

Briefing

National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection August 8-9, 2007

Legislative Update for FY 2008

Purpose

The following is a summary of major legislation affecting the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) – the 2007 Farm Bill and Agriculture Appropriations for FY 2008.

Discussion

FY 2008 Appropriations

On August 3, 2007, the House passed H.R. 3161, the FY 2008 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill by a vote of 237-18, with 13 voting to abstain. After contentious debate over procedural matters, many Members walked out in protest prior to the final vote, accounting for the high number (167) of those not voting. The Senate Appropriations Committee has passed separate legislation which has not yet been acted on by the full Senate.

The House bill includes an appropriation of just over \$930 million for FSIS, an increase of \$37.9 million above the amount available for FY 2007 and the same as the Administration's budget request. The bill reported from the Senate Appropriations Committee includes \$500 thousand more than the requested budget, all of which is directed towards state inspection programs. The major provisions in the bill include the following:

- Salaries and Benefits – Both the House and Senate provide the full amount requested related to pay costs and employee benefits, an increase of \$28 million over FY 2007. The House bill also provides an additional \$6.4 million for filling vacancies in federal inspector positions.
- Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) – The House bill provides the full amount for FERN data systems and lab equipment (\$750 thousand and \$2.5 million, respectively). The House Committee rejects the requested increase of \$8 million for seven additional FERN labs while rejecting the proposed reduction of \$1.9 million for the public health data communications infrastructure.
- Poultry from China – The House bill bars the use of funds “to establish or implement any rule allowing poultry products to be imported into the United States from the People’s Republic of China” This provision applies to poultry processed in China, as well as poultry raised in China. The Senate bill does not include this provision.
- Horse Slaughter – As passed by the full House, the bill includes language which prevents the payment of salaries or expenses for personnel who inspect horses under the FMIA (21 USC 603), the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act (Humane Methods of Slaughter), and 9 CFR 352.19 (the voluntary ante-mortem

- inspection language adopted in February 2006). The Senate bill does not include this provision.
- Risk-Based Inspection (RBI) – The House bill includes the same provision that was enacted in the supplemental FY 2007 appropriations bill stating that none of the funds for FY 2008 may be used to implement the risk-based inspection program until the USDA Office of Inspector General has provided its findings on the matter to FSIS and Congress, and FSIS has addressed and resolved any of the issues identified. The report accompanying the Senate bill calls for quarterly reports to the Committee by FSIS on the implementation of risk-based inspection, as well as a full evaluation of the pilot program before expanding it beyond the prototype locations.

2007 Farm Bill

Because many of the provisions in the last Farm Bill (The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002) will expire in 2007, a new Farm Bill is under consideration by Congress. The Farm Bill approved by the House contains two provisions with would have an impact on FSIS: a provision providing for interstate shipment of state-inspected meat and poultry products; and language requiring country-of-origin labeling for meat products, including ground products which may have multiple countries of origin. While the House passed its version of the Farm Bill (H.R. 2419, the Farm, Nutrition and Bioenergy Act of 2007) on July 27, 2007, the Senate has not yet acted on its version.

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