



Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

PHIS—What Are the Benefits?

The Public Health Information System (PHIS) will integrate and automate our paper-based business processes into one comprehensive and fully automated data-driven inspection system. It will enhance our existing systems by increasing efficiency and improving timely responses to stakeholder needs. The system will also assist the agency in being more transparent and open. The system will have a positive impact affecting public health, consumers, industry, regulated establishments, import and export firms and our trading partners.

PHIS is a new tool FSIS inspection personnel will use to collect and analyze information about domestic and international food safety systems that produce FSIS-regulated products. It will enhance FSIS' ability to identify food safety risks before they result in outbreaks or recalls, detect problems before they reach consumers. Improved data quality, more consistent reporting, enhanced management controls, and efficient, effective use of FSIS data will enable FSIS to respond more quickly when threats are realized and to prevent unsafe products from entering commerce.

The system is easy to use and offers establishments, firms and trading partners secure access to relevant parts of the PHIS over the Internet. For example, establishments will be able to view and respond electronically to non-compliance records and request reports relevant to them. Importers and exporters will be able to submit applications and forms online. PHIS automates the processes to provide a more efficient way to submit requests, view FSIS information about plants and receive responses from FSIS. Individuals using PHIS will not need highly advanced computer skills—only basics of web browsing—therefore establishments and firms should not need to invest resources into training their employees.

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Export Requirement Updates



There are no updates reflected in this week's Export Library Requirements.

Complete information can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/index.asp.

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... *Benefits of PHIS*

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PHIS will also streamline and automate many of our export activities. It will have an automated feature to confirm a product's eligibility with import requirements of the destination country. Once PHIS finishes the check, FSIS inspection personnel will conduct product reinspection, review checklists and then sign the PHIS-generated export certificate.

The new system will allow FSIS to systematically verify the effectiveness of foreign food safety systems by enabling the advance receipt and verification of electronic foreign health certificates associated with arriving foreign shipments certified by a foreign government. Processes for auditing inspection programs of foreign countries exporting to the United States will also be automated. This is beneficial to exporting establishments and firms, as it will be a centralized location and an automated way for them to carry out essential export related tasks, such as submitting and managing export applications and maintaining a product lists.

For a full look on the benefits of PHIS, visit the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/PHIS. Keep reading the *Constituent Update* for more information about PHIS in future issues.

Register for Public Health Information System Web Seminars

FSIS presented a series of web seminars to introduce a PHIS.

The presentations provide an overview of PHIS and how they will impact requirements for import certification, export certifications and owners and operators of domestic establishments.

There are three information sessions remaining. The agency will hold a domestic information session on Sep. 29. Export information sessions are scheduled for Sept. 28 and 30. To register for these web seminars, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Regulatory_Web_Seminars/index.asp.

Replays of past web seminars and meeting transcripts are available on the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/PHIS.

Contacting the Policy Development Division

The Policy Development Division (PDD) will be closed on Tuesday, Sept. 28, for an all-day, off-site meeting. PDD will not be answering questions by phone.

Individuals may submit questions through *AskFSIS* (askfsis.custhelp.com), and responses will be available Wednesday, Sept. 29.

Other divisions within the Office of Policy and Program Development will remain open.

To contact the Labeling and Program Delivery Division, call (301) 504-0878. For questions related to sampling, contact the Risk and Innovations Management Division at (301) 504-0884. For questions related to exporting, contact the International Policy Division at (202) 690-4354.

Individuals may also submit questions for these offices through *AskFSIS*.

USDA to Host NACMPI Public Meeting

The National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection will hold a public meeting on Sept. 29 and 30 to review and discuss issues related to data collection, analysis, response and transparency, and strengthening policy and collaboration in pre-harvest food safety.

Members will meet on Wednesday, Sept. 29, from 12:30 to 5:00 p.m., and Thursday, Sept. 30, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The meetings will be held in the conference room at the south end of the USDA South Building cafeteria, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C.

To register, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Meetings_&_Events/index.asp. FSIS welcomes comments from Sept. 16 through Oct. 18 on the topics discussed at the NACMPI public meeting. Comments may be submitted through e-mail at NACMPI@fsis.usda.gov.

For more information on the content of the meeting, contact Josh Stull at (202) 720-9113 or josh.stull@fsis.usda.gov. For general meeting and logistical information, contact Tiffanie Newman at (202) 720-9113 or tiffanie.newman@fsis.usda.gov.

Joint Public Meeting to Measure Progress on Food Safety

FSIS, in collaboration with FDA and CDC, will host a third joint public meeting on “Measuring Progress on Food Safety: Current Status and Future Directions,” on Oct. 20, in Portland, Ore.

Information will be gathered from various stakeholders, including the food industry, state regulators and consumer groups, on measurements they recommend or are using to assess performance in food safety.

To give an oral presentation at the meeting, contact Juanita Yates at (301) 436-1731 or juanita.yates@fda.hhs.gov by Sept. 24.

Look for additional details about the meeting on the FSIS’ website at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/meetings_&_events/index.asp.

PHIS Resource Page Now Online

Information about the dynamic, user-friendly data analytics system, the Public Health Information System, is now available on the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/PHIS.

Have a Question? Ask Karen in Spanish, too.

Pregúntele a Karen is a virtual food safety representative with information for consumers about preventing foodborne illness, safe food handling and storage, and the safe preparation of meat, poultry and processed egg products.

Consumers can also chat live in Spanish and obtain food safety information. To access “Pregúntele a Karen”, go to pregunteleakaren.gov/.



AskKaren.gov

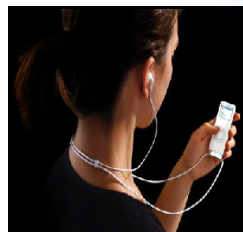
Comment on Codex Activities

The Office of Food Safety is inviting comments on standard-setting activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex). Codex activities announced in the June 4, 2010, *Federal Register* notice include: phytosanitary standard-setting activities, commodity standards, guidelines, codes of practice and revised texts.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FRPubs/2009-0033.htm. Documents pertaining to Codex standard-setting activities are accessible at <http://www.codexalimentarius.net/current.asp>.

Comments may be submitted by May 31, 2011, through the Federal *eRulemaking* Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> or to the Docket Clerk, USDA, FSIS, Mailstop 5272, George Washington Carver Center, 5601 Sunnyside Ave., Beltsville, MD 20705.

All items submitted by mail or e-mail must include the agency’s name and docket number FSIS-2009-0033. Comments received in response to the docket will be made available for public review.



New Podcasts

Tune in to podcasts on selecting, handling and preparing meat and poultry products to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. FSIS released this podcast helpful to consumers.

Food Safety at Home: Let’s Talk About Veal (English and Spanish)

Check out this podcast at www.fsis.usda.gov/news_&_events/Podcasts/index.asp. Spanish language consumer podcasts are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/En_Espanol/Podcasts_SP/index.asp. Video-casts in American Sign Language are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/news_&_events/SignFSIS/index.asp.

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