilities to insure that the industry is aware of what we're doing. So as we move forward in the area of public health and food safety that we do it together, because in the area of food safety and public health it is a partnership if we want it to be successful, because food safety is everyone's responsibility. Public health is everyone's responsibility and so we want to hear your ideas on things we can be doing together to make it successful for everyone and so that's the final group that we're going to be doing - to get your input and ideas on. Again we believe that we can hear - learn a lot from your ideas and suggestions as we always have in the past. So we look forward to hearing what you have to say and I will let you all get to work. So again, thank you very much for being here and I'll look forward to working with you over the next day and a half. Thank you very much.

MR. TYNAN: Thank you Dr. Masters. We're at the point on the agenda where we have what's called charge to the committee and essentially what I'm going to do is perhaps walk through the agenda very briefly and

then talk about what has now become affectionately in the agency as Roberts Rules and how we do these meetings, and talk about a couple of logistical items as well. The agenda - I think everybody should have a notebook in front of them for the meeting - there is an agenda in the front left-hand pocket so I want to call your attention to how the agenda's going to run and perhaps a few of the minor modifications that we need to make. We're at the 9:00 point at this - at this juncture and at 9:20 we're going to do an update on issues from previous meetings. Again as - as Dr. Masters pointed out we've changed the format. The focus of the meeting now is - is on the issues but - based on comments from the committee we've provided some time to update you on issues from previous meetings.

At this particular point what we propose to do is have short presentations on the three most recent issues, the ones from our June committee meeting. Also in your notebook there should be materials on issues going back to June of 2003 when this committee was first initiated. So you have materials for all of

the issues that we've discussed at past meetings but we'll only have short presentations for the three most recent. At 9:50 we're going to have questions on briefing papers. So we have several briefing papers and we'll talk about those as we get to them. There's several briefing papers that are new items - things that we want to call to your attention such as legislative affairs and where we are with some of those things. We have - in both of those topics - we have people in - either sitting at the table or in the audience who are the experts in those areas. If you have questions on any of those items, that will be the opportunity for you to ask those questions at that time.

At 10:15 we'll do a very important thing. We'll take a break, recharge the batteries a little bit so we're ready for the discussions of the actual issues for the meeting and the first issue on the agenda at 10:30 is going to be developing a data depository to help FSIS anticipate food-borne hazards. So that will start at 10:15 and I believe, is Dr. Altekruse here or Phil, will you be doing that portion? Okay. We'll

have someone here to do that one for you. At 11:15 we're going to change the agenda just a little bit. It says at 11:15 the Technical Service Center. We're going to shift and take the last item, the training and outreach, and move it up to 11:15, and the Technical Service Center issue will go to 1:15. So we're just going to swap those in order that Ms. Cutchall can get to the airport and be off to another meeting. At 12:15 we're going to do another important thing and have lunch, that's always good to recharge the batteries and then again at 1:15 we're going to do the Technical Service Center issue. At 2:00, we have a period for public comment and obviously adjournment, but in the public comment period we - we provide an opportunity for the folks at the back of the room that are not part of the committee to make some brief remarks, so we're going to limit those to about three minutes each.

If you intend to make remarks based on any of the discussions that are going on during the committee meeting itself, we would ask that you register outside to be sure that we recognize you at the appropriate

time. So again during the public comment period, anyone in the audience that is not a member of the committee can weigh in and make any comments, remarks or ask any questions at that particular point in time, but we will for purposes of efficient running of the meeting limit that to approximately three minutes.

At 2:45 we'll start our subcommittee deliberations and in your book I believe it's Tab 3 or perhaps Tab 4, the subcommittee assignments are listed there. So we try to respond to some of the comments or some of the requests that we receive from committee members to participate on specific subcommittees. We hope we've done that to your satisfaction, but those will be the subcommittees and I'll get you the rooms that you'll be - you'll be meeting in prior to your break at that particular point in time. That will be the remainder of the afternoon. So from 2:45 to 5:30 or perhaps even 6:00, if you need to go that far, you'll be dealing with the various - various issues. Dr. Denton will be taking the first subcommittee and he'll be doing the data depository - he'll be the chair of that committee.

The Subcommittee Number 2 will be Dr. Harris. He'll be chairing that and he'll be dealing with the Technical Service Center and the third issue, Training and Outreach will be Mr. Govro and he will be taking that issue as well.

So that will conclude the first day. Are there any questions on what we've done so far? This is pretty much the same format as we used the last time.

Now on Wednesday morning at 8:30, Dr. Masters will cover a small recap of today's events and kind of get us set up to go into our report out period. So there will be - from 8:45 to 9:45 we're going to allow Dr. Denton to do a report out on his committee's deliberation. From - we'll have a break at 10:15 to 11:15 again there'll be a - the - Dr. Harris' committee will report out and 11:15 to 12:15, Mr. Govro's committee will report out. Again at 12:15 we are allowing for a public comment period and we'll use the same rules limiting it to perhaps about three minutes. So that will conclude Wednesday's session and that'll be the end of our meeting. Any questions so far? Okay, with no questions let me go over the

Roberts Rules or the meeting rules of order just briefly.

I know you've been through this before. I think we agreed that these were probably good rules to have in place for management of the meeting at one of our earlier ones I think perhaps is November of 2003, we sort of put these in affect. Basically the rules of order the chair is going to be the person conducting the meeting. I get the pleasure of standing up here and moderating the meeting, but really the person that is running it is Dr. Masters and so therefore the chair is - is going to be the person recognizing those that want to speak. We'll impose some time limits if the comments get too voluminous, and I would ask you at this point in case I forget to mention it later on, that as you're asking a question or making a comment if you could perhaps stand your card up on its side and when Dr. Masters calls on you or I call on you perhaps that you could state your name and your affiliation for purposes of our transcription so that we get an accurate record of who said what.

All the questions and requests to speak will be

addressed to the chair. People must be recognized by the chair before speaking so we sort of keep some - some order. We don't want any fights to break out. Presentations of the issue paper are going to be followed by short question-and-answer periods. In the interest of time, again the questions and answers should be limited in length to - ask and clarification to make a comment that perhaps keeps the discussion going a bit longer, but nothing too lengthy. Speeches, statements of opinion by the audience or by the committee need to be made during that public comment period. So if there's something lengthy that you have to say or want to say about something, then we'd ask you to hold that to the public comment period as opposed to trying to do it as part of the normal meeting. That's in order to allow us to proceed through the agenda fairly rapidly. Again I would ask anybody that wants to make a public comment to do - to sign up outside at the registration desk so you can see Sonia and she'll get you lined up.

The chair is going to approve in advance any materials to be distributed. Normally we do - we only

have agency materials. I think the CSPI was kind enough to reprehend some very good materials this morning and we looked at those and decided that would be a - a good thing to have here at the meeting.

Committee members are expected to attend the plenary sessions here and the subcommittee meetings to which they're assigned. So committee members who do not attend the presentation of the issue or participate in the subcommittee for their assigned issue are going to be restricted in participating in the final plenary session tomorrow morning.

So you can't be assigned to one meeting, go to another and then come back in the morning and complain about your original committee rep - subcommittee report. You had your chance. You got to go where you go.

Subcommittee chair is designated by the chairperson and I think we've already talked about who the chair will be. They're going to control the subcommittee sessions and we haven't placed any restrictions on how they do that. We leave that totally up to the subcommittee chairs and what will

efficiently run their meeting. Members of the public can attend those meetings as well and the chair will be the person that will decide how much participation the public can have in those deliberations. I think that's basically it for the rules of order, any questions to this point? Okay, last but not least, let me mention some logistical items that I think will be helpful to you. If we could - I know this is very hard for all of us to do - but if we can take cell phones and either turn them off completely or perhaps put them in a silent mode or a - a something that doesn't disturb the discussions, that would help us out quite a bit. Those that are not technologically literate yet or have not gone to Verizon to get their cell phones, if there are some emergencies and somebody needs to get in contact with you, the hotel phone number to call, I am told, is 703-837-0440. That will be the phone number. We'll make sure that any messages get brought down during the discussions and we'll get them to you as quickly as we can. Also if for whatever reason you need to have a fax, the fax number here is 703-684-8928. That sort of takes care

of the messages and contacts that you'll need.

Restrooms are immediately across the hall adjacent to the registration desk, and also I - so I think that's basically for the logistical items.

I want to call your attention that this is going to be the last meeting for a number of members of the committee. Two in fact are - have maxed out their participation. That's Dr. Lee Jan, our Texas representative and Dr. Alice Johnson, who could not be here with us today. Alice did send a letter though, and she asked that I read it and if you'll bear with me for just a moment, I will do that.

"Dear Robert, As you are aware the November 16th and 17th meeting of the National Advisory Committee for meat and poultry inspection is to be my last meeting. Unfortunately I will not be able to attend either day of the scheduled meeting. However, I would appreciate you taking the time out of the session to give my personal thanks to the committee members that I've had a privilege of working with during my tenure. We have worked long hours with much discussion and done so in an open and productive manner and I believe that the

recommendations of the committee reflect an understanding of all the points of view. In areas where there was not agreement, we acknowledge the differences and move forward on other items without letting a disagreement influence discussion on the next issue. It is this open environment that makes the information sharing and discussion useful. I also want to thank the staff of FSIS for the work they have done in preparing for the meetings, listening to committee suggestions for changes and providing input on information as requested. I appreciate the opportunity to have served on the committee and wish the committee and its new members the best as they move forward in the upcoming years to provide guidance from all the stakeholders on regulatory policy. Sincerely, Alice L. Johnson."

So Dr. Johnson will not be here with us today and unfortunately as I say she's completed her tenure as Dr. Jan has and I want to thank them personally for all the hard work that they put in. There are two other members that will be leaving the committee as well and I wanted to acknowledge their hard work and

effort on the committee. I believe Deanna Baldwin our representative from the state of Maryland, go Maryland. Sandra Eskin will not be returning to the committee because of conflicts with their schedule and other commitments. So again while we only had them for a short time, we appreciate the hard work and the effort that you all put in, in our deliberations. So with that I will conclude my portion of the agenda and ask if there's any questions? There being none, let's go to update on issues from the previous meetings and as I mentioned earlier - we're going to do three short presentations on the sessions from June of 2004.

What I'm going to - the presenters, since they are short presentations, not to have to come up here to the podium but sit where they are and do it from there if nobody has any objection to that. I don't think it's going to change what they say if they stand here or there, but just wanted to be sure how formally you want to make this. Okay.

The first issue I have Mr. Phil Derfler and he's going to talk about the issue on listeria monocytogenes interim final rule and FSIS preliminary

assessment of its affects. Bill?

MR. PHIL DERFLER: After the advisory committee met in June I convened seven-program assessment teams and had - that had - that had written the reports and I presented to them the advisory committee's recommendations. I charged each group with reviewing your comments, assessing the implications of your comments for their reports and for taking whatever actions the group considered appropriate in response to the recommendations that you had made. Quite frankly, the reactions of the teams varied. Some reviewed their report and essentially decided that they had satisfied their recommendations and had - had done what you recommended. Others went out and completely wrote a whole new section to their report. The responses of the working groups are summarized in the paper that I prepared for you for this meeting - at - at some length. The fact that they're there though, I guess raises a concern and that is when we met I promised that we would be coming out with the seven reports in October of this year to provide a thirty-day comment period or a sixty-day comment

period on those reports or some - some comment period. Obviously the reports themselves have yet to be made publicly available. I can tell you that a federal registered notice announcing the availability of the reports is in the latter stages of completion. We've - we recognized that we had planned to have them out a while ago and all that I can say is that I'm sorry for the delay. We also recognized that the comment period on the interim final rule itself is coming to a close. It's to close, I believe, December 6th -- and we recognized that a lot of people are interested in being able to comment on the interim final rule and the six reports at the same time and only submit one set of comments rather than two.

We've heard from a number of people on this issue and -- including a number of industry groups. What I can tell you is that it's our intention to accommodate these concerns. It is our hope to publish shortly both the notice of availability of the reports and the notice extending the comment period on the interim final rule with coincident closing dates for comments. Obviously this has been held up and I can't

tell you exactly when it's going to be out, but I hope it will be out shortly. So that's an update where - of where we are in response to your reports. We fully considered each of the recommendations. It's reflected both in the paper I gave you and in the reports themselves. Other than that that's what I have to say.

MR. TYNAN: Okay if there is any questions on the - on that particular issue? Yes, if you could stand the card up and then Dr. Denton if you want to introduce yourself again and your affiliation? Go.

DR. DENTON: Dr. James Denton, University of Arkansas. Phil, I wonder if you could expand just a little bit. There is one particular response in the labeling consumer education team response back to the recommendations of the committee in which the - the team stated that the incentive labeling provision should remain in the final version. Now my best recollection of some of our discussions is that the issue of food safety is something that is in expectation that we have with regard to all products and not something that we should use as a marketing

issue or a company trying to gain a competitive advantage. Could you elaborate just a little bit on why you left that provision --

DR. DERFLER: Well- we're not - and this - this is only a recommendation of the working group. We haven't made any decisions at all with respect to what we're going to do. We will consider any comments that we receive on the interim final rule. There are people in the agency - it's a view that's shared by some in - in the public that there are advantages that providing incentives for people to - to provide information. One of the reasons - just to sort of go back over old ground - one of the reasons why we put the provision in is when we did the radiation rule for beef. After we published it we didn't deal - we didn't deal with labeling at all in the final rule and then we got questions as to - if somebody wanted to make a claim about a radiated for - for food safety or something like that could we say that? So what we - what we thought we were doing was anticipating that question. There are some studies that have been done by industry on the incentive labeling on listeria

monocytogenes there maybe some other studies that are under way as well. We're going to see what we get as a result of the comment period and make a decision. This only reflects the recommendation of the working group it doesn't reflect the agency's ultimate position.

DR. DENTON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Hollingsworth.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Jill Hollingsworth. Phil, just for verification I want to be sure I understood the reports from the PATs are coming out about or at the same time as the - the comment period or prior to the extension of the comment period for the rule, and that both of them will be available at the same time. And did I understand you to say that we would also be requested to comment on the PAT reports in addition to the final rule?

DR. DERFLER: It was - it was always our intent to make the PAT reports available for public comment. We - we - I said that when I was here --

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Right.

DR. DERFLER: It still remains our intention.

We know that a number of people are interested in being able to, not only just comment on the PAT reports but also comment on the interim final rule and do them at the same time, instead of having to prepare two sets of comments. We're looking to accommodate.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Okay so - so the intent was not to get comments on the PAT reports and then use that information to look at where you are with the final rule and make any adjustments or changes?

DR. DERFLER: Well, no. When we get all the comments - when we get comments on the PAT reports and we'll get comments on the interim final rule and we'll consider them altogether as we decide what to do in coming through with an ultimate final rule.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Okay. Thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Other comments? Ms. Eskin.

MS. ESKIN: Sandra Eskin. So on the same issue, first when I read the summary of the recommendation on labeling and then the response, am I reading it correctly? It looks like that the response focus is just on set - on sensitive labeling it really doesn't respond to the NACMPI's. Our recommendation regarding

other - other types of labeling meaning safe handling statements, and labeling addressed at risk populations. Am I reading that right?

DR. DERFLER: I'm trying to remember the report. I - I don't remember whether - I just don't remember from the report - whether it, dealt --

MS. ESKIN: Because it seems to be answering a different question. You mentioned again that there are so --

DR. DERFLER: Well I mean if all I'd say is I turned it over to the - to the committee and I asked them to address it. I was not part of any of the teams and --

MS. ESKIN: You mentioned that there are - there are some industry studies on incentive labeling?

DR. DERFLER: I believe that there's some - that were at least - yes.

MS. ESKIN: Are they submitted on the record or - I guess --

DR. DERFLER: I haven't reviewed the record.

MS. ESKIN: Okay, and also I know this is just a recommendation but let's assume that the - that FSIS

decides to go forward and do some focus groups. What kind of time table are you talking about here? Again these recommendations are subject to comment and then there'll be a period of time to assess the comments. So it may be quite a while before we would see any sort of results from any sort of focus group on any type of labeling. Is that realistic assessment?

DR. DERFLER: Probably --

MS. ESKIN: I mean is there money in the budget or is there anticipated money in the budget for this type of study? Should FSIS decide to do it in the next fiscal year?

DR. DERFLER: It depends how much it's going to cost. Sometimes I can find money in my budget if it's - if it doesn't cost a whole lot. If it's going to cost a lot of money, it would have to be a separate budget item and we did not budget for it.

MS. ESKIN: You haven't? Okay, thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Other questions on the listeria monocytogenes? Okay there being none, then let's go to our - our next update and that's relating to applying the market inspection to product tested for

an adulterant. Mr. Gioglio.

MR. GIOGLIO: Thank you Robert. Good morning. When you met back in June of 2004, I had presented an issue to you concerning the FSIS decision about whether or not to apply the market inspection to products when we have sampled that product for - for an adulterant and I think it's fair to say the committee worked hard through that - through that issue considering the impacts of - of that - if we took that policy and especially the impacts on small and very small establishments, and although the - the committee did not reach a consensus on - whether or not the agency should take the policy position, it did point out that the majority of establishments presently do in fact voluntarily hold product when the agency - when the agency's inspectors collect those - samples of those products for - for testing for adulterants. The - the committee then - you also did state that you thought this would have a significant impact on - on small and very small establishments. In - in general the committee recommended that the agency continue to - to encourage establishments to

develop plans for holding products when they're sampled for adulterants. Went on to recommend that FSIS provide additional guidance to plants regarding holding products and to work with the industry through seminars and information sharing on strategies that would mitigate some of the practical problems that - our sampling may set up for a especially small establishments. The committee also recommended that the agency notify establishments when it tends to - intends to take samples which is our present policy and the instruction to inspection personnel. Finally the committee recommended that the agency's policies on residual testing should not be changed. There has been no final decision at this point on whether we will in fact issue a proposal, but we are actively working on a proposal that will be moving through agency and department clearance that - it and in that process we're considering all the issues that were raised by this committee and other constituents at other public - four that we've had. If the proposal is issued, obviously there'll be the public comment period on that and we would encourage your comments on

the proposal at that time. We're also on a parallel track or - but on a separate track preparing guidance, taking your advice and going ahead and preparing that guidance especially aimed at small and very small establishments where in fact to try to guide them through the process of - of establishing a plan for themselves - dealing with their business circumstances for holding products when we sample, and to try to mitigate some of the practical problems that - that - that may set up for them. At that point Robert we expect - would expect that - that guidance should be available sometime early in the new year and we're working with our office of outreach to decide on the best roll out for that type of guidance for the small and very small establishments.

MR. TYNAN: Questions on the - the testing? Dr. Hollingsworth.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Jill Hollingsworth, Food Marketing Institute. Charlie, Dr. Murano had mentioned about the decline in outbreaks - I'm sorry - in outbreaks or in recalls?

MR. GIOGLIO: Yes.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: I'm wondering has the agency done any kind of assessment to determine if that has been impacted because of test and hold procedures or have you looked at that at all, whether or not holing product has been a contributing factor in fewer recalls?

MR. GIOGLIO: At this point the most recent data that I've looked at and what I've looked at - the most recent recall data I guess back to the 2000 -. We're still close to about 40% of the recalls are due to our testing and when you look further into that, you can see that most of those - those recalls are small - small volumes of product, but also coming obviously from the small and very small plants. So we think that a policy like this should affect that in a positive way as far as the number of recalls. We need to work through these other issues however.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Mr. Schad.

MR. MARK SCHAD: When you say 40%, you're talking about 40% actual cases or 40% by volume of product?

MR. GIOGLIO: No, about 40% of the actual cases --

MR. SCHAD: Okay.

MR. GIOGLIO: --of recalls. If you look at the number of recalls - if we had 100 recalls there might be close to 40.

MR. SCHAD: Okay.

MR. TYNAN: Mr. Govro.

MR. MICHAEL GOVRO: Mike Govro, Oregon. Do you have data about how much product that's held because of testing then is not distributed because of positives?

MR. GIOGLIO: I don't have that data available we could work - and actually the committee - when the subcommittee worked - worked through that sort of worked backwards to try to get - to that - looking at the number of samples we've collected to - but I don't have that available this morning. We could work through the - try to estimate what that in fact would be. Vol - I would say that the volume of product if you just looked at product volume question the - would be much, much larger than in fact the amount of

product that is recalled. Because the product was not held.

MR. TYNAN: Other questions on the test and hold? Okay there being none, let's go to the last update from 2004 and there'll be a short presentation by Carol Maczka who is our Assistant Administrator for Food Security and she'll be talking about that very topic, Food Security.

MS. MACZKA: Okay. Good morning. In way of background. In June of 2003 as well as, in June of 2004, we asked this committee whether or not FSIS should require mandatory food security plans. The advice from this committee from the last meeting was "No". But they suggested that we form a partnership in which we would share information. That's industry in the government and also assist industry in developing self assessments and mitigation strategies. In light of that advice, we're doing a number of things. One of the things we're going to do is we're going to develop model food security plans and we're going to distribute these plans to the industry for voluntary use. I'll come back to that in a few

minutes. Another thing we're going to do is - or what we have done is, we've developed a self-assessment checklist that we will make available in our constituent update that industry can use so that they can do an assessment of any vulnerabilities that they may have. This was built off of our guidance documents and other guidance documents that we - were made available to us. Finally we're going to develop some training. We're going to offer training to specific industry sectors. We're going to coach them through CARVER + Shock training, which is the methodology we use to develop the vulnerability assessments. We're also going to be offering some training at the local level meaning, we're going to go down to our district levels, have our district managers host a training where we invite in FDA sanitarians, AMS graders, FSIS Inspectors, State act health personnel and local school food authorities as well as local industry. We're developing this training with FDA and AMS and FNS and - so that's it with the training. Going back to the food security plans - the model plans. What we've done is

internally. We formed a working group that are developing these plans. Inputs to the plans will include such information as our guidance documents as well as, any information we get from industry. Skip Seward has been very helpful to me in providing some security plans that he's obtained from industry and we're looking for any others who would be willing to offer that kind of information. We'll also use our vulnerability assessments as inputs working with some industry consultants. So together we'll form these model plans which we hope will be available by January of 28 - 28th of January, 2005. Then we'll solicit industry input into the plans. One of the things we like to go to is our - the industry sector, the coordinating council, - specifically the processing sub-council for - to get such input and we'll probably reach out to this committee and to our monthly industry group that we - we meet with. We'll revise the plans in response to that industry input and then we would distribute - hope to distribute those plans in March of 2005. We're going to study how we distribute the HACCP plans. Maybe use a similar kind

of model where we reach out to larger industries to help distribute the plans or educate small industries in adopting the plans. I guess that's about it. So I'll be happy to take any questions.

MR. TYNAN: Questions on food security? Mr. Schad I'll start with you.

MR. SCHAD: Schad, Schad Meats. This is a comment. Carol and I have spoken about this already. Since the last meeting the American Association of Meat Processors with - in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Agriculture has put together a guidance document for small and very small piance for developing a food safety program and we're willing to share this FSIS to help out.

MR. TYNAN: That would be great; I personally would like to see it so.

MR. SCHAD: I've got a copy right here.

MR. TYNAN: Okay. You brought copies all right. No fooling around. Okay. Dr. Carpenter, you had a question?

DR. CARPENTER: Reference has been made to CARVER + Shock vulnerability. I must be the only one

that doesn't know what this is. Where can I get reference to learn more about it?

MS. MACZKA: These are - the CARVER + Shock vulnerability assessments was a methodology that was taught to us by the - under the auspice of the White House and it's what's called an offensive targeting tool that's used to figure out where in the production of a product are the most vulnerable points. The acronym CARVER - each letter stands for something you would assess. A particular infrastructure producing a product. How you would assess it, like – as C stands for criticality, how critical is that piece of infrastructure? A stands for how accessible is that piece of infrastructure to terrorist attack? R is how can you recuperate from the attack? V is how vulnerable is that piece of infrastructure to attack,? R is how recognizable is that piece of infrastructure. I can send you the - sort of like a little appendium of the methodology. But I should mention that this methodology has been used by FDA, AMS, FSIS, F&S, APHIS to assess vulnerabilities. So it's sort of become the common methodology for

assessing vulnerabilities. It's also being reviewed by the DHS. They're presently looking at the methodology and sort of updating it and will provide us with perhaps some modifications to the tool because we will be required to use the tool again to update the vulnerability assessments. But I'll be happy to send you more information on it if you like.

DR. CARPENTER: Thank you very much. Obviously I have to update my acronym dictionary.

MR. TYNAN: It's getting a lot longer I imagine too. Mr. Elfering, you had a question?

MR. ELFERING: Yes. Kevin Elfering, Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Who is actually going to be developing these model plans? Is it something that's going to be done by FSIS? Have you considered looking at things that FDA has already developed? Have you considered looking at maybe some of these centers that have been developed in a lot of Universities especially related to emergencies that would consider input from them also?

MS. MACZKA: First of all, the plans will be developed internally initially by FSIS using the

sources that I mentioned. We'll reach out and get whatever guidance we can get from industry. We've actually tapped in - into some consultants - industry consultants. We'll use our own guidance documents as well as our vulnerability assessments. But then the plan is to take those model plans in draft form and ask for industry input into them and we will go to the food industry ISAC to ask for that input. This group and other groups, as far as FDA, I am not aware of any model plans they have and in fact I'm pretty sure they do not, because we've been in communication about the development of these model plans. As far as the centers, I have not thought of that idea but it's a good one and now that you've mentioned it, I'll probably use that.

MR. TYNAN: Mr. Govro.

MR. GOVRO: Yes, Michael Govro, Oregon Department of Agriculture. As you're probably aware FDA is in, I believe, it's the last week of a six week food security assessment. It's doing its – it's sort of an exercise involving all 50 states and I would recommend that you be in communication with FDA as to

lessons learned on this assignment. We're participating in it in Oregon, because we do a large number of contract inspections. I think what FDA hopes to learn is, is how the whole system would work if there were an event that the agency needed to respond to. How it would work with all of the other states, because they would be so reliant on the states to - to carry out the assignment. I - just from my experience in having dealt with it, I believe FDA is learning a lot - and a lot of lessons to learn there and finding out what they do and don't know. I think there's going to be some good information to come out of that.

MS. MACZKA: Okay. Thank you very much for that and I will check in with them. We actually meet every Monday at 8:00 to share information, but I would like to mention in light of your comment that we have developed a cooperative agreement with NASDA and that agreement is to basically try to glean from the states how we would respond in an emergency. We're looking at best practices across the states and then we're going to use that information to develop guidelines

that would feed into the national response plan and then we would actually test those guidelines with exercises.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Jan.

DR. JAN: Lee Jan, Texas Department of Health. I - I just want to verify or be sure that you're going to have - you mentioned you're going to have - distribute these materials similar to the HACCP. Does that mean that you'll have like a very small plant projects where you actually help them assess that material or are you just going to send it out in the brochures?

MS. MACZKA: No, we won't just send - send out brochures. It was a exactly what you initially said - that we want to build off of what we learned. When we distributed the HACCP plans and how the larger industries are able to reach out to the smaller ones. We're not just going to dump the plans on them.

MR. TYNAN: Other questions on the Food Security - I'm sorry. Mr. Detwiler, I didn't see you.

MR. DETWILER: Darin Detwiler, Educator. The recent news about the larger percentage of imports of

our product. I was wondering if there was still discussion about collaboration with other agencies across the borders in terms of the - the food safety and their plans. If there's any partnerships for say - for instance with Canada or Mexico that the implications of this issue would touch in with their product?

MS. MACZKA: We have been in touch with Mexico. We've actually had a critical infrastructure protection - document that talks about how we will interact - that we will work together to identify vulnerabilities and then put - think about how we could put counter measures in place. We're doing something similar with Canada and we hope to do something similar with Australia and New Zealand. We're also working very closely with customs and border protection in terms of product coming in across the borders and trying to really firm up our ability to figure out what is coming into this country before it presents at our in-houses. So, - in fact we're developing an MOU with customs and border protection.

MR. TYNAN: Other questions on Food Security?

Okay now those are the presentations from our three most recent issues of the June 2004 Advisory Committee. As I mentioned before in your notebooks, we have several others. We, in fact, have four others that there should be short papers there for you. We have people in the audience, because we have a number of experts that are here. What we've done is we have some of our experts in the audience and I'm going to ask Ellen, could I impose on you? Would you grab the wireless mic and perhaps if there are questions, - I'm going to go through each of the papers directly and I'm going to ask Ellen to be the person - the Vanna White of the National Advisory Committee to hand the microphone to whoever is answering the questions. Okay, so the first - the first issue at Tab-8 is a State Review Methods,. Are there any questions from the committee related to state review methods? Dr. Hollingsworth? Jane are you going to answer, Ms. Roth in back --

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Jill Hollingsworth, Food Marketing Institute. I'm not sure if this fits under state review, so I'll throw it at you and you can tell

me if I need to hold my question.

MR. TYNAN: Okay.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: I'm wondering if we can get an update on - on a much older issue and that is the interstate shipment of meat from state inspected plants.

MR. TYNAN: That's a possibility I don't know if anybody is prepared to do that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: The short answer would be that the - this would not be the time to talk about that. That the state reviews were undertaken to strengthen the review process separate from dealing with the interstate shipment issue.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: That's fine. I'd like to just leave it on the table then as a question if we could get an update at some time in the next two days?

MR. TYNAN: Okay, we'll try and do that for you.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Thank you. Okay, state review methods going once, going twice. Okay, the next under Tab-9,. We have procedures for conducting inspection in Talmadge-Aiken Plants. I think our folks from our

field operations office are - are meeting in Pittsburgh and I think some of the folks here may be attending that meeting shortly. So I don't know if we have too many experts here in the room. I know Dr. Masters would probably be able to answer any questions that might come up. Any questions on Talmadge-Aiken? Dr. Jan?

DR. JAN: Lee Jan, Texas Department of State Health Services. Kind of tying into Dr. Hollingsworth, interstate shipment in Talmadge-Aiken that brought this up before. We discussed how Talmadge-Aiken Plans would fit in the - with the FSIS method of assigning work at our meetings. That that was the focus and have gone through that process initially. As a result, or for some reason Talmadge-Aiken Plans were not assimilated into FSIS workforce as a responsibility. It appears that there still remains a need for the Talmadge-Aiken agreement and its agreement - or it's a - a - arrangement that has been very beneficial - in my opinion. I think of others as well as beneficial to FSIS, to state programs and tremendously to the very small industry

where they have the sense of working with the smaller governmental agency. She brought up the issue of interstate shipment. I know this is not the time to talk about it but I'd just like to reiterate that I think that it was worth looking at the use of Talmadge-Aiken as a method of interstate shipment and making that system more accessible to more state and to more industry so that we can see state inspected products go across state lines. Although it bears a fair market inspection - that's fine but that takes away jurisdictional issues and a lot of that. My organization, the National Association of State Meat and Food Inspection Directors is preparing a document that points out the benefits of that so we would be willing to make that available to this committee.

MR. TYNAN: Okay so you'll be submitting that separately?

DR. JAN: In a future date or if the committee wants to look at it, we'll submit it even though I'll be off the committee. We would still have links to this committee and we'd like to present that or per --

MR. TYNAN: I'm not trying to be funny but was

there also a question you had regarding that?

DR. JAN: I was just making comments and --

MR. TYNAN: Okay.

DR. JAN: -- statements.

MR. TYNAN: Thank you Dr. Jan. Other - other perhaps questions or comments on the state - I beg your pardon - Talmadge-Aiken? Okay. Under Tab-10 we have another issue related to how FSIS can better associate food safety activities with public health surveillance data. We have Dr. Goldman in the front row and he can answer any questions you may have on that particular issue paper. Questions? That's a shame Dr. Goldman got dressed up for nothing. He's got his class A's on, he's looking good - oh I'm sorry Mr. Elfering, thank you for using Dr. Goldman correctly.

MR. ELFERING: Kevin Elfering, Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Maybe a couple of questions and maybe this will be part of having this depository also - maybe will link, but has FSIS considered utilizing Veterinary Diagnostic Lab data, is a method of also being able to maybe predict or see

any trends that maybe associated with food-borne illness?

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Goldman.

DR. GOLDMAN: Do you have other questions? Or you want me to take that one?

MR. TYNAN: I'm surely am not going to take that one, trust me.

DR. GOLDMAN: No, no. I thought Kevin said he had several questions.

MR. TYNAN: Okay.

DR. GOLDMAN: At this point FSIS has not been using MBSL data or - excuse me - diagnostic data on food animals, but I think in the interest that you'll hear about later of creating this data depository, we would be interested in all sorts of data that may have some bearing on food safety issues. I think we'll be participating with that group in looking at that data and seeing if it might be helpful to us, and appreciating any suggestions you have in particular you have about that.

MR. TYNAN: Kevin, you had other questions?

MR. ELFERING: No.

MR. TYNAN: Okay. Mr. Detwiler.

MR. DETWILER: Darin Detwiler, Educator. Speaking as an educator I personally would like to see examples of the modeling in the data analysis and how they could possibly be used in the classroom. I - I do modeling in data analysis and I do actually look for a data along these lines to rather than dealing with arbitrary numbers provide the context for which food safety education can take place even in the high school classroom. So I hope at some point that while this data is collected that maybe it can become available for academic purposes other than the agricultural education.

MR. TYNAN: Other questions from the committee on associating data with public health surveillance? I'm sorry public health surveillance data. Excuse me. Yes Mr. Govro? Thank you for saving me.

MR. GOVRO: Mike Govro, Oregon Department of Agriculture. I'm just wondering if this project is tied in to FSIS' consumer complaint monitoring system project and if - if this group has any input on that project as far as development of the - the system that

they're developing?

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Goldman.

DR. GOLDMAN: I think you're referring to a - a project that we are beginning to look at with AFDO's assistance and that is a project to expand the consumer complaint monitoring system data that comes into FSIS to include those complaints that might come into state health departments or state departments of agriculture so that we have more data available for our analysis. The context for this is that CCMS the Consumer Complaint Monitoring System is undergoing an enhancement to its system and its ability to analyze the consumer complaints in order to recognize either an intentional or unintentional event before we're able to currently do so with our - our human based analysis. So although that's not addressed specifically in this update paper, I do foresee that we will be using the - this project of enhancing CCMS as a way of - as a way that FSIS can further analyze data that comes in about food safety issues. I think that data and its analysis will in turn help to inform policy about issues that we might not otherwise

recognize through the national surveillance systems that exist.

DR. GOLDMAN: I've been involved in a little bit with that project in the early phases and now is the time that they're developing - deciding which data elements to collect and this would be an excellent time to provide your input to that group if we're not associated with the project.

MR. TYNAN: Other questions on that issue. Mr. Detwiler, do you have another question? Come on, get with the program. Dr. Hollingsworth.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Jill Hollingsworth, Food Marketing Institute. Two questions. The first one just a clarification in the next to the last bullet in the briefing paper where it talks about the listeria rule. It says that the public health assessment team report is attached, I'm as - is that the PAT report and therefore it's not attached or available yet? Is that what that's referring to?

DR. GOLDMAN: Yes, it's part of the PAT report that will be published later.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Okay then, my second

question is, in this area, in looking at the agencies - the information available to the agencies - scientific information one of the - the strong things that we have that we're using as an assessment tool, I think, in the listeria arena is the risk assessment, the USDA, FSIS, FDA, CDC, Risk assessment and in one of the would-have scenarios the greatest impact on reducing Listeriosis, 98% of the cases it was in that risk assessment in the what-if scenario they said that they could reduce 98% of the cases by lowering home refrigeration temperatures. I'm wondering if that information is being used by the agency at all to look at how can we develop a message and how can we educate consumers about the importance of their home refrigeration temperatures?

DR. GOLDMAN: I don't know if someone from the food safety education staff representing that would want to answer, but I do know that the agencies recently published some food safety education materials in which for refrigeration temperatures are high-lighted. So I know there is a specific effort in the food safety education are around to highlight that

very important issue.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Hollingsworth what we will try and check on that. Thank you. Are there other questions regarding that - that issue? Okay. There being none, we'll move on to the last issue at Tab-11 which is delivery of training and education, and this was presented in June of '03. Mr. Phil Derfler, our Assistant Administrator in our policy office, will address that question. If there are any? No questions? I notice everybody's busily looking at it. Okay. Going once, going twice. Okay. Let's move on to the briefing papers which are the second group of papers that we have in there. I apologize - in the book they're not in any particular order but I will let you know which tab they're under so that we can have a reasonable discussion of them. The first one under Tab-13 has to do with the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods and I think we have Christina Barlow - here we go and if you have any questions on that particular briefing paper - did I get the wrong tab? I'm sorry Tab-11. I just wanted to see if you were paying attention. Okay, any

questions regarding the micro committee? Your sister committee? Okay. We also have a legislative update under Tab-8 - I hope I got that one right. Don't have the book in front of me but I believe Tab-8, legislative update. Are there any questions on that particular briefing paper? Okay. Going once, going twice. Okay. How about Salmonella Enteritidis, the risk assessment? Were there any questions on that briefing paper? Mr. Elfering? You had a question on that one?

MR. ELFERING: Yes I actually have a couple - what I mean a question and a comment. Kevin Elfering, with the Department of Agriculture in Minnesota. There's - one thing is - on the results of this risk assessment and it talks about that Salmonella species in liquid egg products was estimated to be about 50,000. In that pasteurization of liquid egg products would reduce that number to 30,000 - are you making reference to liquid eggs that are from a shell egg source that were pooled at a restaurant or I'm just not aware of any illnesses or outbreaks associated with pasteurized liquid eggs, and is this a reference

to pooling of shell eggs?

MR. TYNAN: Okay, I was going to say there is a Carl Schroeder was to be here to respond to questions but evidently he was delayed so if you could - if we could hold that question, I promise I'll get you an answer on that.

MR. ELFERING: Then I just have a comment.

MR. TYNAN: Okay.

MR. ELFERING: There's a lot of people, that think, that there should be a single food safety agency and I guess there can always be arguments for and against and I - I go back and forth on many different times in thinking different but with eggs = it is such a convoluted industry that when you start doing risk assessments on eggs, you have multiple jurisdictions between FDA and USDA and you really don't know where - who has jurisdiction at one particular point and I'll give you an example. Pasteurized liquid eggs in a tanker truck going across the highway is under the jurisdiction of USDA. The tanker hauling unpasturized liquid eggs, same type of system, is under the jurisdiction of FDA. FDA has

responsibility at the farm but only in the lair houses. They don't have any responsibility in the pullet houses. When it gets to the processing plant it goes back to USDA's responsibility for sanitation and grading in the plant. The actual food safety responsibility is still FDA's. When it gets out into the retail establishment, it's under FDA's responsibility. If there's any way that we can get at least one commodity like this regulated by one agency, it would really, very much help in food safety, and I don't know who it should be.

MR. TYNAN: I'm sorry that system confuses you? I can't understand that. Does anybody want to comment on that comment? I don't think we're going to touch that one, but I understand the concern. Dr. Carpenter?

DR. CARPENTER: If you'll allow me just back up to Tab-8. We talk about the legislative fiscal year update.

MR. TYNAN: Yes, sir.

DR. CARPENTER: In the third paragraph about two-thirds of the way down, it talks about the

establishment of five regional hubs in a National Operating Center in FERN. Is FSIS going to be the lead agency for doing that? If those funds do come through in the - in the budget?

MR. TYNAN: Okay. Mr. Quick are you there? We have a question on the legislative update.

DR. QUICK: (inaudible)

MR. TYNAN: I'm sorry.

DR. QUICK: Dr. Carpenter would you repeat the question? It had to FERN and the leadership of FERN.

DR. CARPENTER: Well in the update about two-thirds of the way down in the third paragraph, it talks about FERN establishing five regional centers and a national operating center. Is FSIS going to be lead agency for doing that? If those funds are granted in the budget?

MR. TYNAN: David, I think that Carol --

MS. MACZKA: In terms of FERN, that responsibility is co-chaired between FDA and FSIS. We have actually - our structure has been approved to develop these regional centers that's within FSIS and so basically we're ready to - to develop those

regional centers. We will need more funding to do so. Again FERN is co-chaired by FDA and FSIS.

DR. CARPENTER: So then it's a real possibility then that the analysis to be conducted by egg and FDA are going to be consistent.

MS. MACZKA: Yes.

DR. CARPENTER: Very good.

MS. MACZKA: Fern, I should mention not only would include - it would also include our animal laboratory network as well as the plan laboratory network. There's an emphasis now to bring all of these networks together under a single network even LRN and there's much talk about that right now how to get all these networks together under a single network. What that will be called, I don't know.

MR. TYNAN: Mr. Derfler you wanted to elaborate?

MR. DERFLER: No. I wanted to go back to some of the issues--

MR. TYNAN: Okay. Please. I'm sorry before you do that are you okay, Dr. Carpenter?

DR. CARPENTER: Yes.

MR. TYNAN: Okay, great.

MR. DERFLER: Certainly the Egg Products Inspection Act creates all sorts of permutations that are more of an interest. What I can tell you is that we are working with FDA to try and work as closely as possible. In developing - both agencies are in the process of developing and FDA actually published -- We're considering publishing the proposal. We're in discussions as we do it in developing some of our policies. We intend to take into account some of the things that FDA is doing at various points in a line, how we feed into - what we would do - As I say, it's still in the developing process but we are trying very hard to work together to ensure that there's not a single agency that's consistent with regulation. Okay.

MR. TYNAN: Okay. I think the last issue we have on our list under Tab-9 relates to the BSE and, I think, Dr. Reagan. You don't look like Dr. Reagan. Okay. Ms. Ferguson and if there is any questions on the BSE? That's under Tab-9 if I didn't say that already.

MS. MASTERS: This is Barb Masters at the FSIS

and I just want to thank Dr. Ferguson for joining us. Certainly there's been a huge effort for our agency and APHIS to work together for the significant output that's been done by the Department of Agriculture to gain the number of samples over 100,000 now that have been collected -- or close to 100,000 now that have been collected since June by the department and appreciate Dr. Ferguson joining us this morning. So if you have questions, here's your opportunity and I know Dr. Ferguson will be glad to answer those questions --

MR. TYNAN: Start over here or -- excuse me Dr. Masters. Dr. Jan you have a question?

DR. JAN: Ladies, Lee Jan with the Texas Department of State Health Services again. I think this project is -- is it -- is the right way to go. I mean it obviously has to have surveillance. We obviously have to know or demonstrate that either the United States is free of BSE or -- or what level there is. One area that seems to be a bit of an obstacle particularly in collecting samples from some of the smaller -- smaller plants is that -- an issue of money

and it -- I mean the money is often USDA, but even at the federal level the federal sup -- veterinarians in FSIS cannot take a sample without billing USDA/APHIS and that's -- that's a system that you can work with your agency but when you start getting state programs it's really not a mechanism to address that funding. And if we're going to follow the cooperative agreements that we have with FSIS, our state veterinarians really should not take samples for BSE sampling because that money should come from APHIS. But you -- but it -- it's difficult, if at all possible, to get a separate contract with APHIS to cover that and -- what we're doing in Texas, because it's so small we're just saying okay we'll just pay for it all. Now that's not in consistency with Texas legislative funding either but it is something that needs to be done and so I think that the issue about money, it -- it'd be nice if there could be some way to figure out a way that a veterinarian, regardless whether he works for APHIS or FSIS, can take the samples submitted and not have to deal with all the paperwork that is related to funding and not a food

safety issue. That's -- I know their budget's important and all that but it does become a bit of an obstacle in -- in trying to collect those samples sometimes.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Ferguson, did you want to comment?

DR. FERGUSON: Yes, I'll add just a couple of thoughts actually. We do have mechanisms with APHIS to have cooperative agreements with the state. Generally it's been with the state animal health authorities. It's really pretty standard. We've done that; all of our animal disease control programs have been cooperative. There are ways to move those funds around. I know specifically with this enhance surveillance program, we have set up cooperative agreements with various states. Primarily for state employees to be -- not necessarily collecting a sample every now and again in an inspected slaughter facility, but more in the rendering the animal disposal end of things which is where we're collecting the vast majority of our samples. Those states where employees are spending most of their time working with

us, many of those areas we do have cooperative agreements with them to pick up some of those costs. So I'm not sure where the confusion has come in.

DR. JAN: Let me just clarify if I may. At least for us, we try to -- we were -- we tried to get that cooperative agreement so that we could get funded. I took the co-op -- or the agreement that FSIS had with APHIS, modified it to fit the state, went through the work to do that, submitted it to APHIS veterinarian, the ADIC and that's been months ago and have not heard a word back. So I don't know if it's something that's not important to them. We do very few, and I understand it's not a big issue as far -- I mean it's not a lot of money. Again, it seems like a lot of paperwork to test one or two cattle a year. So he may feel the same way.

DR. FERGUSON: I'll -- I'll touch base with him just to see.

MR. TYNAN: Okay, Mr. Elfering.

MR. ELFERING: Kevin Elfering, Minnesota Department of Ag. I know that there are a lot of questions and maybe -- the success of getting the

samples and whether or not you're really getting a good cross-section of sampling in with these opportunistic samples and what used to be collected from non-ambulatory livestock and slaughter plants. Have you been successful in getting samples of animals that were clinical cases for CNS symptoms that perhaps were euthanized on the farm and not necessarily sent to a rendering plant? Have you been getting any of those samples at all?

DR. FERGUSON: Actually we feel like we've been getting a pretty good cross-section of samples. We've had some issues with our database and are just now really starting to do some pretty substantive analysis on the data. But just based on reports initially from our area offices, as I mentioned, obviously we're getting the vast majority of our samples from 3-D, 4-D rendering facilities which is truly what we expected. There are a number, though, of samples coming from on-farm facilities. Primarily those are dead of unknown causes, but we feel like we are getting access to the variety of samples that we need. I'd also -- I mean while I have a microphone -- just put one thing

on the table or out there on the floor. There's been a lot of focus on CNS cases as -- the big issue and those are the primary ones we want to get if you look at clinical BSE many times that's probably not necessarily going to show up as a CNS case per say. A lot of the more subtle signs are the non-ambulatory, the wasted away and died cases. In my opinion would probably where we're more likely to find it.

MR. TYNAN: Any other questions on the BSE? I'm sorry. Dr. Harris.

DR. HARRIS: Joseph Harris Southwest Beef Association and I just wanted to ask you one question relative to the kind of the progress that's being made on the enhanced surveillance program. I know originally the intent was to over a 12 to 18-month period, collect as many samples as possible. Obviously from -- from the reports that we're seeing, that's going pretty well. Can you give us any additional kind of feedback relative to the timeline when the -- you think the goals will be met and where -- where do we go from here relative to the surveillance and how those -- how that data will be

used by -- particularly FSIS and APHIS in terms of developing and implementing policy?

DR. FERGUSON: Okay, lots of stuff in there. We don't have a timeline right now as far as when we'll say stop. We are very encouraged by the number of samples we're getting. We feel like at this point we're probably at a maintenance level with six to seven thousand samples a week, which is where we need to be. So we are doing well, as I said. We're really starting now to do some initial substantive analysis, some of that will tell us truly where we are. How many are meaningful samples that are going to contribute to our analysis. Hopefully, here in a couple of months or so, we might have a better idea of when -- when we'll say okay we're done. I know the magical figure of 268,000 has been sort of thrown around out there. More data's always better than less data. So as long as our money holds out, we might continue to go on, but again that's -- there's lots of options out there. We're already putting together options for what we do at the end of this. Clearly a lot of those decisions are going to depend on the

results from this effort. But what we're trying to do is say okay if we find no cases, if we find this, if we find this -- these are the different options that we could have and what those would be. How those would contribute to a decision-making process. We are trying to use this information to drive public health mitigation measures to drive animal health control measures and to support any type of trade negotiations, trade restrictions that we're moving forward with.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Leech.

DR. LEECH: Irene Leech, with the Virginia Citizens Consumer Council. What has happened with the trade issue? I know Japan was not willing to accept any of our beef unless it was tested. There was a rancher out west who was trying to test everything. Where are we with that situation?

DR. FERGUSON: With Japan, actually, there was an announcement a couple of weeks ago where we have reached a sort of a framework agreement with the Japanese for export of product from animals 20 months of age or less with no testing required. There are

clearly still details to be worked out and we're continuing to work out those details with the Japanese. I think the issue with our producer out west was an individual facility that wanted to essentially use testing as a marketing tool. These tests are not food safety tests. Our surveillance is done for animal health purposes with the current testing methodology. You get into an issue of detectable disease versus non-detectable disease. What does the test really mean? Especially giving a test that will only be positive in an animal that's truly infected about three months before it comes clinical. So there's a lot of issues in there that contributed to our decision to say these are not food safety test. That's a bad implication for the testing and we still are supporting that position and our surveillance is done in a targeted fashion primarily to contribute to our animal health statements or claims.

MR. TYNAN: Other questions on the BSE? Are there any questions on any of the briefing papers or updates so far? Are we sort of concluded this portion? There being no other questions, I think we're

going to take that important moment in our agenda to recharge the batteries. We'll take a break. I have on my watch a little bit after 10:30. If we could get back together a little bit after 10:45, I would appreciate it. So we can keep sort of with the agenda and then we'll start the actual issues for the meeting today.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 10:29:43 a.m. and resumed at 10:52:06 a.m.)

MR. TYNAN: After our break I think our agenda takes us to the first of three issues that are the focus of this meeting. The first issue relates to developing a data depository to help FSIS anticipate food-borne hazards. We have Dr. Sean Altekruse who's the Deputy Executive Associate for policy analysis and formulation here to do that presentation for us and to answer any questions you have. Dr. Altekruse?

DR. ALTEKRUSE: Thank you. It's very nice to be here today. This is not a new issue. It's something we've been talking about with the advisory committee for several years now. It's -- it's in this world where we -- with all of the information that's out

there -- it's very clear that FSIS isn't going to have all of the data that it needs or would benefit from in developing policy, and so we'd like to have your advice on how best to proceed with receiving data from other sources. I'd like some advice on how to use this. There. So that, the context is that industry and researchers in academia and consumer groups are likely to have very good and useful information that would help the agency to define hazards to measure the effectiveness of pathogen reduction programs and that final point, to implement optimal regulatory programs. Really the advantages are not just to the agency. This is a two-way street. It's also to the provider of data, and the advantages are that sharing of data will help to inform agency decisions on risk management, on the impact of proposed regulations and therefore to develop the best possible programs. If we work in a vacuum without that information, it is unlikely that we could develop programs that are as beneficial. So that's -- what we'd -- what the agency would like to seek your advice on today is mechanisms for data transfer. These are

broad categories. What would be reasonable expectations in terms of conditions that data providers would want to see in order to participate and how would the quality of data be assured? Also projects like this need to start out small and what might be a useful project. We'll go into these in more detail. So as I mentioned this is not a new subject. Dr. Murano's vision paper described the goal of the agency, which is to use data to anticipate problems before they arise. Some of the specifics that she mentioned were to address in-plant issues and to develop appropriate verification activities and to optimally allocate the agency's resources for inspection and enforcement. In addition, last year at this time, Mr. Derfler asked the- committee for input on the affect - how data could be -- outside data could be used to improve the effectiveness of agency's efforts with regard to the safety of meat, poultry and egg products. He also mentioned the growing importance of risk assessment to the agency specifically alluding to efforts of - related to the listeria monocytogenes and E. coli O157, as examples.

Actually, the agency feels that it has access to in-plant records so that's really not the issue. The issue is that the type of data that lends itself to analysis is -- is frequently different from what is observed in one observation in a given plant, and so data sets that contain well-designed fields of information are much more useful. In other words population base data are much more useful than anecdotal information for making decisions about hazard prevention and allocation of resources. These are some of the issues that we'd specifically like your advice on. What in the opinion of the committee is the best way to receive data? Should -- should a mechanism be developed that is within the agency that would allow receipt of information? Or would it perhaps be more favorable for an external body to -- to administer the data set -- the databases and the -- the -- it's a balance of multiple issues that are involved. The first is managing data, which is no small task and having a program that's cost-effectiveness. In addition having a repository that is likely to have buy-in from the people that can

provide us with the data that we need. Also in this -- I think this is very important to have a data depository that is responsive to what the agencies needs are. It's very possible to -- in this day and age -- to download lots and lots of data and that's not necessarily the most useful way to proceed. Very concise and targeted data sets make it much more compelling for making decisions. It might be worth clarifying what the agency is thinking about in terms of this data depository right now. The goal is to define hazards and to implement programs that are beneficial for both for the industry, consumers and the agency in terms of using increasingly scarce resources for food safety programs. It's not designed to be a data clearinghouse with -- where people can openly access data and it's also not designed to be a source for FSIS data. Some of the considerations that we might want to -- we'd appreciate your thoughts on include the structure that would make it appealing, that would create incentives for participation. Some of those issues are perhaps removing identifiers, creating more aggregated information and -- now this

opens up an immediate question of what is the regulatory implication of providing data about pathogens in products? It's not a -- I don't think that there's a simple easy answer to that it. It has -- the issue has ethical implications. It has regulatory implications and it has data sharing implications. If an industry has evidence that they have an adulterant for example, in a product, they're obliged to take action and if - if that information is shared with FSIS, they can't ignore it because their participating in a product - in a project. However, we're very interested in the sharing of information so perhaps removing identifiers in that sort of safeguard might be appropriate. Data quality is an important aspect of any data-sharing activity. Unless there are safeguards in place, it's very easy for misinformation to enter into data sets. It's also important that the data that's provided to the agency, lend itself to analysis. Then there is this question of who should have access to the data within the agency and outside the agency? So condition for participation - perhaps some people would see a benefit of providing data in

aggregate, of having eliminated identifiers and of some considerations related to regulation. Other people might be more comfortable with providing data, if they feel they have a process that's very effective and they want to share it with the agency,. They might be willing to forego some of these things. Also data quality control is an important consideration. So, for example, database cleaning. Where does that occur, what logic checks are needed, is there a need to double key critical fields? Is the developer of the data set available for consultation on questions like appropriate statistical modeling for making inferences? Also data is almost unusable unless it's well-documented, so that it contains variable names and clearly defined categories.

Now this is really not a bold new step. This is already occurring. We receive data from -- from people in industry from trade organizations, professional organizations already. What we'd like to do is expand it so that it can improve our ability to develop effective programs, to make assessments of their impact, to use data for risk assessment purposes

and we also see a clear need for more participation from small and very small companies and other groups that have information to share with us. So I mentioned earlier that a project like this needs to start out slowly and one way to consider doing that is to develop a pilot project that perhaps would focus on a very specific hazard or a clearly defined policy initiative of some sort and see what the -- what the -- how -- what mechanisms are working and what need to be slightly refined. So in summary, the agency is very interested in the committee's advice on a data depository and -- and how it could be used. In particular how it would be administered, what would be necessary or perhaps appropriate or useful conditions to set for participation, how data quality control would be assured, who would have access to the data and what might be a useful pilot project for beginning this? All right. Well, that's my comments. We'd be very interested in your comments or questions.

MR. TYNAN: Does the committee have any questions at this point on Dr. Altekruse's presentation? I'm sorry, - Dr. Denton.

DR. DENTON: I think that is fair that I get to ask the first question since this is the subcommittee that I chaired. I have a couple of questions that I'd like a little bit of clarification on as we go into our deliberations this afternoon. I guess the first one has to do with what I see as the challenge that we face in accumulating data like this. One is that we have the historical data that already exists within all of these environments that we're talking about trying to aggregate the information from - the historical portion of it, if you will. The second part would be how we manage that as we go forward in adding to that future data sets with regard to adding to that information that we already know. Has there been any discussion with regard to how that would be handled? Number one because the first part is going to be huge, assuming that we can get this repository established, and then with that in place, is there any discussion with regard to funding associated with this because we are talking about a fairly significant undertaking that's going to be very intensive from the stand point of manpower of getting all the data

aggregated and then future management of that data set?

DR. ALTEKRUSE: Thank you for that question and it's a very good question. If it's not addressed appropriately, we could rapidly begin receiving terabytes of information and that's not what we're seeking here. I mentioned a pilot project as perhaps a way to begin. What would be useful to the agency is data that are responsive to what our priorities are or toward petitions that others may present to us and that would support those petitions. So I really think that the ideal data repository would contain concise quality control data. It wouldn't request retrospectively that any data that someone might have be provided to the data repository. So it would begin with targeted information, and I think a pilot project is a good way to begin for that reason. There's probably some other part of your question that I may not have answered.

DR. DENTON: If I could, just to follow up on what you said. I understand exactly what you're saying. If we picked a particular pathogen, whatever

that may be, and try to restrict that to a pilot project in something that we can manage with regard to the data aggregation for the repository. I am of the opinion that we still would want to collect information specific to that pathogen. It can be in a multitude of different ways of looking at it. One, it could be in the use of intervention strategies that are particularly successful in addressing that pathogen. That's something that I think that you would be interested in. It's something that the community at large would be interested in. If you alter a process within a processing plant, you have got data that would substantiate that you have either improved the process or at least been equal to that particular process. So that there's a huge amount of information out there that would be beneficial if we could put that into that risk assessment/risk management framework. Because as I interpret where you want to go with this, you want to be able to focus on those places where the need is the greatest, where we have the best information that gives us direction with regard to policy in making those decisions that

we need to make. I think it still comes back to the issue of how we address that initial accumulation of data specific to where you identified initiatives that FSIS has in mind and obviously that's going to take some considerable discussion to set the priorities with regard to what we want to do within that context. Then once we have established that set of priorities - how do we deal with that from the funding standpoint, because it still going to be fairly expensive process in the early stages. Now later it may become a lot more manageable because you're dealing with data that comes in on a routine basis and that's obviously going to take less investment of human resources in managing that data than getting this thing up and done the first time.

DR. ALTEKRUSE: I agree. There's a need for someone with very good - not one person - there's a - first of all, this is a collaborate team. This is a collaboration that we're - essentially what we're talking about here is FSIS and other interested parties who have data to provide working together to develop a data depository. In the pilot project

slide, I mentioned pathogens but I also mentioned one other category, which was other agency initiatives and so perhaps an example of that would not be a pathogen specific intervention, but what are the measures that a group - a company - are using to assure that their process is working? So there are a variety of different possibilities out there and in the setup stage in a pilot project, I think the agency would have to work closely with the data provider to develop those - the systems for an effective data transfer - one that is encrypted, that has good quality control, good documentation, consultation to make sure that the appropriate methods of statistical analysis are brought to it. We're getting very technical and I can see some people - their eyelids starting to drop a little bit, but the questions that you raised are so important, they really are.

MR. TYNAN: Go ahead, Phil.

MR. DERFLER: I'm Phil Derfler. One of the things we're really interested in the committee though is not necessarily cookbook how to do it --

DR. ALTEKRUSE: No, no, no --

MR. DERFLER: A set of options. I mean, suppose we don't have money but we really need it, or various scenarios. Are there options for how we would get access to do the things that they're are talking about is really important? So that's the kind of advice that we're --

MR. DERFLER: That's where my question was going is to find out what the commitment from the agency side is and how we go about doing this because there are a multitude of ways to do it.

DR. ALTEKRUSE: I'm not sure that we can presume any - other than a commitment to do this. I'm not sure that we can commit to any particular way. So that's why a set of options would be very useful.

MS. MASTERS: This is Barb Masters and that was going to be my comment. You might as a committee come back - group come back to us say this might require funding from this perspective. We have not specifically funding in the out years for this but you might suggest to us we might request funding but you also might suggest to us we might put staff years into this and we might be able to put staff years into it

because that's a little - where we have a little bit more flexibility. We might also be able to divert some of our - some of our staffs do have grant money they can use and so there are the variety of options that we could use internally and that's why if you come back to us we - where we have flexibility, we can use flexibility and so you're thinking along the right track and that's where I think Phil's coming from. If you give us different options that would be very helpful to us.

DR. ALTEKRUSE: Okay.

MR. TYNAN: I'm going to start way over to my right with Mr. Schad and then I'll work my way over to the left.

MR. SCHAD: Mark Schad, Schad Meats. Dr. Altekruse, you said you were doing some of this data collection now. What has been your experience, pitfalls, what can you bring to the subcommittee now that this - this has not worked right. What kind of problems are we having now?

DR. ALTEKRUSE: My personal experience is very limited but the risk assessment division within OPHS

has frequently received information from industry as part of the regulatory proposed rule-making process. We often ask for data and that has worked well when it's provided. I think that these mechanisms would help to make that a little more transparent of a process and there are some things that the agency anticipates would be issues. So for example, FOIAs. Proprietary information. But there are also mechanisms in place for addressing this thing. There are exemptions to the FOIA process. If proprietary information is provided to the agency and the owner of that information later decides that they don't want to have that information released as part of the rule-making process, they can be asked to resubmit it in a form that is more acceptable from their standpoint. Those are some of the considerations that go into - go into this.

MR. TYNAN: Mr. Elfering.

MR. ELFERING: Kevin Elfering, Minnesota Department of Ag. I've got maybe a couple of questions. You're only looking at the particular pathogen. You're not looking at molecular subtypes or

anything like that?

DR. ALTEKRUSE: I think that our focus is less on the - on the content of data sets that we would request and more on how data could be provided to the agency to help develop optimal allocation of resources. So in some instances it may be that molecular data's extremely important. I think that would vary from one submission to the next, though, and I purposely stayed away from specific examples of pathogens or their attributes, but clearly there could be all kinds of attributes like the - the effective lethality treatments of interventions of characteristics by molecular subtype by their - a certain molecular characteristic makes it more virulent, but those things would vary from one submission to the next. Does that get at it somewhat?

MR. ELFERING: The other question I have is - is you said that you're already getting some data from industry? What kind of - is this is - what kind of percentage of the industry is reporting and what are they reporting right now, and then what other areas are you getting – you're getting data from CDC,

FoodNet?

DR. ALTEKRUSE: CDC provides - that becomes public domain and it clearly goes into our considerations - FoodNet. We have received information from trade groups related to specific pathogen contamination incidents - ready to eat foods for example. Some companies are very proud of their projects - how their addressing for example O157 and they've been willing to tell us in some detail the - the approach that they're using and what they're finding in terms of sampling for the pathogen, in terms of measuring their process within their - their establishment and so those - those are very positive developments, but we'd like to see more information in that regard and in particular there's some - some sectors that are under represented, like the small and very small establishments. So that's a question. How do we reach out to them to receive more information?

MR. TYNAN: Mr. Link.

MR. CHARLES LINK: Charles Link with Cargill Meat Solutions. I understand you guys are looking for options and things to consider. I'm curious as you

develop a pilot project. In your thinking there, are you looking to design a model and experiment, if you will, say everybody's kind of using the same protocol, taking the same types of data so that you can use the data? Because there's a lot of ways to collect data and send it in to you and you can't do anything with it. Secondly, are you looking at voluntary participation or are you going to mandate across the board, that now we have a project, let's go and start collecting data?

DR. ALTEKRUSE: It's not really a data depository. If it's a requirement, it's something different and I think that the answer is - the misconception is that we would work with - first of all, for a pilot project we'd identify a specific area where there's a data need and we would work with interested parties that have data that they would like to provide to define fields, variables that would be provided and develop electronic methods for transmission of data and work on documentation. I think, if a particular company felt that their methods were working well and they had a statistical approach

to demonstrate that, we'd very much like to hear about the approach that they're using so that it could be perhaps applied more broadly to see if it can be replicated. So it really is an open discussion particularly in the pilot phase when we're trying to figure out what's going, what might work and what might need to be refined.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Hollingsworth.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: I'm not on this committee, so my comments are just being sort of thrown out for them to consider. In looking over this, it appears to me that where the agency is at this point is almost conceptual in its thinking, and it would seem to me that there's a whole bunch of pre-work that would need to be done even before you can consider some of the questions. I mean, what would be the features of this depository and you've mentioned things like where would it be housed, is it a third party initiative, is it - it would seem to me there are even other agencies within USDA, Ag statistics or ARS or ERS or other groups that could perhaps come in and have a role to play. I think another big issue that would need to be

addressed and probably the committee doesn't have the resources to do that and that is what is FSIS's authorities to - to collect this kind of information and not act on it if it's public health regulatory agency and so I think that that whole issue of legal authority would have to be looked at - where it's housed, who's going to pay for it, who has access to it. It would seem to me all of those issues would somehow need to be addressed in some kind of an industry, government partnership and I think until that - the whole scope of the project is - is better examined. It's hard to jump forward to questions like how do we control the quality of the data, or do we do a pilot using a pathogen? It seems to me that those preliminary questions are going to have to be addressed up front way before you even get to the issues of quality of data and pilot studies. So it's just my thinking on it and reading it, I just wanted to share that with the subcommittee.

DR. ALTEKRUSE: Thank you. Those are points that were raised also in my presentation. I also mentioned that some groups are already providing us with very

useful information and so part of this is actually formalizing a process that's already been taking place informally for some time and you - you mentioned some specific areas. My perception is that we want data that are concise and targeted towards answering specific questions rather than data that could be mulled over in mind and that sort of thing. I don't know if - how that would play into consideration, but there's also the ethical issue that you raised and the agency can't back away from its regulatory responsibility in that regard, either. So thank you for bringing that up.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Leech.

DR. LEECH: Irene Leech. My question relates to what incentive would someone have to provide, data and it seems that if it's voluntary and so forth that the only kind of data anybody would want to provide would be positive environment data and that's good but does that really help us solve anything?

DR. ALTEKRUSE: That's a very good point. We have requested data on the incidents of pathogens in ready-to-eat foods and for example, we've asked

questions about products other than ground beef and O157. So it's a way of getting some information on contamination that we're not aware that we don't currently have access to and maybe getting that in a very expedited way. But you're also right. It's a way for companies that have found approaches that are working well for them to - to provide that information to the agency. They do have an advantage if in doing that, and that is things that they've already adopted are brought to the attention of the agency and if they're shown to work, they may help to inform decisions on future directions for food safety within the agency. So it really - it does have clear advantages and I've emphasized the advantages to FSIS of receiving data, but it also has advantages to the provider as well.

MR. TYNAN: Okay, he'll take one more question. If there is one? Okay. Mr. Kowalcyk.

MR. KOWALCYK: Michael Kowalcyk from STOP. If you can expand a little bit more on what the agency's vision is for this data depository. Is this really to be looked at as a research database? Where you're

looking for a centralized place where you have data that you can use to help develop policies in the future? In other words, looking at operating procedures and collecting data for a cross section of industry to take that historical information to make future recommendations, or is this also to be used as a regulatory tool as well to help you with your regulatory enforcement? If you could expand a little bit more about your vision for the uses of this statement?

DR. ALTEKRUSE: In Dr. Murano's vision paper, she talked about anticipating hazards before they occur, and I really think that's the purpose here. It's it's not to create a new research resource within the agency, it's to inform decision making on the best approaches for using inspections resources to address food safety issues. Again, so my perception is that it would be a concise and targeted data submission that we'd be seeking over two alternatives, one being anecdotes, which are not very helpful, and the other being large terrified size data sets that are difficult to evaluate. So really, I think that the

ideal set of data would provide information on the impact of proposed regulations of regulatory approaches that look very promising and that almost, with the data submission and documentation there, would be models that we're saying - and these are the models that we use that work for us. I mean, rather than a data mining type approach.

MS. MASTERS: This is Barb Masters and the only other thing I would comment on is that Dr. Murano is - she used in her words forecasting - the weather forecast. Again - as when you have conglomerated data, instead of individual people having that data - again we would be optimistic that perhaps it would help us in forecasting that. If it's not all in isolated places, that perhaps we would be hopeful that it would help us forecast and - and making our policies that if we see it all in one place, kind of like our CCMS - our consumer complaints - instead of one complaint here, one complaint there. When it's all together, we're hopeful that it might help us predict further out and form our policy decisions in that way. That's where we're hopeful that we can use

it in a very progressive way to predict risk and predict hazards so that we can make more informed policy decisions in a more forecasted way.

MR. TYNAN: I think if the committee has no objections I'm going to let Dr. Altekruse off the hook, and maybe we'll make a transition to the next topic. If Sean has the time and can stay -- Maybe if there are more questions and I sense that there are, and I know you're going to have quite a challenge on your hands Dr. Denton, that maybe Sean could stay and have some dialogue with you during lunch if there are some other questions for the people that are on that subcommittee.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is he going to be here this evening?

MR. TYNAN: We won't let him go. I'm going to sneak up here for just a second. Before we transition to our next topic which is as - as I mentioned this morning, we're changing the third topic to the second, so we're going to do Training and Outreach. We had outside just a little bit of a glitch. We had some material that we were going to use for the committee

session so that each member of the committee would have a copy of our E.coli workshops. Because they're so popular and they are so good, several of those copies are now gone. So we suspect that some of the folks that are in the audience may have taken those. If we could recover those from you, we promise we will send you another one with our sincere thanks, and we will do that as quickly as we can as soon as we get back to the office. In fact if - I'll bring some additional copies over tomorrow. I had no idea that they would be such a hot seller. Particularly when they were free. If you don't turn them in, of course, we're going to have to call the Department of Homeland Security, and you'll not be allowed to leave. But if you could if we could collect a few of those copies, I would appreciate it. Then I'm going to ask Ms. Mary Cutshall who is the Director of our Strategic Initiatives staff to come on up and we'll pass out the rest of those while she's getting ready.

MS. CUTSHALL: Thank you Robert. I'd also - being director of Strategic Initiatives partnerships and outreach staff which has a large responsibility

for running of the committee. I'd like to thank all of you for coming today. I'd like to thank all of you for your responsiveness. We appreciate it, and we're looking forward to a very good meeting. I'm going to talk to you today - we're switching gears a little bit - I want to talk to you today about training and outreach in FSIS. During the past few years FSIS has issued policies that have had a significant impact on the FSIS workforce. I think you're well aware that we continue to issue policies that are more complex, and at a continually rapid rate. These policy changes have also had implications for the industry as well. I think that's obvious that when we put out regulations and we put out notices and directives, that there's a direct impact on the industry, and often our other partners and constituents as well. As a result of that we have a two-fold challenge: training our internal workforce and communicating these new changes and requirements to our outside customers and constituents as well. In both cases we're focused on ensuring that the message is clear, consistent and understandable, so that it can be

implemented effectively both from the FSIS perspective and from the industry perspective. FSIS is dedicated to effective and targeted outreach and training, and I think that's been obvious in the last few years. I think at the last meeting Dr. Masters very eloquently talked about some of the issues in training. We recognize that we work in a changing environment, and we can't rely on the way that we've always done things in conducting our outreach activities. We need to think ahead, we need to be thinking forward, and we need to be thinking about the new challenges that are facing us. Therefore today we want to talk about two different things. Are there other ways in which FSIS can efficiently and effectively share information through outreach and training with our constituent groups, and how can we improve our outreach to external groups - establishments? Establishments, both small and very small, states and our constituents? What additional training should we offer or engage in with our constituents? Before we get into the details I want to explain a bit about the Strategic Initiatives Partnerships and Outreach staff,

or SIPO, and clarify our role in FSIS. I think you've heard a lot this morning about partnerships, about outreach, about communication and you've heard the name SIPO bandied quite a bit about. So I'm going to tell you a little bit about SIPO, because I'm not sure that people are really familiar with who we are and what we do. So who or what is SIPO? Good question. The Office of Public Affairs, Education and Outreach, plays a critical role in implementing, educating and communicating the undersecretaries and FSIS' public health message to the agencies' constituents, partners and stakeholders. There are actually five offices in OPAEO which is the Office of Public Affairs, Education and Outreach. We used to have four but we've recently acquired a new one. The Congressional and Public Affairs Office, the Executive Correspondence and Management staff. The Food Safety Education staff, I'm sure you're all familiar with. The Batmobile and the outreach that our Food Safety Education staff does - I know I'm not supposed to call it the Batmobile, it is the Food Safety mobile. We've recently put together a new technology staff, and I'm going to talk

a little bit about some of the things they're doing as well as it interacts with our coordination, our partnerships, and our outreach and training, and then finally SIPO. Within OPAEO the Strategic Initiatives Partnerships and Outreach staff, or SIPO, conducts a variety of activities from our understanding of and support for agency goals, policies and initiatives. We do this both with our internal customers which are our FSIS personnel and external partners. SIPO carries out these activities in coordination with the other OPAEO offices, as well as assisting all other program FSIS offices. We provide outreach to four primary areas of constituencies. FSIS employees, small meat, poultry, and egg processing plants regulated by FSIS for the states, state and local public health agencies, and underserved communities. In addition, SIPO coordinates and administers public input into FSIS policies through the NACMPI. It also plans and organizes public outreach to agency constituents, generally through its meetings' management function, and participates in the development and implementation of cross-cutting agency

initiatives.

So we're involved with the Office of Policy when Phil develops a regulation, when Mr. Smith implements a regulation, when Office of Public Health and Science is working on risk assessments that would impact regulatory changes. We're involved in helping coordinate these things and getting the message out as is all of OPAEO. In conducting these activities, SIPO deals extensively with other offices and with administrator's procedures such as chartering the NACMPI and cooperative agreement functions that need to be carefully managed to make sure agency goals are met. So our focus is primarily for external constituents, while the Center for Learning often times focuses on our workforce, but we're working to change this. One of the things that I would say is I think it was a surprise when you saw an issue that talked about training and outreach, and you didn't see Dr. Kelly up here, and you didn't see Mr. Derfler up here. I think that's a big shift in agency policy, and looking to make sure that both internally and externally we're clearly communicating our messages

and we're making sure that all our partners and all our constituents are hearing the same message, are understanding the same message, and that we get the word out to everyone equally. I see Dr. Masters nodding her head.

MR. TYNAN: That's a good sign.

MS. CUTSHALL: Yes it is. That means I have a job for one more day. Although SIPO and CFL, as I said, have different customers, we work very closely in the development and delivery of training and education materials relating to the public health and food security. You heard Dr. Maczka this morning talking about planning workshops, doing outreach, putting out their models. That's something that SIPO would participate in as well, providing guidance and assistance to them to make sure that the lessons that we've learned and the methods that we've used are transferred to others so that we can continue to be more effective. Well how do we currently do the things that we do? As you all know, significant policy changes are published in the federal register. They're also put out in form of notices, supporting

directives, and compliance guidelines that are often posted on the website. Our website is very important to us in getting information out, but these vehicles of regulations that the policy, the notices are often very complex and this is not a criticism of Mr. Derfler. But we're dealing with complex issues, and we deal with public health and dealing with regulating the public health and understanding the industry. So sometimes it can be difficult for the average small plant owner or even some of our inspection program personnel to understand these highly complex issues. We want to enable all of the people impacted by these changes to be able to implement the regulations and comply with them. Often times it's understanding why we do what we do, and understanding what we're requiring and what we're trying to get at. If you understand the basis behind what we're doing, you're often more likely to want to implement it to be able to adapt to it. While we found this out with the implementation of HACCP - when folks didn't understand why we were doing what we were doing, they didn't understand the impact on public health. We had a lot

of comments that it was an exercise in recordkeeping, it was paperwork exercise. I think a lot of our communications over the years have gotten it across that it's so much more than that. You can tell by the numbers that Dr. Murano talked to you about, that Dr. Masters talked to you about, that it really has impacted the public health in a positive way. So SIPO and the Center for Learning collaborate to develop materials that transform the complex regulations into more understandable and simple forms without changing the message. When a change occurs, we provide our workforce with a comprehensive training program, and training often these days is in the form of an interactive or narrated CDROM which contains flow charts, illustrative video clips, copies of agency issuances, regulations, directive notices, compliance guidelines, a summary of directives and quizzes. We and SIPO have been working very closely with the Center for Learning to make sure that we often do plain language interpretations of the regulations. Side by side. This is what was there before. This is what has changed. We have a number of workshops that

we've put on the past year, but I don't have PowerPoints, but I do have visual aids. I think Mr. Detwiler, being a teacher can appreciate visual aids. You see the E.coli workbooks in front of you? That was our most recent workshop. If you take a look at it, you'll find that it has the CDROM that was used for inspection personnel. We also provided the workbook that was used at the workshops to our inspection program personnel as well, and we've posted on the web. So if you open up your package, you can kind of take a look and get a feel for what we do when we go through workshop. It's got our PowerPoints, and it follows the regulations through. We conducted a series, particularly with E. coli of 11 workshops. We try to schedule them throughout the country at strategic locations to make sure that we share information with owners and operators of small and very small plants, of states, and all of our other partners that are interested in public health and food security. We publish notices about these workshops in letters. We actually send out hard-copy letters, electronic letters to all the small and very small

plants using the PDIS system. We post that on our website, and we publish in the agencies weekly constituent updates with instructions for registration. We've learned a lot about doing these workshops. One of the things that we've learned is that a lot - we get a lot of good questions. We get a lot of good feedback. We learn from them as well and we can take the questions, work them into compliance guidelines, but we've made sure that when we go out and conduct these workshops that we have the agency technical subject matter experts. We want to make sure that when we present, that again we give a clear, concise message, and that we have the folks that know that subject matter inside and out. I can see three or four people in this room today that participated in a number of workshops with us. Dr. Englejohn, Dr. Masters and in her former capacity, Dr. Arrington. So we've had a lot of support for doing these workshops across the board. As you can see from your sample books, the materials include the regulations, directives, notices, supplemental guidance materials and PowerPoint presentation. I mentioned before that

the CDROM was also included with the workbook. In addition to the E. coli workshops over the last year we've done workshops on Listeria, which we did last summer through fall and BSE this winter. I'll ask the question. Did anyone on the committee attend one of the workshops and I'm going to pinpoint Dr. Jan, because I know you went to one of the E. coli workshops in Texas?

DR. JAN: I actually didn't make it.

MS. CUTSHALL: You didn't make it. Did anyone else attend one of the workshops? Mark? What did you think of the workshops? What was your - I think you were in Toledo?

MR. SCHAD: Yes, I was in Toledo. Yes.

MS. CUTSHALL: Okay. Could you --

MR. SCHAD: I thought overall it was a very good workshop, very informative. I think that the one thing that could be done better, if there was one frontline supervisor that was there, the frontline supervisors could also attend the workshops at the same time. I got the answers to all my questions, but when I came back to the plant or visited those other

plants, it seemed like the frontline supervisors had a different answer to the same question. It was just a Communication problem, and that just causes some problems out in the day-to-day activities at the plants.

MS. CUTSHALL: Right. Duly noted, and we did encourage as we went through more and more of our FSIS personnel to attend. I'm kind of happy to say Mr. Schad went to the first - the first of the series of E. coli, and we did realize that we needed to get more of our personnel involved and we're very sensitive to that. That's one of the issues that, I think when you look at the topic that we're talking about and the issues that we're putting before you that that's something that we need to consider, how we can do that more effectively so that it works more effectively between the regulated establishments and FSIS so we all are understanding the same thing. While these workshops have been effective, we want to reach a broader audience more effectively and efficiently than we have in the past. Our idea is to enhance our current approaches in order to identify sources that

can help us multiply the message to a wider audience. We want to additionally use technology to get the word out. We understand that not everyone can tap into the internet, but it is an important vehicle that we need to take advantage of for the future. I think more and more people are relying on technology. One of the things that we know is difficult, particularly with small and very small plants and some of our underserved populations, some of our state and local partners, is that they can't necessarily get out. If we have 11 workshops throughout the country, even if we hold them on a Saturday, it's not always practical for everyone to be at every meeting. So we need to start examining new ways that we can reach more people with our message. How do we plan to do it in the future? I can tell you some of our vision for the future, and what we're going to ask you to do is to expand on that vision and give us more information and help us to move even further. You heard a lot today about progress and moving forward, and that's what we're talking about here. We can't just do what we've always done. We need to move forward. We have a

large constituency, and the public health is really critical. If we want to continue to make strides in improving the public health we need to keep moving forward. One of the things that we're doing is working with cooperative agreements within SIPO. These aren't new to SIPO, but I'm mentioning them because we do them differently. We've started now. We're going to continue to do them differently in the future. Our efforts want to bring about a more focused approach on cooperative agreements. One of the things that SIPO is doing is serving a sort the central coordinator for cooperative agreements within the agency. We have a number of different program areas that have cooperative agreement authority and cooperative agreement funds. But we want to make sure that, in these ever-shrinking budget times, that we're using our money as efficiently as we possibly can. We want to make sure that we're having the most significant impact with what we get from those cooperative agreements as we can. As I said, all the program areas are moving forward to make sure that we're achieving the most that we can for the public

health. We're looking at deliverables that have a national approach and a national impact that can be used across the board by a wide audience. Not just by FSIS, but by FSIS sharing with states, with locals, with our underserved partners, and all the partners that we have. We also want to leverage our resources. One of the things about working together is we make sure there's not overlap. We make sure that the limited resources that we do have are going as far as they can. We also want to provide a multiplication effect for increasing our audience. That means for everything that we put out there, there's a vehicle for someone else to share it with someone else and that it's going to continue to multiply because a multiplier effect through information sharing. That there's a multiplying effect through the things that we put on website. That there's a multiplying effect through the things that we even say to groups like NACMPI that you can take a message back and learn something about what FSIS is doing for the public health. Webcasting is a technology that's being used more frequently by organizations and institutions

around the country, and actually around the world, to communicate with a large and geographically dispersed audience, and believe me that's what we have, a very large and geographically dispersed audience. We actually pilot tested this method by actually putting several of our workshop sessions on the web live and I - I get kind of excited about it. I was a little nervous when we did the first one in New York City, but when I actually sat down at the table and I had the computer in front of me, and I could see what the people were seeing that were virtually participating. I could almost whisper into the microphone and just go awesome. It was really - it was just a real good experience for us. We had people that were able to virtually attend the session and actually interact with the presenters. It doesn't take a lot of complex computer knowledge. It doesn't take a lot of complex set up, and so we were very excited about that. It provided a useful tool and from all the feedback that we've received it was very well received.

As a result of that, we've initiated a contract with the company to provide webcasting support for

other programs and activities that FSIS will be conducting over the next year and hopefully far into the future. The other thing that we're looking at is, for want of a better name at this point, the virtual resource center. The Virtual Resource Center is a very new initiative. It's in its infancy at this point, but it's one that we believe offers a great deal of promise for providing broad access to public health and security information and training. The resource center will be a repository of materials generated with an FSIS as well as through cooperative agreements. So for example, it would provide all the materials that FSIS Center for Learning has, as well as all the materials that we have gleaned over the last 10 years of cooperative agreements through working with universities, through working with states, the deliverables that we have that relate to just a myriad of topics. It's going to have directives. It's going to have links to notices. It's going to have links to our websites. It's going to have links to other websites where folks have cooperated with us to provide deliverables. I spoke

about it earlier, but this is one thing that we're working on that we would like some input on into how it can be used more efficiently. It is in its infancy, but we have high hopes for its use and for continuing to develop it. We like to think of it more as a one-stop shop than a virtual library or resource center. If you want to know something about FSIS, if you want to know something about meat, poultry egg inspection, processing, food safety, public health, security, you'll be able to go to this site and you'll be able to find this information in a very easy to obtain manner. When it matures, we're hoping to make this a place for interacting with the materials, and to be able for folks to even take courses online, perhaps even be tested on the learning as well. So that's our initial thinking. I know I've laid out a number of things about how we'll be conducting outreach in the future, and it brings us back to our reason for opening this topic with you. We want your advice and recommendations on how we can improve our outreach. As I mentioned in the beginning, we have the following questions for your consideration. Are

there other ways that FSIS can efficiently and effectively share information through outreach and training with our constituent groups? As you can see we're thinking ahead, so we're going to be asking you to think ahead, to think maybe nontraditionally. To look at ways that we can multiply, leverage our resources, and to think of things even possibly that we may not have. How can we improve our outreach to external groups, to establishments, to states and to all our constituents? Also, what additional change should we offer or engage in with our constituents? In our view these issues are very important. Perhaps even critical and urgent questions that we need to consider. If you have any questions I'll take your questions at this point?

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Hollingsworth you were first, so we'll let you go first.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Jill Hollingsworth, Food Marketing Institute. In a bit, follow-up to Mark's question - I know previous committees prior to even my time on this group, have discussed the issue of joint training – excuse me. I've noticed here in the

bullets, it appears that the terminology - training is used for the FSIS workforce versus outreach for the industry. Can you update us on what, if any, joint training is taking place so that as we look at this issue, we sort of can look at the difference between training and outreach?

MS. CUTSHALL: That's a good question, and I think it has some historical - I don't want to say baggage - but we had always said in the past that joint training was problematic. That it was for us as a regulatory agency, difficult to provide training directly to the industry. I think FSIS has struggled with that issue for a number of years. It is my understanding that we are moving more closely toward what could be considered joint training. A joint understanding of what we're doing. So we use the terminology outreach, but in essence, from what you've heard, we're presenting the same material. We're presenting the same types of things that we do to our workforce. I don't know if Mr. Derfler or Dr. Masters wants to address that as well?

DR. MASTERS: The most recent example - this is

Barb Masters. The most recent example was - we worked with the international HACCP alliance. The industry did request the opportunity to walk through our food safety regulatory essentials as well as our EIAO, our Enforcement Investigation Analysis Officer training. The international HACCPC alliance worked with our Center for Learning to walk through that material. It was done in three days because that was what was done at the request of industry, to walk through the highlights of the material. About 150 people were in attendance and the material was presented by FSIS presenters. We are open and interested in any suggestions that this committee has to our agency as to approaches that any constituent group is interested in and joint opportunities, and the word is not important to us at this point as Mary says, we are open to - we're moving to joint understanding. Whether you call it training, whether you call it outreach, and we are very interested in what this committee has. We have talked to the industry and often times say we're interested in joint sessions. Then when there's an opportunity for two-week session,

we hear back from them to say we'd love to come to a three-day session. So we are interested in hearing from this committee as to what joint opportunities for understanding from all constituent areas that this committee would have. Phil?

MR. DERFLER: I just want to say that one of the things that we find when we ask industry, when industry talks about joint training. Nobody has a consistent definition of that. Sometimes it is, you come to the training that we put on and you pay for it. Sometimes it is let us come and be trained jointly with your people. So we're interested in what that means. What do people really have in mind? We're also interested in, are there situations in which we should be reaching out to consumer groups, for example? There is practically no attendance at the sessions that we've put on. Why is that the case? Are there - are there things that we could be doing better? Are there things that we could be doing differently? So we're interested in broadly - there's an issue that keeps coming up. It's one that we'd like to get our arms around and get a good hand

on as possible.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Leech.

DR. LEECH: Irene Leech, actually you headed toward part of my question in which you just answered. Because part of my question was into what extent is this for consumers, public, versus training for staff? Particularly your virtual resource center is - is I think of particular interest, and curious whether the intent there is for people who are really working in the industry or for consumers. I could see some good possibilities of ways to help to increase the average person's confidence. Obviously from the Gallop Poll, things that we heard this morning - it's very good. But I think that something we need to be ever vigilant about, particularly when we know that folks in Europe and some other places are not as trustful of their government systems - particularly food systems - I think it's important for us to hold on to what we've got. So today a lot of consumers like to do their own research and learn about things, and so forth, and not just get platitudes that everything's wonderful and we're doing enough, but enough information they can

really ascertain for sure to their satisfaction across a broad range of education levels and think, so forth, and it's a challenge, but I think it is important today. So are you trying to balance to - trying to do a little of everything? Are you trying to mostly do training for your staff? What's the real focus, and where did the dollars - are the dollars really intended to go?

MS. CUTSHALL: Well I can tell you that the focus that we're looking at both for the virtual resource center and for our outreach has been the widest audience we can get. We continue to move forward in trying to get input to make sure that we are reaching people. One of the things that you brought up were things that are difficult to understand. Within our staff, we've been trying to adapt materials so that no matter who attends the workshops, or who is going to go on to a virtual resource center, there will be things that will be understandable and things that will address their needs. We do intend to try and reach all our constituents, and that includes the consumer, the consumer groups. Our food safety

education staff does a number of things directly related to consumer needs and specific populations at risk. They've been very, very active in putting things out there. So I think we're trying to target as many folks as we can.

MR. QUICK: On the consumer side, if you go on the website now, you've spent a number of resources on the virtual representatives. It's populated with 5,000 questions. It's not just food and safety preparation, to do preparation, that's also agency questions. So it really goes towards what you're talking about.

MS. CUTSHALL: That was Mr. Bryce Quick and he's talking about our ask care and our virtual representative on the website. Which I think is a model that - that other agencies and other folks have been following.

DR. LEECH: I would also find a need for - some ways to look even more in-depth if there are some documents that follow-up on those questions and so forth. I've looked at a little bit, but I think, and I think it's a - definitely start in the right

direction, but probably could do a little more, to.

MS. CUTSHALL: We certainly welcome your suggestions. That's why we're coming before you today and asking you to come back to us and give us your suggestions and your input on the things that we can do better.

MS. MASTERS: This is Barb Masters from FSIS and I just wanted to follow-up on one Ms. Cutshall's comments. She said it's unusual that it's not Dr. Kelly up here. For those of you who don't know who Dr. Kelly is, she's actually our new Chief Training Officer for the Center for Learning. So we do have funding that goes both directions. Certainly the training of our own workforces. As a new - Dr. McKee and his administrator role really brought the focus back to our own workforce, and it's been an initiative that really needed some new ignition for our own workforce, and certainly that is a huge funding area and something that is a huge priority for our agency. But when Ms. Cutshall was commenting, I was shaking my head and the reason we have Ms. Cutshall here is, we do need to be looking with one focus, and one voice.

We do need to be looking - not only at our workforce but consumers, industry, and our workforce with one voice, one focus and one message. That is why we chose to have Ms. Cutshall representing this issue. To answer your comment, we have two staffs. We have funding for both areas and both of them are a huge priority for us. So that comment - so if you didn't understand it. We have two staffs - funding for both areas and both of them are a significant priority for us and we do welcome your comments. Thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Harris.

MR. HARRIS: Joe Harris. Are we - be involved in a different subcommittee so this is maybe more in the form of a little input for - as the subcommittee goes forward. But, I think the workshop format that you talked about specifically with some of the new regulations as they come out and new directives is very effective. I think industry especially appreciates that maybe a comment for improving it is one, continue the webcasting. I thought that was a great first endeavor. I think that would really grow, but maybe something that would improve attendance. I

know attendance was good but there's still a lot of companies out there that - that didn't participate and the timing is sometimes an issue. When a directive or a regulation becomes effective, and then two months later we start having workshops on it, the tendency for companies is to say, well, I've either, A, already run into a significant regulatory snag with this regulation and I've dealt with it, or, B, I haven't hit a bit regulatory snag. It must not be too big a deal for me. So those are my only two comments. Thanks.

MR. TYNAN: Okay, thanks. Mr. Detwiler.

MR. DETWILER: Darin Detwiler, Educator. I don't come at this from an agency or an industry standpoint. But you've talked about how folks understand the underlying reasons, they'll be more likely to implement. We've also heard the idea of one message and also broadening the message going out to not only the workforce, but the consumer groups and the consumers. I just want to point out that I was involved 10 years ago with the safe food handling label, and that idea of one message going out to all

consumers, and there was considerable resistance and change from the industry in terms of exactly what message you're going to put out. How's that going to impact the sale of the product and the confidence of the seller or the supplier of that product. My concern is that as we expand this training in outreach to beyond the industry and to consumers and consumer groups that that is going to be an issue that we are going to face. So I don't know if that's a comment or a question, but it definitely is a concern on my part.

MS. CUTSHALL: Thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Mr. Elfering.

MR. ELFERING: Kevin Elfering, Minnesota Department of Ag. I think one of the challenges we always have is with these very small plants. Not only new information that's coming on, but we're seeing some plants that are just starting now. How many years now have we been since the implementation of SSOPs? I'm almost thinking maybe we need to go back a little bit, to, and resurrect some of those training and outreach programs that would help some of these very small plants, starting with just the basics

again. We're almost - same with training employees. People who have been around a number of years seem to have kind of gradually learned all of this information,. But when we hire new employees, we need to really go back to some of the information. Why we even do things that we do.

MS. CUTSHALL: I would ask you, Mr. Elfering, if you could pinpoint some of the folks. Because one of the things that we are doing, as I talked about the virtual resource center - we are going back through a lot of the materials that we have looking to see if they're viable, do they need to be updated and seeing about putting them on the virtual resource center. But are there other target audiences that we may not reach that way, and I don't know if you're on the committee, but that may be something the committee wants to consider as well to help us with.

MR. TYNAN: Mr. Govro.

MR. GOVRO: In reading the materials prior to coming to the meeting, I read that - and apparently it wasn't in the training and outreach briefing. But there was a statement that said that many small plants

do not have internet access use of computers. Perhaps this is a regional difference, but in my experience dealing with the public and industry, not many people don't have access to the internet, and I'm wondering if you have a clear idea how many of your industry members do not have access to the internet?

MS. CUTSHALL: Actually we don't have a very accurate idea. One of the problems that we have as an agency, and maybe with your experience, you can help us with some of that information. We cannot survey the industry. We can survey the industry, but we must go through a lot of restrictions to be able to do that. So our efforts to be able to go out and actually ask the industry "Do you have internet access? How often do you use it? What do you use it for? Do you just have a computer?" is somewhat hampered. I know Captain Altekruse was talking about anecdotal evidence. We take what we hear. We take the feedback that we get from the field. We take the feedback that we get from other program areas. In some senses we find that particularly with some very small plants - which is the majority of the plants

that actually FSIS regulates - that there are a number of gaps in the use of technology. Whether that is the most accurate information at this point, I could not attest to because of our undeveloped ability to mine for the data.

MR. GOVRO: Do you have the ability to simply ask for email addresses as you would a telephone number or an address on whatever licensing registration process you use?

MS. CUTSHALL: I think in the PBIS system now they actually do ask for an email address and that's a good idea. I mean that's something that we could search to see how many folks actually filled it in. It would at least give us some idea of who's got email. So thank you, that's a good idea.

MR. TYNAN: Other questions on training and outreach? I know everybody has looked at the agenda and they know what's coming next. So that's why I guess the questions are perfect timing. It's 12:15. I would suggest that we take a break for lunch. I think we have an hour on the schedule, but knowing the area walking up the street, getting served, getting

back is a little bit problematic. So why don't we target for 1:30? Is that, another 15 minutes or so would that give you enough time? Okay. Let's plan on being back at 1:30 so that we can start the third and final issue. Bon appetite.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 12:12:21 p.m. and resumed at 1:34:34 p.m.)

MR. TYNAN: I think if it's 1:30 on your agenda, it's 1:30 on mine, and I think we talked this morning about shifting the Topic 2 to Topic 3. We're going to be talking about the Technical Service Center, and I have Dr. Isabel Arrington, who is the Director of the Technical Assistance and Correlation Technical Service Center, and with that I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Arrington to talk with you a little bit about the TSC.

DR. ARRINGTON: Thank you very much Robert. I just want to say I am very delighted and happy to be here to be able to represent the Technical Service Center. I see ourselves at the tech center on the verge of being able to change with the agency. New opportunities, and we've been doing things a certain

way, and now it's a chance to make some changes or to continue on with what we're doing, but in any case to continue to improve. I wanted to go over the history a little bit of the Tech Center. It was created in 1997 to implement the HACCP and the pathogen reduction rule. We were in the office of field operations at that time, and our strategy that we worked on was, how to provide technical assistance and expertise to mostly our inspection force. But of course we also included the industry. It became - what we wanted to do was to have one place to be able to get an answer - a one-stop shopping place. In fact our motto became provide prompt and consistent service to our customers. That included giving technical advice and guidance, included also having correlation, sessions with our inspection personnel which some of those range from one-on-one telephone calls to actually having sessions out, and a plant tour at the technical service center. We also worked on implementing new or modified inspection procedures. We did quite a bit of work with implementing some of the new drafts on the hemp plants, for an example, of new and modified

inspection procedures. We, at that time the center for learning was under the Tech Center, and we worked with the Center for Learning to develop and deliver training. As the agency in evolved, we also evolved. We included industry more than we had before. There was actually a demand for us to work with industry as well as inspection. For example, sometimes we would have joint teleconferences. If there was a particular problem that arose in a plant or there was a particular issue, we would have a teleconference where we'd include both the inspection personnel and the industry personnel. We did get a reputation for being able to get an answer, and their information is mostly seen as being useful, reliable and practical. But as the agency has been evolving with, now verification of the HACCP plan design and performance of the HACCP plan, we have evolved to provide that information and that technical advice. We also created a program analysis staff that was created to be able to use data, make data reports, databases, and that was one of the things we did to evolve as the agency's evolving. In fact in April of 2004, the Technical

Service Center moved from field operations to the Office of Policy, Program and Employee Development. That's OPPED under Mr. Derfler, and I did - I think in the handout there is an organizational chart, and if you want to just see where the Technical Service Center is in that organizational chart, it's on the left-hand side. There are three parts or three main divisions in OPPED. One is program development, another one is policy analysis and formulation, and the third is the Center for Learning. The Technical Service Center is under the program development. If you look, I've got a star on that organizational chart on the left-hand side to show there're two staffs that are under the title Technical Service Center. Those two staffs are Technical Assistance and Correlation. You don't have a -- okay we have that in some handout - it must be in another set of handouts. I'll get those. It really is just - it's a chart like this. So I'll just repeat under OPPED - under program analysis, is one of the major three divisions, is where the Technical Service Center falls. We are comprised of two staffs, the Technical Assistance and

Correlation staff, which is the one that I direct and then the other staff is the program analysis staff and Dr. Karen Morris directs that staff. In the Technical Service Center, as I mentioned, we do see new opportunities now. As we have moved into the office of OPPED, the policy office, we can now have a closer relationship with the Center for Learning, which is under - had been taken under - under OPPED earlier. I guess it was over several years ago. We also can renew our correlation efforts.

MR. TYNAN: Is that it right there?

DR. ARRINGTON: Yes, that's it. Renew our correlation efforts with inspection, industry and others. We can now - being under the Office of Policy - we can move more quickly to identify policy development needs. So as we receive telephone calls and emails, we are very aware of what the latest questions are, what are the issues that people are having a lot of calls or emails on, and in that way it helps us to help identify what policy needs there might be. Whether or not we need clarification on an issue, or whether or not there is even any policy on a

given issue. Then we can go from the Technical Service Center and report that upline, resulting in having notices or directives or even potentially regulations written to respond to that. We also have another advantage now being under policy is that we still can include the field perspective. We still have a very close relationship with the field inspection personnel. They still call us. They still look to us to help guide them, to get technical input so as they make their regulatory decisions. See I'm not moving this very fast. We also are of course doing more use and data analysis, and we are looking at further being able to support the field EIAOs and the district managers on data, on design questions, and also on enforcement strategies or enforcement questions or problems. We've been out in Omaha since 1997. We think at this point, having the changes going to OPPED, and having been out there that long, that it certainly is a time to ask some questions, to do some assessment. That is why we're here in front the committee. Is - one of the questions we have are should we continue to give technical assistance to

establishments? If we are going to do that, should there be any changes in how we give that assistance, or what assistance we - who we give it to or how effective it is. Are there effective ways to assist other constituent groups is another question we have. In general we want input on are there any new or enhanced ways for the use of the Technical Service Centers so that we're realizing our full benefit of our unit to the agency and of course to our constituent groups? So I'm open for questions now.

MR. TYNAN: I'm not quite sure who was first on that one but I will - okay we'll go with Ms. Eskin.

MS. ESKIN: Thanks. Sandra Eskin. I have a couple of questions. First is, how big is your staff?

MS. ARRINGTON: How many people?

MS. ESKIN: Yes.

MS. ARRINGTON: In total there's close to a 60.

MS. ESKING: Do you do any sort of customer satisfaction survey that is talking to companies, establishments, whoever calls in to see if they've gotten the information that they need and if there's any other information that they haven't been able to

receive from you and would like?

MS. ARRINGTON: We have in informal ways but not in a formal survey. We do get feedback. Some of it we ask for. A lot of it we - is brought to us by our customers. We get a lot of positive responses, we also get some negative responses.

MS. ESKIN: Well that's true. Do you have any sense of the volume of callers that you get? Do you keep track just for --

MS. ARRINGTON: Yes, we do, and I think it's something like seven or eight hundred a week.

MS. ESKING: Really. Last again, the first question, should you continue providing technical assistance to establishments? Are there other entities out there where there - through trade associations or whatever - who would provide the information or who also provides the information now? Similar to of what you all do?

MS. ARRINGTON: I don't think there's anything out there that is similar to what we do. That's not to say that trade associations do not disseminate information, do not have training, and I believe they

all do. But I guess our unique nitch is that our information - all of our technical assistance by and large always relates back to the regulatory side.

MS. ESKIN: Okay, thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Mr. Link.

MR. CHARLES LINK: Charles Link, Cargill. I just want to say, and from an industry perspective - I'm not on the subcommittee so I thought I'd give my two cents in worth while I can. We've used the Tech Service Center quite often to answer questions, to get guidance on different issues. A lot of times it's because there's a disagreement at the plant level if you will with the plant and the USDA inspection folks, and so we try to work through that and by and large it's been very successful, I think. We've – it's good to have that kind of go-to person or go-to place that you can talk about issues. You can get on the phone with your local inspectors and talk through issues and try to work through whatever problems that come to a resolution. That being said, we also run into problems where we call and we get different answers depending on who you talk to, so if some of that

happens. Customer satisfactions really might be interesting to see, but I think it's important that the Tech Service Center's there. They've certainly proved useful through the implementation of HACCP. But just the fact that you're still getting seven to eight hundred calls a week should indicate that you guys are still serving a pretty useful purpose out there. As you guys debate this, this afternoon, I - just from my perspective, I guess from the industry perspective, I'd like to see the Tech Service Center continue its operation. I think one thing that could certainly be helpful to us is - is we've talked in the past about Q's and A's and you guys have - if you get seven hundred calls a week, you got a lot of questions that have a lot of answers that you could probably publish a book and help us all out quite a bit. So just a couple of comments. No real questions.

MS. ARRINGTON: Okay, thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Hollingsworth.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Jill Hollingsworth, Food Marketing Institute. First let me say that I somehow missed the news, I guess in the move of the Technical

Service Center until I got the book and read it, I didn't realize it had been moved over to another office. I guess my question again - I'm not on the subcommittee either, but I'm curious as to what went into the decision about moving it out of operations and in that - I realize in your write-up you talk about other opportunities you have. I guess in my mind the Technical Service Center was sort of the extension of field operations out beyond the beltway, I mean the whole idea I thought originally was to have an office in a location that was seen as the knowledge pool, if you will, of operations outside of Washington? I'm curious as to this change in location within the agency. Has that changed that thinking and what is the current relationship of the Tech Center to Operations now?

MS. ARRINGTON: Well I can start with an answer and I probably will also ask Dr. Masters to weigh in. It's my understanding is one of the things - and we have already seen it take place, is - we are able to identify the policy leads quicker and therefore be more responsive to get something in writing in terms

of a notice or directive. Now we could always send an individual email to someone who asks us a question once we clarified through oral conversation, telephone call with headquarters what that policy was or maybe we already knew. We could always give you an email, but what we couldn't do before was to get a notice out and we - I have seen since we have - in fact we knew, I guess it was back December a year ago that we were going to go to policy officially in April, and we started working on that almost immediately, and I think the BSE notices are an example of where they were timely, they were responsive to what questions were out there. Because as this program came in new, there were issues that came up just as in any program when you start to implement it, there are things that come up that no one could foresee. We found from our calls and our emails where there were questions, and we were able to feed that back and get the response. At least from that standpoint I'm supposing that that was one of the things that was looked upon as that could happen and I'm going to let Barb add.

MS. MASTERS: This is Barb Masters. Again what

Dr. Arrington is saying is absolutely correct and that was the thinking that was put into that decision. But to add on to that what you're saying is still absolutely correct. We still look at the Tech Service Center as those individuals that we want to maintain that subject matter of expertise and continue to be that extension of folks that maintain that field knowledge and that expertise, and be one step away from those individuals from the field. What we challenge them when we told them about this transition is that we never want them to become policied so to speak, and to have them be the beltway folks like we have here in Washington. No criticism - criticism to our folks here in Washington, but if we wanted those folks, we would have brought them all back to Washington. What we want them to do is be the best of both worlds. Continue to be those folks that have that arm and they continue to serve field operations in the same capacity. But by working for policy, now Phil can tap into them for that program on policy development which we felt was so beneficial in the development of our policies. That's where we thought

they really strengthened our policy development, but we didn't see it as a loss to our field operations because there was a commitment and the relationship already there with field operations that's maintained and that was a commitment in the moving to policy. By Isabel's answer I think you can hear that it's still there, and so I'm proud to hear that that answer's there because there was some concern when we first made the move, but it sounds like what we had hoped would happen has happened. Thank you.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Mr. Kowalcyk.

MR. KOWALCYK: Michael Kowalcyk, safety is our priority. On your second to last slide you mentioned more use of data analysis; could you elaborate a little bit on the type of data analysis the Technical Service Center is doing and where your expertise lies in doing data analysis just to give us an idea of what the Service Center is doing?

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: There's actually a -- I would say a variety of data analysis and it ranges from somewhat routine reports that are derived from PBIS

data. As far as if there's a specific question or I'll say if there's a specific question or problem, then our data analysis staff would go through the PBIS data, and derive the data to come to an answer or to show support or lack of support for that question. Then there are also things like - there's been a - recently an RTE survey that went out to plants that will feed into risk base sampling. the Technical Service Center under Dr. Karen Morris' staff is going to be analyzing the results that came back from that - that are coming back from that survey. So they range from routine data analysis to come up with trends and hopefully down the road more predictive as we've been talking here earlier to special surveys. I think we're kind of wide open also when getting - getting advice or getting ideas or options for data analysis. I believe that it will feed into some of the other - the data repository would of course feed into that.

MS. MASTERS: Barb Masters. Another - an example I'll give you from a headquarters perspective of a data analysis, that they're very instrumental in doing for our agency, and it fit into some policy

development which is one of the examples that lead us to this decision. Where our EIAO officers were doing the assessments when the industry was asked to do the reassessments for E. coli O157H7, and the EIAO officers went out and did those assessments. The Tech Service Center did the data analysis on all those assessments. They did the data for us and then our policy office looked at the data analysis that they did, and it helped feed into the guidance material that was put out for industry based on the practices that they saw in there. It was a very early example of how they were looking at the trends that were coming out of that. Then it was used to help the very small plants, etcetera, based on some of the trends that we were seeing.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Carpenter.

DR. DAVID CARPENTER: David Carpenter. I have a question -- just clarify for me, is there an overlap or redundancy? I mean, because I look at OPPED one of its functions is develop and administer employee training and Mary Cutshall also talked about that in terms of workforce development?

MR. TYNAN: Can you clarify what you mean by what do you see as the overlap?

DR. CARPENTER: Well it says that both of them are involved in employee training; is it the intent in the agency to have employee training in two separate offices?

MS. MASTERS: This is Barb Masters. I'll try to help answer that. Part of what we were talking a little bit about this morning when Dr. Leech was answering her question. I was saying that was the reason we thought it was so significant that Ms. Cutshall was up there. Dr. Kelly is our Chief Training Officer for the Center for Learning, and their primary role and responsibility is the development of training for our employees - our agency employees. They work very, very closely with Ms. Cutshall's staff who's the Director for Strategic Initiatives partnerships and outreach, whose primary responsibility is for working with our constituent groups. They work together. So, as material is developed such as this material, it went two different directions. Dr. Kelly used it to work with our

employees. Ms. Cutshall used it for our outreach. There is not duplication but they have two different audiences. That was my comment - that there's fundings and priorities for both groups, but they have very different sets of audiences that they're trying to reach. That was my comment - that it's my objective to ensure that we're speaking with one voice. That we're not training our employees, that we have one set of priorities and that we're training the industry and consumer groups that we have, a different set of priorities. So I have the obligation to ensure that we're speaking with one voice. They're working together to ensure that we're using - often times now similar materials, and that's why Mary made the comment that it's unusual that she was up here rather than Dr. Kelly. Typically in the past when we talked about training, we would have had Dr. Kelly up there. We do have two different staffs that work in two different areas on training and outreach, but they work very closely together with two different sets of audiences.

MR. TYNAN: Does that answer your question, Dr.

Carpenter?

DR. CARPENTER: Let me see - so as I read on this organizational charts is develop and administer employee training? That's different than delivery. Is that correct?

MS. MASTERS: Develop that - that block there is development and delivery of employee training - that is to FSIS employees. That is Dr. Carly Kelly has primary responsibility for that block. Ms. Cutshall is Strategic Initiative Partnerships and Outreach. She works with often times the material developed by that block, and delivers that material to primarily to our constituent groups and partners with state programs, small plants, very small plants which often times it's the same materials used but different audiences.

DR. CARPENTER: Okay. Great. Thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Ms. Eskin.

MS. ESKIN: Yes. Sandra Eskin. The center - when you have again various - this whole group of employees I guess, responding both by phone and by email to questions. How do you get to the point where

- or how do you - how are the questions either cataloged or just reviewed so that you see, for example, that there seems to be a systemic problem that people are having and again you then go and talk to policy people and maybe a directive comes out or is revised, is there sort of a system that you all have?

MS. ARRINGTON: Yes, we - for our emails of course, they come on email. We have a Tech Center account which we archive after we get so many questions everyday they start to go into the archive. They're also searchable so that we can go back and look at them if we need to. Particularly, we may get a question where we're pretty sure we've answered it before and we'll go back and look at it. On the telephone calls, when we first implemented HACCP, just about 99% of every question that came in went into a database, a written database. Since that time, we only actually formally count the questions when we know we have a new initiative. Typically on a new initiative, we will have a smaller group of people answering the calls. Particularly on initiative that we know there may be policy evolving, we'll have that smaller group

of employees doing that. They -- we'll keep track of what questions. They will write down, what questions they'll have and we talk about it.

MS. ESKIN: So someone has the job of not only obviously cataloging them and putting them in the database, but looking at them and saying, look, we have a whole series of questions about this particular issue.

MS. ARRINGTON: Yes and I --

MS. ESKIN: Maybe it needs to be addressed on a policy basis.

MS. ARRINGTON: Yes, and another thing we do is every week, we have our - our whole Tech Center correlation, which means as a group we get together and we discuss anything from specialized topics to what kind of calls have we been getting this week? Then within my staff which is tasked with the majority of the technical assistance, every week we have an additional staff meeting where we - we have one staff meeting for staff and then we have another meeting that's called our correlation, our SOP meeting, and in that we will talk together as a group and say what

calls have we been getting, what answers have you been giving. Are there answers to this or not, I think there's a problem here, and then we would take that feedback through our supervisory chain, usually up to appropriate level in headquarters.

MS. ESKIN: If you have a situation - it was mentioned before - where let's say you called at two different times and get essentially two different answers or seemingly two different -- is there someone who would decide if there were conflicting interpretations within the tech center like a next level?

MS. ARRINGTON: Yes, yes when that comes to our attention we - we do decide. Something you should also be aware of though. If I ask a question in a certain way or a certain kind of question I can get an answer to that. I can take essentially the same issue though and ask it a different way and perhaps get something that sounds like a different answer. I know a lot of times when I pick up the phone - which is not all the time, but when I do it always surprises me at how often I will get a call. Because usually

the days I'm doing that is when we're more understaffed. I'll get a call from either an inspector or a plant, and it'll be about a specific issue, and they may even say we're just checking out, is this the policy? Or what do you think about this? Within a few hours or maybe shorter than that, I get another call. Then it's the industry or inspection and say you know we've got an issue and it's quite helpful when that happens to have had that history and with our staff officers. They do communicate with each other throughout the day to say I've gotten a call that seems like a hot issue, so be ready if - to be prepared if - if you call then by either the inspector or the industry. I would - anyway.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If I could - one of the strengths of TSC is that they have these connections with OFO or military. My question is a question that I'm not familiar with that they hadn't heard before. They - they are able - because of long standing relationships to talk with OFO, also on a daily basis, their meetings of the Technical Service Center director, and Policy Analysis Formulation Program

Development in the CFL, as well as the assistant administrator. These things are brought up, and plans are made on how to address them. Like to add a new question to a series of Q and As, to develop a directive, or notice as needed, there are a lot of interconnections between TSCs and other parts of the agency.

MR. TYNAN: Mr. Detwiler.

MR. DETWEILER: Darin Detwiler from Washington State. Ms. Mary Cutshall was bringing up about - was talking earlier about improving the outreach to external groups plan, states and constituents, which is not part of the Technical Service Center. How would a plant out there know to contact the Technical Service Center or to contact this other outreach program for consultation.

MS. ARRINGTON: Well I would say quite often a plant will call us and they even say who should I be talking to? We do liaison with Mary Cutshall's staff, we do --

MR. DETWEILER: Is it possible that we have a name? We need to be more deliberate in terms of - are

we talking about - the agency, or the industry or - it just seems that there's so many names that sound familiar, or they could be interpreted one way or interpreted another way.

MS. ARRINGTON: Well we – yes. I think we take on at the Tech Center, take on the responsibility that if you call, and you explain to me what your question is - what kind of information you need - that we see to it that you either get the answer from us directly or that another staff somewhere else in the agency can help you. When we do that, we usually do refer to a name. We do give a telephone number. Sometimes we'll actually go ourselves. I know on a lot of our labeling questions that we get, we at the Tech Center actually then go to the staff and policy on labeling. We will get the information we need and we'll get back to who called us.

MR. DETWEILER: Well then in terms of how to better fully utilize the benefit of your unit. Is it possible that there needs to be some type of a document organizer out there that helps a plant to determine, I've got this kind of a question. Maybe

instead of going to you and ask who I should talk to, maybe they can predetermine who would be a likely resource to have this question answered?

MS. ARRINGTON: Yes, I see what you're saying. I think that - I mean this is sort of more - I think of that in terms of - I mean that is the kind of input we knew - we need is exactly how that would work. I guess one thing that I also see is how specifically can you take a complex question and say that it exactly goes one place or another place, to. I guess that would be something that we'd work out on a procedure, or something, but to give - I think are you asking to give additional information about what kind of expertise and where it is and where you might obtain it?

MR. DETWEILER: Something to that effect, yes.

MR. TYNAN: If I might - this is Robert Tynan now - working in a strategic and issuative staff, one of the things that we have that problem and occasionally a company or someone will call us and more appropriately should be calling the Tech Service Center. We – it's - there's a sort of a self-

correcting mechanism there. In other words if you mistakenly call us when you should be calling the Tech Service Center, we make sure that you know who to call. Also in our staff, I think we try very hard not to make you make the call, but to try and find out the person that you should be talking with on your question. So we try and do the leg work on your behalf, and then find that person so you don't have to make - call out to the Tech Service Center and have them say, well it's really Harry that you should be talking with and then, no it's Sally. So we really - we work together in that regard. So if something comes into the Tech Service Center and needs to be us, Isabel gets them over to us and we do the same. It - while - while I think what you're suggesting is a good idea, while we're figuring out how to do that right now we - we do take care of it internally. As I say we try and prevent you from having to do more than two phone calls, one to me with the error, and then to me to figure out who you're supposed to be talking with and save you that portion of it so that I can get you the right - right phone number.

MS. ARRINGTON: Right.

MR. TYNAN: I think it helps - it takes care of itself a little bit.

MS. ARRINGTON: Yes, that's - that's what I really - what I was trying to say. If you call, and we do emphasize to our staff officers that we do give an answer, even if that answer is, FDA has jurisdiction over this question, and here is the person or here is the staff and here is the number that you might talk to and – so that it doesn't become multiple calls. I, of my own experience, have many times gotten calls, and it's usually not our industry. It's usually somebody outside the industry and outside our inspection force. They'll say, "You know, you are the fifth person I've called and you are the first one that could tell me something." Often it's not that I have the answer. It's – it's something about maybe another agency, but I'm able to give them a telephone number and often a person's name. We do pride ourselves at the Tech Center on giving an answer and getting an answer and doing that as quickly as we can. So we don't need fixing. I'm just kidding.

MR. TYNAN: Just kidding there. Dr. Hollingsworth.

DR. HOLLINGSWORTH: Jill Hollingsworth, Department of Institute. Isabel, one thing I'm trying to get clear now in my mind. The Tech Service Center and the staff there, do they do any training for the inspection that for the inspected workforce or to the industry and/or do they conduct any workshops?

MS. ARRINGTON: We do what's called correlation, which technically is not training. But it's - for example, we have given correlation sessions on poultry pathology. That would be on how to make the dispositions. In fact we gave one just - I'll give an example of one we gave for turkey ostiomyolitis to one of the districts in the southeast. In that group of people there were I think of 20-some veterinarians that were inspectors in charge and - from two district offices several of their personnel. We went to that site. We had samples gathered, we went through what the pathology, what the dispositions were, and had a wet lab and so forth. We do that - we don't, though, write the section on poultry pathology that's in the

new public health veterinarian training. Now we did serve on that training as the technical experts. I had several people on my staff that reviewed what was written in the training, and in some cases wrote small sections of it, and also went and participated and helped actually teach some of - some of the classes that were this spring. But that is more - that's in our support role of the center for learning. The correlation role is more of our primary role to do that. We did do something with the BSE sampling for the public health veterinarians. We also called that a correlation session and we did train 60 of our own veterinarians on that and we had a wet lab. That probably had more to do with the ability to immediately mobilize our staff officers. We've had no more than one week to decide how that correlation session would go, and in that case it was almost an emergency that we are able to respond to those kind of things. I would think if it had been something on the sampling where we said in six months we're going to do that, then it would have fallen more to the Center for Learning to develop the full-blown training with that,

and in fact they're taking what we worked on and making it into training. Does that get at where you're --?

MR. TYNAN: Okay. Dr. Harris, you've been patiently waiting over there and I've ignored you completely.

DR. HARRIS: That's okay, I'm used to it. Joe Harris. Two quick questions regarding the operation or the function of the Tech Center as it exists today. Specific to technical advice and guidance. For a lot of firms one of the more daunting tasks that they face is validating or documenting the validation of a process. Particularly if they choose to deviate from the more common processes. If they were to contact the Technical Service Center would the Tech Service Center provide guidance in that area to either, A, assist them in identifying - okay I've got a new process and I want to validate it. Can you help tell me what I need to do or what questions I need to be considering? Or better yet, if I have conducted some sort of a validation study, would the Tech Service Center agree to help review that with me or for me or

- I guess I'll stop with that first question and let you answer that before I muddy the water with the second one.

MS. ARRINGTON: Okay. On proposals such as validation, or if you're calling to ask what are some general parameters - if it's something that we have worked with, we may go on and give you the feed back. If it's something newer or something we don't feel we have the expertise for or that we do need further headquarters policy input, then we will go to headquarters and we may end up even taking your written proposal and sending it to headquarters and coming back for policy. Specifically on validation, it probably is more to the policy headquarters. On other proposals, for example like contamination of products, we may - depending on what it's contaminated with or we may go to the Office of Public Health and Science to get more microbiological or toxicological expertise. But our goal is to evaluate any of those that might come in, and then decide where we need to go with this. Whether we can do it on staff or whether we need more expertise than what we have on

staff or many times it does involve policy decisions. Policy decisions - we interpret policy at the Tech Center but the real determination of policy still resides in headquarters.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Harris, did you have a follow-up question?

DR. HARRIS: The other - the other piece of that that I was going to ask, is relative to policy, and especially with the realization that the Tech Center now is aligned more with the Office of Policy. Does the Tech Center provide input not - not input that's not the right word. But would potential new policies be passed by the Tech Center so that the Tech Center could maybe anticipate what types of questions are going to be asked? Because my experience has been that the Tech Center people tend to be a little closer to the field than the Office of Policy at headquarters, and would that be a role of the Tech Center to - to help identify what are some areas of question that are sure to arise when this policy is implemented or rolled out?

MS. ARRINGTON: Yes, often when we do send

something up, we will - we will have some comments ourselves. We also quite often will ask if there are any field comments from the - either the district office or the frontline supervisor, or the IIC, depending on what - what it is - what the proposal is and what's written, and we do that. So yes. My expectation is that on anything we receive we - we should have some kind of comment about it, whether it's - we have no idea what the parameters are for this because it's so new, or we think given that they're doing this, and this, and this, you might want to take a better look at that. Now there's also the new technology staff which there are pretty clear parameters about what goes to new technology. Of course we - somebody calls and asks about that, we'll discuss it with them to give them an idea.

MR. TYNAN: Dr. Masters did you want to elaborate?

DR. MASTERS: No. My - my comment - Barbara Masters - I was just going to say that Dr. Harris is just recognizing another advantage of having the Tech Service Center. Located in policy is that again we're

optimistic that they would again and having more - a closer relation in evaluating the policies. Again that would be another advantage - is that they would again be able to more closely reflect some real-life questions that might come up in the implementation of some of those policies. So again that was another one of the hopeful advantages of having them housed in the Office of Policy.

MR. TYNAN: Ms. Eskin, we're going to have you as the last question - last but not least - and then we're going to go on to the next segment.

MS. ESKIN: It's actually more of a follow-up to Darin's questions before. But simply how do constituent groups establishments know to call you? If the Tech Center number and the email address - is it posted everywhere, on the web site, on the documents, on your - so clearly advertised? Obviously the fact that you get seven to eight hundred calls a week means a lot of people know, but, there could be four or five hundred people out there who don't.

MS. ARRINGTON: We - we get a lot of different kinds of calls, to. We get the - we have students

that call and say I'm writing a term paper on - can you help me and they've gotten our number --

MS. ESKIN: Have you helped them? You said that most of the time you're able to.

MS. ARRINGTON: Yes, we try to guide them --

MR. TYNAN: Short of writing it.

MS. ARRINGTON: Short of – yes, we don't write them. I mean, and those kind of cases we might say, on the web, look under - there should be information there. We often send out - we'll give out links. We'll say we know - because our staff officers often have notebooks of - of different links, different sources of information, and they pass that around among themselves. It's not unusual for someone to say, I found this on the web, everyone take a look at it.

MS. MASTERS: This is Barb Masters, just one close out comment, thank you Dr. Arrington and a lot of good comments already generated for this sub-group. A lot of comments were generated about customer surveys and I would remind the group - and I don't think Ms. Roth is still here, but we do internally

have a program evaluation staff. If the subcommittee deliberates and comes up with that as a recommendation, I would encourage the group, if they do, to remember that we internally have that capability. If you do that as a recommendation to even go as far as to say - and you might include this group or that group and - and get into that detail because we do have that capability internally as an agency, and we would value that level of detail. So thank you very much.

MR. TYNAN: With that the PowerPoint goes off. Okay, we're at a point in our agenda where we have public comment and adjournment before we break into our subcommittee sessions. Looking at the list outside, I think we only had one potential commentor and that is Ms. Gisele Hicks from the Center for Science and the Public Interest. Do I have that correct? Okay. Please.

MS. GIESELE HICKS: Hi. My name is Gisele Hicks and I'm from the Center for Science and the Public Interest. We submitted a letter to the committee along with copies of our outbreak alert report, which

summarizes our findings from our outbreak data. CSPI has a lot of experience working with outbreak data, specifically linked to food sources and pathogens. Basically we thought we could just give you some points to consider. Some lessons we've learned and challenges that we've encountered. Although from this morning's discussion, it sounds like you're more in the conceptual phase of designing your data depository, so that - I may be jumping a few steps ahead. But I figure these points may still be valuable in determining specifics of the data depository. So first I just wanted to say that categorization of food sources - it's very important for this to be consistent throughout the entire data depository and some complicating things can be multi-ingredient foods such as beef tacos or meat pizza and cross-contamination. These are two complexities that need to be considered. Second, common pathogens may appear in many different food sources. So when you're looking at food-borne illness data that's primarily based on pathogen data, you need to be very careful in the assumptions you make about food source and food

attribution. Third, to get a better picture of food--borne illness overall, you not only need to consider outbreak data but also sporadic cases of food-borne illness. Lastly, I wanted to emphasize that public access is very important for the data depository, especially when government decisions are going to be made based on the data in this depository. CSPI appreciates your consideration of these points, and thank you.

MS. TYNAN: Thank you Ms. Hicks very much.

MS. MASTERS: Thank you, and thank you for sharing your data, as well.

MR. TYNAN: I know as always there maybe somebody else that would like to make a comment that perhaps did not get a chance to sign up or didn't see the sign up sheet. Could you introduce yourself and your group?

DR. J. WINTHER: Dr. J. Winter with the American Association of Meat Processors. I just want to comment a couple of things. The training and outreach programs we appreciate, acknowledge the work that's being done and continues to be done and an outlook on what's going to happen in the future with the webcast.

We've participated in the webcast both at our office and I did it from home just to make sure it could work. It did work very well. Unfortunately a lot of our people we represent are still stuck up on dial-up services and which does not work very good with the webcast. We submitted comments at that time back into the Mary Cutshall and her group as the fact of why don't we start looking at our universities that we already fund because they have the personnel, the facilities, the education to put these things on. Plus it's a one connection with our membership that - usually that's the first person they call is their extension person at the university. The one-stop shop website is a good idea. We've revamped our website and done that - that kind of information to put it there. I strongly acknowledge the fact that when you look at FSIS's websites you might do - you might be on that website or the USD website on a daily basis, so you know exactly what's on there and how to find stuff more quickly than most. I can tell you right now it's a complex website. Both FSIS and USDA even after the reconstruction. We're asking that maybe you can get

outside input from that with people who have never used that website to try to find things and then use that information to create this other one-stop shop. Along with that the Tech Center. I believe it's improved through the years. It's been improving every time we call back there. The one-stop shop idea was reiterated there, again. If that's going to be the case, we'd like to know who the owner of the store is because we need - who is the hierarchy of authority? Who's right, who's wrong? We have IICs competing with the Tech Center saying, well, no we don't agree with it, and then when they get the answer they do, they do agree with it. So that consistency is still lacking on that part. Sometimes in the learning process, we find that our inspectors are learning along with our meat plants as well as people at the Tech Center. There's so much guidelines and so many documents being out there and coming out so quickly that we believe that people at the Tech Center should be above that and know more than what we should know when we get to the guidelines. I came out with the jerky issue when I called back in there, and so we want to explain the

- prior to the meat for the education prior to implementation on that. The hike information on the BSE thing was very useful and I - we strongly encourage the support, and keep the Tech Center up and running because the six or seven to eight hundred phone calls a day - a week - does not truly represent the amount of phone calls that they get. If there's one guy that has one question, I'm sure there's more out there like that. We take that information, we post it on our websites, so more people get that information so we don't have to go calling the Tech Center back and forth. But there again, that's why we need the process of having one process authority saying this is the way the answer is so we don't have to keep on going back and forth with the Tech Center. Thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Thank you, I appreciate it and I'm sorry could I ask your name again.

DR. WINTHER: Dr. J. Winter.

MR. TYNAN: Okay thank you sir. Mr. Corbol.

MR. CORBOL: Tony Corbol from the Consumer Group Public Citizen. I also wanted to comment on training

and outreach. Particularly the statement that Phil Derfler made about consumer groups not participating in the weekend workshops that you all hold. I think we have to know that we're invited to participate in those workshops. I don't think that is clear in terms of our being able to participate and having said that, I decided to test the system back in August, and registered for the Philadelphia E.coli workshop that you held and participated via webcast. While there were some technical glitches with the webcast, I got a lot out of the program and I was really appreciative of the fact of receiving the material and the CDROM a few days ahead of time and I want to compliment the agency for - for allowing me to sit in on - actually at even submitted a question which got answered. Thank you.

MS. MASTERS: Thank you.

MR. TYNAN: Okay, thank you. Are there any other comments from the public? Okay with that Mr. Corbol reminded me that several of the public took some of our training manuals and we retrieved them. If you could stop in with Renee or with Sonia out at the

registration desk and leave your name. If we can't get copies over tomorrow for first thing in the morning, then we will mail you copies of the training package so that you'll have them, and I'm sorry for the little glitch that we had had there. Any other comments from the public? Okay with that I think we can adjourn this portion of the session and go to our breakouts, and let me just mention where the breakout rooms are and what we'll need to be doing. Perhaps that the first subcommittee - Dr. Denton's group will be in the Soverign Lounge which is on the - it's not as good as it sounds - will be on the seventh floor. It'll be on the Sovereign Lounge on the seventh floor. Seventh floor. Okay, and for subcommittee number two, and Ellen Bloomberg of our staff will be helping you with the facilitation, and we're going to try and find someone to do a little bit of the typing to get the report together. Ellen is new to our staff but a very capable individual, so she'll be a big help to you. Dr. Harris, your group subcommittee number two will be dealing with the Technical Service Center, and you'll be in the Washington Room on the second floor. So

it's just up the stairs and - I'm sorry, Dr. Harris - it will be just up the stairs and it'll be the Washington Room on the second floor, and we'll have Renee Ellis to give you a hand with some of the logistics there. Last but not least, the third Subcommittee doing the Training and outreach to Mr. Govro will be here in Salon A. So we're going to use this area in here. I'll be with you helping you in any way I can, and with that, why don't we take a quick break. Again, the chairpersons are running the meeting, and you are at your leisure to decide how you want to run the sessions and come up with your reports. Also if any members of the public want to participate in that, you're welcome to do so. Again, that will be at the discretion of the chairperson in terms of how much you participate. With that, we'll leave you to your own devices.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 2:30:40 p.m.)