

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

**Food Safety and
Inspection Service**

FSIS Strategic Plan

For Fiscal Years 2000 - 2005

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FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE**INTRODUCTION**

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), a public health regulatory agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is responsible for ensuring that the commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products moving in interstate commerce or exported to other countries is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. FSIS was established by the Secretary of Agriculture on June 17, 1981, pursuant to legislative authority contained in 4 U.S.C. 301 which permits the Secretary to issue regulations governing the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Legislative mandates provide FSIS with the authority to conduct its public health mission. The Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1906 required Federal employees to inspect all meat and meat products moving in interstate commerce. The Poultry Products Inspection Act of 1957 provided for mandatory Federal inspection of poultry and poultry products. The Wholesome Meat Act of 1967 and Wholesome Poultry Products Inspection Act of 1968 extended inspection and enforcement requirements to products in intrastate commerce. The Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA) of 1970 provided for the inspection of the processing of egg products, uniform standards and labeling requirements for eggs and egg products, and the regulation of the processing and distribution of eggs and egg products.

Because of its food safety responsibilities and its presence in so many plants, FSIS depends upon a large and dedicated workforce to inspect the Nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products. FSIS provides inspection at approximately 6,000 plants that slaughter cattle, swine, sheep, goats, horses, chickens, and turkeys, as well as plants that process a wide range of processed products including hams, sausage, stews, eggs, and frozen dinners. In addition, FSIS oversees approximately 26 State inspection programs, conducts compliance reviews of Federally inspected or exempted products at warehouses, distributors, retail stores, restaurants, etc., and inspects imported products through a comprehensive system of import controls. In all, the Agency employs more than 9,000 professional, scientific, and technical personnel.

Appropriated Agency funds provide the means for funding the Agency's inspection activities. These include first and second shift slaughter, processing, egg, and import/export inspections as well as laboratory services, pathogen reduction activities, grants to States, other support services, and administrative costs. In addition to appropriated funds, FSIS charges fees for inspection services provided on overtime and, in some cases, holiday basis, and for voluntary services requested by the industry to accommodate business needs. The Agency also charges for accreditation of laboratories for chemical analysis.

Responsibilities of FSIS to assure food safety include the following:

- Inspecting, before and after slaughter, poultry and meat animals intended for use as human food and verifying further processing of meat and poultry products.
- Inspecting, before and after breaking, eggs intended for further processing and used in human food.
- Providing microbiological, pathological, chemical, and other scientific analyses of meat, poultry, and egg products for pathogens, disease, infection, extraneous materials, drug and other chemical residues, or other kinds of adulteration.

- Conducting risk assessments to identify and evaluate the potential human health outcomes resulting from the consumption of meat, poultry, and egg products. The results of risk assessments serve as the scientific basis for Agency risk management and communication strategies.
- Responding to emergencies, including foodborne illnesses, adulterated product in commerce, bioterrorist threats, etc., by investigating each incident, evaluating risk or compliance, and seizing, retaining, or detaining product as necessary.
- Conducting epidemiological investigations based on reports of foodborne health hazards and disease outbreaks in collaboration with local health departments and/or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Developing and implementing cooperative strategies to prevent food safety health hazards associated with animal production practices.
- Reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of State inspection programs to ensure that standards are at least equal to those under the Federal Acts.
- Evaluating Agency programs to assess their effectiveness and efficiency in ensuring the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products for both internal clients, such as program managers and the Administrator, and external clients, such as Congress and the public.
- Reviewing and assessing foreign inspection systems and facilities that export meat, poultry, and egg products to the United States to ensure that standards are equivalent to those in the United States; and reinspecting imported meat and poultry products at ports of entry and egg products at their destination or other locations.
- Monitoring allied industries to prevent uninspected, unwholesome, or mislabeled meat, poultry, and egg products from illegally entering channels of commerce.
- Providing public information to ensure the safe handling of meat, poultry, and egg products by food handlers and consumers; and
- Coordinating U.S. participation in the *Codex Alimentarius* Commission and informing the public of the sanitary and phytosanitary standard setting activities of the Commission.

On July 25, 1996, FSIS published the final rule on Pathogen Reduction and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point systems, known as HACCP. Foodborne illness outbreaks over the previous several years alerted the Agency to the need for fundamentally changing the FSIS meat and poultry inspection program to improve food safety, reduce the risk of foodborne illness in the United States, and make better use of the Agency's resources. The objective of HACCP is to directly target and systematically reduce harmful bacteria, as well as other likely hazards, thereby reducing the risk of foodborne illness. FSIS reached a milestone in its food safety strategy on January 25, 2000, with the third phase of HACCP implementation. All domestic meat and poultry plants are now operating under HACCP.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION

Working in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other USDA agencies, FSIS is building a seamless and science-based national system to ensure food safety from farm-to-table. While America has one of the safest food supplies in the world, foodborne diseases cause 325,000 serious illnesses resulting in hospitalizations, 76 million cases of gastrointestinal illnesses, and 5,000 deaths each year. The FSIS transition in recent years into a science-based public health regulatory agency is dramatically improving food safety both here and abroad. Through the Office of the Under Secretary for Food Safety, FSIS coordinates discussion of cross cutting issues with its food safety partner agencies. Due to stronger coordination

among government food safety agencies and greater investments in scientific advances, FSIS is posed to make tremendous progress on this vital public health issue.

KEY EXTERNAL FACTORS

A number of key external factors could impact either favorably or unfavorably on the Agency's goal and objectives. These include the following:

Budget Constraints/Balanced Budget – Reduced budgets and workforce size could impact unfavorably on the Agency's implementation of program change and innovation, as well as on the achievement of current inspection goals.

Additional Major Outbreaks/Microbiological Mutations – Even with a comprehensive inplant inspection system, major outbreaks of foodborne illness can occur, depending on the handling and preparation of meat, poultry, and egg products by commercial establishments and individual consumers. Ongoing research may also identify new and emerging strains of organisms that can cause foodborne illness. Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have also improved their surveillance and reporting systems. Therefore, unknown factors can alter the incidence of foodborne illness.

Research and Surveillance – Because FSIS can not conduct research, it must rely on other organizations to conduct the research it needs to support its public health mission. These other organizations have included the Agriculture Research Service (ARS), Cooperative State Research Education, & Extension Service (CSREES), Economic Research Service (ERS), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), CDC, as well as well as academia and other private sources to conduct the research needed to fill data gaps that are necessary to conduct risk assessments and make risk management decisions.

Legislative Action – The mission and programs of FSIS are grounded in legislative mandates. Changes in Federal mandates and Acts could affect what the Agency does and how it does it.

Unionized Labor – As a major stakeholder in FSIS programs, unionized labor (inspectors) could alter the conditions of implementing program change.

Consumer Habits – Non-hygienic practices in the private home are still one of the primary causes of foodborne illness. Additional outbreaks are possible and could affect Agency goals and objectives.

Public Opinion – To the extent that media molds public opinion, Agency goals and objectives could be modified based on media pressure.

Special Interest Groups – Consumer and industry organizations could advocate modification of Agency activities and methods, resulting in different program expectations and goals.

New Technologies – New inplant equipment and processes could impact program objectives through faster processing times and through the need for more product testing and sampling, resulting in a different allocation of resources.

New Products – Newly developed or engineered meat, poultry, and egg products could impact

program objectives through the need for more product testing and sampling, resulting in a different allocation of resources.

Political Imperatives – Legislative or Administration priorities could impact Departmental and Agency leadership, which could result in new missions, programs, and goals.

Codex Alimentarius – FSIS works through the *Codex Alimentarius* Commission to help develop international food safety standards. Member countries are encouraged to accept and implement *Codex*-approved standards nationally, but they are not obligated to do so.

Trade Issues – Internal and external transportation or trade issues could impact Agency goals and objectives through trade barriers or conflicting standards which could result in product delays and affect markets.

Medical Community – There is an apparent lack of awareness within the medical community to public health issues associated with foodborne illness.

OTHER PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Each FSIS Objective contains a section listing other governmental, State, and local agencies which have an interest in that Objective. The list of abbreviations for those agencies follows.

APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CSREES	Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERS	Economic Research Service
FAS	Foreign Agriculture Service
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
GAO	Government Accounting Office
GPO	Government Printing Office
GSA	Government Services Administration
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
JIFSR	Joint Institute for Food Safety Research
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PHS	Public Health Service
RAC	Risk Assessment Consortium

MISSION

FSIS ensures that the Nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged, as required by the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Products Inspection Act, and the Egg Products Inspection Act.

GOAL

Protect the public health by significantly reducing the prevalence of foodborne hazards from meat, poultry, and egg products.

The goal reflects the Agency's public health responsibilities embodied in its Mission Statement and required by its legislative mandates.

The **outcome** of this goal is a further reduction of 25% in the number of foodborne illnesses associated with meat, poultry, and egg products by the year 2005, using a baseline year of 1997. The CDC baseline numbers for foodborne illnesses and deaths attributable to all foods are estimated to be 76 million and 5,000 respectively.

STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL

The FSIS goal for food safety is to protect the public health by significantly reducing the prevalence of foodborne hazards associated with the consumption of meat, poultry, and egg products, consistent with available science and technology. Toward that end, the Agency is applying resources in a prudent manner to make fundamental changes in its programs and build on partnerships with other Federal agencies, the States, industry, academia, employee organizations, consumer groups, and other stakeholders.

As FSIS is only one part of the farm-to-table continuum, quantitatively assessing its contributions to improving public health is very difficult and can not be measured directly through traditional public health data. The FSIS Strategic Plan outcome measures are surrogate measures for those objectives that the Agency **can** measure. Therefore, FSIS will achieve its goal by successfully achieving each of the four objectives. Other Federal agencies have some role in meat, poultry, and egg product life span from production through consumption. Everyone in the food chain, from farmer through consumer, has a responsibility in keeping the food supply safe. Since meat, poultry, and egg products are of animal origin, they are not sterile and can be contaminated with bacteria at any point during production, distribution, and consumption. To ensure food safety from farm to table, it is vital that all of FSIS's stakeholders – including other Federal, State, and local governments, producers, the industry, food handlers, and consumers – participate to avoid duplication and to close any gaps that could compromise food safety. Toward this end, FSIS will promote the involvement of all stakeholders to achieve its goal.

The Agency has adopted a well-recognized scientific approach in its strategy to achieve its strategic goal. This Strategic Plan is based on the **Risk Analysis** model that includes:

Risk Assessment – The process of estimating the severity and likelihood of harm to human health or the environment occurring from exposure to a substance or activity that, under plausible circumstances, can cause harm to human health or the environment.

Risk Management – The process of evaluating policy alternatives in view of the results of risk assessment and selecting and implementing appropriate options to protect public health. Risk management determines what action to take to reduce, eliminate, or control risks. This includes establishing risk assessment policies, regulations, procedures, and a framework for decision making

based on risk.

Risk Communication – Exchanges information among risk assessors, risk managers, other stakeholders, and the public about levels of health or environmental risk, the significance and meaning of those risks, and the decisions, actions, or policies aimed at managing or controlling the risks.

The Agency goal will be achieved by accomplishing all of the daily tasks necessary to satisfy the four objectives. The goal is linked to each objective by the pathogen reduction requirements of the Agency's Pathogen Reduction/HACCP regulation. All FSIS program areas support, to varying degrees, each of the objectives. Required resources to achieve the goal are detailed in the FSIS Annual Performance Plan. All of the previously listed Key External Factors could affect achievement of the goal.

LIST OF FY 2000-2005 STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES

1. Provide worldwide leadership towards the creation and utilization of risk assessment capacity for meat, poultry, and egg products that is supported by the latest research and technology.
2. Create a coordinated national and international food safety risk management system for meat, poultry, and egg products from farm to table.
3. Conduct a comprehensive national and international risk communication program that is an open exchange of information and opinion about risk among risk assessors, risk managers, and the public to reduce risk.
4. Create and maintain an FSIS infrastructure to support Risk Assessment, Risk Management, and Risk Communication objectives.

I. OBJECTIVE 1

Provide worldwide leadership towards the creation and utilization of risk assessment capacity for meat, poultry, and egg products that is supported by the latest research and technology.

A. Outcome for Objective 1

The most significant meat, poultry, and egg products risks from farm to table are identified and quantitatively assessed through sound science and risk assessment.

B. Outcome Measures

1. Number of risk assessment models established
2. Number of risk assessments that have been used to inform risk management decision making and policy development

C. Time Frame for Completion

September 30, 2005

D. Discussion

FSIS needs to conduct risk assessments to improve and ensure the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products. The knowledge FSIS gains through research and risk assessment needs to be translatable into practical application by inspection program personnel, scientists, policy analysts, and other public health professionals throughout the Agency to strengthen the scientific basis for food safety policies and regulatory decisions. FSIS relies on other organizations to conduct research necessary to support its public health mission.

E. Major Activities

1. Identify emerging, potential high-risk pathogens and risk management gaps that threaten food safety.
2. Develop a risk-based problem solving research and technology agenda in cooperation with other agencies that will enable the Agency to meet its risk assessment and risk management goals.
3. Improve the scientific expertise and knowledge of Agency public health personnel.
4. Conduct rigorous risk assessments that identify emerging and potential high-risk public food safety threats.
5. Use risk assessments to evaluate risks in farm-to-table food safety strategies.
6. Evaluate research, risk assessment, and surveillance programs for their effectiveness in providing the scientific knowledge needed to develop and implement public health programs.
7. Provide international leadership in establishing risk-based food safety programs by providing risk assessment results to the international community and leadership in the *Codex Alimentarius* Commission.

F. External Factors

Elections; budget constraints/balanced budget; press/news media; existence of FoodNet; risk assessment consortium; trade barriers-influence of international trade issues; divided statutory authorities; industry competition; economy; public acceptance/new markets; public opinion; emerging pathogens; new technological advances including biotechnology; bio-terrorism.

G. Other Participating Agencies

ARS, CDC, CSREES, ERS, FAS, FDA, JIFSR, RAC, various universities and industries

II. OBJECTIVE 2

Create a coordinated national and international food safety risk management system for meat, poultry, and egg products from farm to table.

A. Outcome for Objective 2

The most significant meat, poultry, and egg product risks from farm to table are minimized or eliminated.

B. Outcome Measures

1. Percentage reduction in the prevalence of *Salmonella* on raw meat and poultry products
-By 2005, reduce to 7.5 the prevalence of *Salmonella* on broiler chickens

Baseline: In 1994, 20% of broiler chickens were found to have tested positive with *Salmonella*.

-By 2005, reduce to 4% the prevalence of *Salmonella* on market hogs

Baseline: In 1995, 8.7% of market hogs were found to have tested positive to *Salmonella*.

-By 2005, reduce to 4% the presence of *Salmonella* in ground beef

Baseline: In 1994, 7.5% of ground beef was found to have tested positive with *Salmonella*.

2. Percentage reduction in the prevalence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat meat and poultry products

-By 2005, reduce by 50% the number of samples testing positive for *Listeria monocytogenes*

Baseline: In 1998, 2.5% of samples of ready-to-eat products tested positive for *Listeria monocytogenes*.

C. Time Frame for Completion

September 30, 2005

D. Discussion

Risk management considers the scientific and technical evidence, from the risk assessment activity, in context with social, political, and economic concerns and strives to reduce, eliminate, or control risks to public health. In order to achieve its goal, FSIS must identify and minimize or eliminate risk from farm to table, that is, the risk associated with producing, processing, transporting, storing, retailing, and delivering meat, poultry, and egg products to consumers. The Agency must also support the application of risk management internationally so that imported products meet the same standards as domestic products.

E. Major Activities

1. Establish national performance standards for ready to eat products and establish additional pathogen standards for raw products.
2. Design inspection procedures to ascertain performance from farm to table.
3. Promote international cooperation through the *Codex Alimentarius* Commission to ensure that meat, poultry, and egg products imported into the United States are safe.
4. Identify, investigate, and respond to food safety emergencies and monitor foodborne illness resulting from consumption of meat, poultry, and egg products.
5. Provide employees with training and education to protect the public health.
6. Promote the development and transfer of scientific and technological advances that have application in improving food safety.
7. Support risk-based, voluntary programs for improving food safety and work to develop such programs in partnership with States and municipalities.
8. Evaluate the Agency's risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication activities to ensure that they protect public health.
9. Strengthen the foreign equivalence review program to ensure the safety and wholesomeness in the import inspection process.

F. External Factors

Budget constraints/balanced budget; additional outbreaks/new and emerging pathogens; legislative action; consumer habits; public opinion; special interest groups; new technologies; new products; political imperatives; trade issues; missions of other agencies

G. Other Participating Agencies

APHIS, ARS, CDC, CSREES, EPA, ERS, FDA, HHS, PHS, States and localities

III. OBJECTIVE 3

Conduct a comprehensive national and international risk communication program that is an open exchange of information and opinion about risk among risk assessors, risk managers, and the public to reduce risk.

A. Outcome for Objective 3

Risk managers and the public are aware of the risks associated with meat, poultry, and egg products and understand how to mitigate those risks.

B. Outcome Measures

1. Number of stakeholder public meetings held to improve decision making and develop public health policy
2. Number of people reached each year with food safety information (publications distributed, media placements, Hotline calls, Internet site "hits")
3. Number of surveys conducted to determine Agency communication impact on public health

C. Time Frame for Completion

September 30, 2005

D. Discussion

The risk communication program would promote public confidence in food safety through effective, open, and timely information exchange and science-based education on decisionmaking regarding food safety risks, limits to total risk elimination, and prevention/protection strategies. The program would emphasize both education and explanation of issues involved in considering stakeholder views, knowledge, and receptiveness to Agency risk assessments and risk management decisions.

E. Major Activities

1. Establish a risk communication forum to promote the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products.
2. Train risk managers, risk assessors, and others involved in Agency risk analysis, in communicating risk.
3. Incorporate risk communication objectives and evaluation into risk management decisions/strategies.
4. Develop coordinated Federal-State, government-industry, and intergovernmental strategies to provide information through various media placements, including the news media and Internet.
5. Identify, develop information for, and deliver information to, at-risk populations.
6. Support research on the best practices in regulatory risk communication and the information needed by constituents in reducing the risk of foodborne illness.
7. Increase seminars and technical training on science-based food safety standards for U.S. and foreign delegates to the *Codex Alimentarius* Commission.

F. External Factors

- technology) to achieve objectives.
6. Expand support for epidemiological activities to inform risk managers.
 7. Expand the application of online or e-government services and information including on-line procurement. Continue to coordinate with the USDA, Office of the Chief Information Officer, to ensure that the FSIS Information Technology security program meets Departmental requirements.
 8. Resolve Agency related problems associated with the implementation of the new Departmental accounting system.

F. External Factors

Staffing constraints/limitations; budget constraints/balanced budget; legislative action; unfunded mandates; political imperatives; unionized labor; employee issues

G. Other Participating Agencies

EEOC, GAO, GPO, GSA, OMB, OPM, USDA administrative offices

LINKAGE OF THE FSIS GOAL TO THE USDA STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Through its goal, FSIS contributes significantly to Departmental Goal Two, Objective 2.3, that is to **protect the public health by significantly reducing the prevalence of foodborne hazards**. FSIS administers food safety program responsibilities through its regulation of the meat, poultry, and egg products industries as part of its regulatory responsibility for ensuring that commercial supplies of meat, poultry, and egg products are safe and properly labeled and packaged. Through the HACCP regulation, the Agency monitors inplant systems to target and reduce harmful bacteria that may cause foodborne illness in consumers.

LINKAGE OF GOAL TO THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLAN

The Agency approach to creating this Strategic Plan began with senior managers establishing initial objectives for the goal. Managers and other professionals from all parts of the Agency formed teams to identify supporting activities, tasks, outcomes, and timeframes for completion. Over the next few months, senior management met to review, discuss, and approve the ideas and concepts presented. As a result, this process formed not only the nucleus for the Strategic Plan but also the Annual Performance Plan (APP) and the FSIS budget submission as well.

The FSIS Strategic Plan contains one goal and four objectives with outcomes and associated outcome measurements. The objectives detailed in the Strategic Plan will be used to identify annual performance goals or targets for each out-year of the planning period (FYs 2000-2005.) The annual performance goals may be viewed as major milestones on the path to carrying out the objectives. Each annual performance goal will have its own annual activities and performance measures that will be reflected in FSIS APP and budget submissions.

Taken together, all of the out-year annual performance goals will support the accomplishment of the objectives and should achieve the FSIS strategic goal of reducing foodborne illness.

RESOURCES NEEDED

The Agency budget maintains inspection and continues making investments in technology, training, and science. Budget estimates are predicated on the assumption that efficiencies realized through the implementation of the Pathogen Reduction/HACCP rule enable FSIS to maintain a level of inspection that ensures the safety of the growing supply of meat, poultry, and egg products with the current level of inspection staffing. The FSIS budget maintains a frontline workforce capable of providing rigorous, science-based inspection from farm to table. The budget also provides for a scientific and technology infrastructure that supports the transition to a modernized, risk-based, seamless Federal-State-local food safety system. Provision is also made for States administering their own inspection programs to be reimbursed by the Federal government for up to 50 percent of the cost of administering their programs.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

For Fiscal Years 1997-2002, FSIS did not conduct formal program evaluations of its 1) Strategic Plan, 2) APP, and 3) Annual Program Performance Report (APR). The Agency did, however, provide these documents through the FSIS web site and notify stakeholders and constituencies of these documents' contents through the use of public meetings on regulatory issues of importance to FSIS. These 144 public meetings over a five-year period included information briefings, scientific and technical conferences, public hearings, and stakeholder conferences. FSIS will continue to provide its constituencies with information through public meetings about strategic regulatory and policy issues contained in its planning documents.

For 2001 through 2005, the Agency has instituted a formal evaluation process for its three planning documents. The FSIS, Office of Management, Internal Control Staff (ICS) will review the performance measures and program data contained in the Strategic Plan, APP, and APR. Each spring the ICS will issue its evaluation of the previous year documents to the Planning Staff, which is responsible for managing the creation of all three reports. The evaluation will point out any potential problems in data collection for the performance measures contained in the Strategic Plan and will focus on the data accuracy, trend analysis, and graphics contained in the APP and APR. The Planning Staff will use information from the ICS evaluations during the annual updating of the Strategic Plan, APP, and APR each August.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) has stated that fundamental changes are needed to minimize foodborne illnesses. Concerns about the need for the recommended fundamental changes in food safety programs and about overcoming perceived food safety fragmentation within the Federal government are being addressed through cross-Departmental partnerships and program coordination activities. Recent collective statistics from CDC show a drop in the incidences in foodborne illness. These figures represent the efforts of several Departments and Federal agencies, State and local governments, regulated industries, and schools. The creation of a single food safety organization addressing all foods, as suggested by GAO, is beyond the legal scope of USDA or FSIS.

On June 26, 2000, the USDA, Office of the Inspector General (OIG) issued a final report on the Food Safety Initiative. The OIG review included the implementation of the HACCP program and of sanitation standard operating procedures; the FSIS quality assurance over its laboratory facilities and operations, product sample integrity, and laboratory testing operation; the FSIS process to determine

whether foreign countries' safety inspection systems are equivalent to that of the United States; and the effectiveness of the FSIS compliance program in detecting violations at non-federally inspected firms. FSIS will be using this review to improve its operations by implementing the agreed to recommendations.

In April 2001, the USDA OIG issued a report regarding the FSIS Inspector Staffing Shortages and Anti-Deficiency Act Violations. The Agency agreed to develop and implement refined procedures to better estimate staffing needs and incorporate the results in its budget requests and, working with the USDA, Office of Chief Financial Officer, resolve the problems associated with the implementation of the new Departmental accounting system.

The Agency is conducting a number of program evaluations on the effectiveness of plant HACCP plans on food safety. Consistent evaluation of the HACCP plans that plants have implemented will ensure that the HACCP rule is effective in meeting the food safety goal. FSIS has contracted with the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) for a multi-year evaluation of the effectiveness of the HACCP rule and our farm-to-table strategies. This is a four-year project consisting of six studies, most of which require pre- and post- HACCP data. As part of the evaluation, RTI will assess the overall impact of the HACCP rule in five areas: foodborne illness and hazards; domestic and international industry; consumer knowledge and behavior; animal production food safety; and in-distribution food safety. FSIS expects the evaluation to aid in the development of a computer-based, farm-to-table database system that can help FSIS determine where to allocate inspection resources. RTI will be issuing reports throughout the next two years on these five areas and will continue to hold public meetings to share results. In addition, RTI developed the software for a database and user handbook in June 2000 and field testing is expected to begin in September 2002.

FSIS requested that the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) conduct a comprehensive review of the FSIS risk assessment of the microbial pathogen *E.coli* O157:H7 in ground beef. The NAS review includes evaluations of the overarching logical structure of the model, the validity and appropriateness of all input data used in the model, the reasonableness of the assumptions made in the assessment, the reasonableness of the anchoring approach that was taken, and the model's mathematics and equations. The review is scheduled to be completed in February 2002.

ROLE OF EXTERNAL ENTITIES

The preparation of the FSIS Strategic Plan was performed by a cross-functional team of Federal Agency employees. All headquarters and field communications, strategy sessions, planning meetings, etc., were conducted by in-house personnel.