



Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

Secretary Vilsack Responds to Recent *E. coli* Story

Many have recently heard about the heartbreaking story of a young woman, paralyzed after eating a hamburger contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7. When Secretary Tom Vilsack heard about it, he called it “unacceptable and tragic,” adding that it would continue to spur efforts to reduce the incidence of *E. coli* O157:H7.

Since President Barack Obama took office, USDA has been aggressive in its efforts to improve food safety and has been an active partner in establishing and contributing to President Obama’s Food Safety Working Group. “Protecting public health is the sole mission of USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service,” said Vilsack. “FSIS has continued to make improvements to reduce the presence of *E. coli* O157:H7 and the agency is committed to working to reduce the incidence of foodborne illnesses caused by this pathogen.”

Since the start of the Food Safety Working Group, USDA has stepped up meat facility inspections, including the greater use of sampling to monitor the products going into ground beef; started testing additional components of ground beef, including bench trim, and issuing new instructions to employees asking that they verify that plants follow sanitary practices in processing plants; and designed the Public Health Information System in response to lessons learned in past outbreaks.

“USDA is also looking at ways to enhance traceback methods and will initiate a rulemaking in the near future to require all grinders, including establishments and retail stores, to keep accurate records

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Export Requirement Updates



The Library of Export Requirements has been updated to reflect changes in export requirements for the following countries:

Japan

United Arab Emirates

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

FSIS Constituent Update is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office.

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of the sources of each lot of ground beef,” said Vilsack. “No priority is greater to me than food safety and I am firmly committed to taking the steps necessary to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness and protect the American people from preventable illnesses.”

To read more of the Secretary’s statement, go to <http://www.fsis.usda.gov>. To learn more about *E. coli* O157:H7 and ways to prevent foodborne illness, visit <http://www.foodsafety.gov>.

FSIS Releases 2008 Dioxin Survey Report

Between September 2007 and August 2008, FSIS conducted a survey to gather information on dioxins, furans and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls in meat, pork, chicken and turkey products.

This survey is part of the agency’s effort to conduct periodic dioxin surveys as a prudent public health practice that provides insight on changes in human exposure to dioxin-like compounds through dietary components.

USDA conducted previous surveys in the mid-1990s with the assistance of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and more recently over 2002-2003.

Information presented in this recent report uses the same format as the 2002-2003 survey report and is available for review at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Dioxin_Resources/index.asp. The report has been submitted as a manuscript to a peer reviewed journal.

FSIS Solicits Public Comment for Fees Proposed Rule

On Oct. 8, FSIS published in the *Federal Register* a proposed rule to amend its regulations to establish formulas for calculating the fees that it charges the meat, poultry and processed egg industry for special services, including overtime and holiday work.

The proposal will establish formulas for calculating the fees that FSIS will apply on an annual basis and at the start of each fiscal year.

FSIS attempts annually to amend regulations to change the fees it charges. Because of the length of the rulemaking process, the fiscal year would partially elapse each year before the agency could publish

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Recent Policy Updates

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. The following policy updates were recently issued:

Notice 70-09, Intensified Verification Testing and “for Cause” Food Safety Assessments in Response to Ready-to-Eat Testing Results.

Directive 7120.1, Amendment 20, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat and Poultry Products.

All notices and directives are available at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index.asp.

Updates on FSIS Testing for *E. coli* O157:H7

Weekly updates for the FSIS raw beef *E. coli* sampling program are posted to the agency’s Web site.

For comparative 2008 and 2009 results, go to http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Ground_Beef_E.coli_Testing_Results/index.asp.

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a final rule to amend its fees. As a result, FSIS has been unable to recover the full cost of the services it provides.

After analyzing the data over the past few years, FSIS determined that a formula could be established for calculating the fees that would be applied annually. This action could significantly enhance the agency’s ability to timely collect the full benefit of any fee change. The agency is also proposing to increase the codified flat annual fee for its accredited laboratory program.

All comments must be received by Nov. 9 and may be submitted through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>, or by mail to FSIS Docket Room, USDA, FSIS, OPPD, Docket Clearance Unit, 5601 Sunnyside Ave., Stop 5272, Beltsville, MD 20705.

FSIS Continues Educational Outreach on Imported Products

The agency will conduct two educational meetings Oct. 21 and 28 regarding the enhanced enforcement program for imported products containing small amounts of meat or poultry ingredients.

FSIS enhanced its programs earlier this year to ensure approved source requirements are met and to achieve sanitary processing and prevention of intentional or non-intentional contamination.

During these meetings, industry organizations, importers and manufacturers of food products containing small amounts of meat or poultry ingredients will learn expected requirements for these products to enter the United States.

The Oct. 21 meeting will be held at the Hilton Hotel at Homewood

Suites, 5500 Blue Lagoon Dr., Miami, Fla., from 1 to 4 p.m.

The Oct. 28 meeting will be held at the Port of Seattle Conference Center, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, 17801 International Blvd. South, Seattle, Wash., Central Auditorium, mezzanine level from 1 to 4 p.m..

Participants may also listen in to both meetings via phone toll free at (888) 469-1930, passcode: import.

For more information and to register, contact the Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training at (800) 336-3747. Also, be sure to check the “Meetings and Events” page of FSIS’ Web site at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Meetings_&_Events/index.asp for more updates.

Use FSIS Subscription Service to Get E-mail Updates

FSIS' e-mail subscription service is an easy way to keep up with food safety news. Throughout the FSIS public Web site, you will find small envelope icons that invite you to subscribe.

When you subscribe, you will receive an e-mail update when changes have been made to your selected pages. You can add or delete subscription items at any time and have the option to protect your account with a password.

More than 70,000 subscribers take advantage of this free service. FSIS currently offers 48 subscription items to choose from, across 7 major categories. Popular choices are recalls, news releases, the *Constituent Update* and FSIS notices and directives.

Through its collaboration network, FSIS also links to FDA's and CDC's subscription services on a wide range of food and health topics.

FSIS also offers RSS feeds. Look for the orange RSS symbol.



FSIS to Host Web Outreach Seminars

To promote a uniform understanding of FSIS regulations, the agency launched a six-part series of Web outreach seminars for plant owners and operators—especially those of small and very small plants.

The agency will host the fifth seminar, *Selecting Scientific Documentation to Support Establishments' HACCP Plan*, on Oct. 27.

With the introduction of HACCP, meat and poultry processors are required to provide supporting documentation for all HACCP decisions. These decisions in hazard analysis, critical control points, monitoring, validation and related issues utilize scientific documentation.

This seminar presents a series of examples that will illustrate proper selection of scientific documentation and highlight available resources to aid in these decisions.

Three 90-minute sessions will be offered via net conferencing at 11 a.m., 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. (ET) to accommodate plant owners and operators nationwide.

To register, go to http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Regulatory_Web_Seminars/index.asp. E-mail questions about upcoming outreach seminars to FSIS.Seminars@fsis.usda.gov.



New Podcast

Tune in to podcasts on selecting, handling and preparing meat and poultry products to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

This week, FSIS released this podcast helpful to consumers.

Food Safety at Home: Tailgating (Spanish)

Spanish language consumer podcasts are available at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/En_Espanol/Podcasts_SP/index.asp.

To continue automatically receiving podcasts, renew your subscription. For assistance, e-mail podcast@fsis.usda.gov.