United States Department of Agriculture

FISCAL YEAR 2018 ANNUAL PLAN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE

Contents

Message From the Acting Deputy Under Secretary

I am very pleased to release the FY 2018 Annual Plan of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). This Annual Plan, which is directly aligned with the agency's 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, outlines the ways FSIS will achieve its strategic goals over the next fiscal year. The Annual Plan serves as an operational guide for FSIS and in it, we hold ourselves accountable to both new and continuing activities. We explain the progression of our activities from the key milestones the agency achieved in FY 2017, outline what we are planning to achieve in FY 2018 and why, and describe how we will assess progress by using our Strategic and Annual Plan measures and targets.

FSIS continues to work towards its goals while the number of establishments requiring inspection continues to increase, to more than 6,400. The agency anticipates a very busy and productive FY 2018 in focusing on its goals to prevent product contamination and foodborne illness, modernize systems and approaches, and enhance how we do business. By collaborating and seeking solutions when faced with challenges, we will be able to move closer to accomplishing those goals and better meet FSIS' mission of protecting the public's health.

Continuing priorities for FY 2018 include further implementation of the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS) and Siluriformes fish inspection, effectively using Public Health Risk Evaluations (PHREs) and pathogen reduction performance standards for Salmonella and Campylobacter in poultry to drive compliance and prevent contamination, and modernizing swine and egg products inspection systems. The agency will also continue to increase its use of whole genome sequencing, further develop key informational tools and resources for inspection personnel, and continue to work with public health partners to prevent Listeria monocytogenes in retail delicatessens. The agency will also encourage industry adoption of food defense and humane handling practices, and consumer adoption of safe food-handling practices. Lastly, to maintain a strong workforce, FSIS will also continue its focus on recruiting and retaining employees in hard-to-fill mission-critical positions, engaging and empowering employees, and implementing process enhancements in key areas.

We expect that our regular monitoring of results and measures delineated in this Annual Plan will help ensure that we stay focused on our strategic goals, while continuing to adopt newly identified operational efficiencies and practices that support our workforce. I look forward to working together to complete the actions in this plan so that we can continue to make a real impact in decreasing foodborne illnesses.

Carmen Rottenberg
Acting Deputy Under Secretary, Office of Food Safety

FSIS Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
ATP	Adenosine Triphosphate
CCMS	Consumer Complaint Monitoring System
CFP	Conference of Food Protection
COR	Contracting Officer Representative
E. coli	Escherichia coli
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EWA	Early Warning Alerts
FERN	Food Emergency Response Network
FEVS	Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FSA	Food Safety Assessment
FSMA	Food Safety and Modernization Act
FY	Fiscal Year
Gen-FS	Interagency Collaboration on Genomics for Food and Feed Safety
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IPP	Inspection Program Personnel
IT	Information Technology
Lm	Listeria monocytogenes
MPI	Meat and Poultry Inspection
NARMS	National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System
nBPW	Neutralized Buffered Peptone Water
NPIS	New Poultry Inspection System
PFP	Partnership for Food Protection
PFGE	Pulsed-Field Gel Electrophoresis
PHIS	Public Health Information System
PHR	Public Health Regulation
PHRE	Public Health Risk Evaluation
PHV	Public Health Veterinarian
POE	Point of Entry
RTE	Ready-to-Eat
SEP	Special Emphasis Program
SRT	Self-Reporting Tool
STEC	Shiga-toxin producing E. coli
STEPS	System Tracking E. coli O157:H7 Positive Suppliers
WGS	Whole Genome Sequencing

Referenced Organizations

APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
CDC	HHS/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
FDA	HHS/Food and Drug Administration
FSIS	Food Safety and Inspection Service
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
IFSAC	Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration
IRAC	Interagency Risk Assessment Consortium
NACMCF	National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods
NACMPI	National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection
NIFA	National Institute of Food and Agriculture
NCBI/NIH	National Center for Biotechnology Information, National Institutes of Health
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OPM	Office of Personnel Management

FSIS Offices, Program Areas, or Staffs

CRS	Civil Rights Staff
HR	Human Resources
OCFO	Office of the Chief Financial Officer
OCIO	Office of the Chief Information Officer
ODIFP	Office of Data Integration and Food Protection
OFO	Office of Field Operations
OIC	Office of International Coordination
OIEA	Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit
OM	Office of Management
OOEET	Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training
OPACE	Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education
OPHS	Office of Public Health Science
OPPD	Office of Policy and Program Development

Introduction

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the public health agency in USDA whose mission is to protect the public's health by ensuring the safety of the Nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and processed egg products.[1] FSIS ensures food safety through the authorities of the Federal Meat Inspection Act,[2] the Poultry Products Inspection Act,[3] and the Egg Products Inspection Act,[4] as well as humane animal handling through the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act.[5] FSIS employs approximately 9,600 employees working collectively to conduct a broad range of food safety activities to achieve FSIS' overall vision—that everyone's food is safe. FSIS employees are highly trained, motivated, and skilled professionals working as "one team with one purpose." FSIS activities contribute to USDA's FY 2018-2022 draft Strategic Plan in its Goal 7, "Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health," and FY 2018 marks the second year of the agency's FSIS 2017-2021 Strategic Plan.[6] The goals, outcomes, and objectives set forth in FSIS' FY 2017-2021 Strategic Plan directly align to the agency's Annual Plans (AP), and provide an integrated framework for understanding how FSIS fulfills our mission and addresses 21st-century public health challenges. Specifically, 15 AP results directly correlate to 15 Strategic Plan objectives, with an additional Result on partner collaborations.

Vision: Everyone's food is safe		
Mission: Protecting the public's health by ensuring the safety of meat, poultry, and processed products		
	OUTCOME	OBJECTIVE
GOAL 1 Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health	1.1—Prevent Contamination 1.2—Limit Illness From Regulated Products	1.1.1—Drive Compliance With Food Safety Statutes and Regulations 1.1.2—Strengthen Sampling Programs 1.1.3—Ensure Establishments Are Meeting Pathogen Reduction Performance Standards 1.1.4—Promote Food Defense Practices 1.2.1—Improve Food Safety at In-Commerce Facilities 1.2.2—Enhance Response to Foodborne Illness Outbreaks and Adulteration Events 1.2.3—Increase Public Awareness of Recalls, Foodborne Illness, and Safe Food Handling Practices
GOAL 2 Modernize Inspection Systems, Policies, and the Use of Scientific Approaches	2.1—Improve Food Safety and Humane Handling Practices Through Adoption of Innovative Approaches 2.2—Enhance Access to Complete and Accurate Information to Inform Decisions	2.1.1—Modernize Scientific Techniques and Inspection Procedures 2.1.2—Increase Adoption of Human Handling Best Practices 2.2.1—Improve the Reliability, Access, and Timely Collection and Distribution of Information
GOAL 3 Achieve Operational Excellence	3.1—Maintain A Well-Trained and Engaged Workforce 3.2—Improve Processes and Services	3.1.1—Improve Recruitment and Retention for Mission Critical Positions 3.1.2— Enhance Training and Development Opportunities Across Competency Areas 3.1.3— Ensure Equal Opportunity and a Diverse and Inclusive Environment 3.2.1—Enhance Efficiency and Effectiveness of Key Business Processes and Systems 3.2.2—Improve Service Delivery
ACCOUNTABLE • COLLABORATIVE • EMPOWERED • SOLUTIONS-ORIENTED		

[1]As of December 2015, fish of the order Siluriformes are included in this definition. See 80 FR 75589, December 2, 2015.
[2]Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA, P.L. 90-492).
[3]Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA, P.L. 90-492).
[4]Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA, P.L. 91-597).
[5]Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA, P.L. 85-765).
[6]See FSIS FY 2017-2021 Strategic Plan.

Agency Performance Management and Governance

FSIS will implement this FY 2018 Annual Plan by utilizing its performance management framework, which includes monitoring and reporting processes underpinned by the agency's enterprise governance (EG) process. FSIS fosters a performance-based environment by using an agency-wide Dashboard, with executives and senior staff assigned to regularly track and monitor progress, ensure FSIS meets intended targets, and make timely and necessary adjustments to key activities or approaches. Our Annual Plan this year includes a greater focus on outcome-based measures, while continuing internal tracking of other key milestones, management controls, and outputs.

FSIS has used its EG process to present public health and other mission-related topics to executive leadership, particularly those that cut across programs and/or have agency-wide implications, and for collaborative decision making and implementation. All new investments, major projects, proposed policy initiatives, and major changes to existing policies go through this process. Three governance boards regularly meet to deliberate, and along with their associated work groups and committees (sub-boards), provide key analysis, evaluation, and recommendations regarding program enhancements that support data-driven decision making. In FY 2017, FSIS took steps to strengthen its EG process, with input from internal stakeholders, including conducting assessments of its sub-boards and information technology (IT) governance. Specifically, this included developing visualization and tracking tools and revising a key internal form that serves to support decision making and funds allocation for new and continuing initiatives. In FY 2018, FSIS plans to implement several recommendations from the IT governance assessment, such as instituting regular communication and outreach activities with directors and work groups to ensure that they understand the governance structure and process, and know how, when, at what level, and on what activities to engage to strengthen agency decision making.

The agency is also integrating new Office of Management and Budget enterprise risk management (ERM) requirements into its current governance activities and structure. To this end, FSIS leveraged existing internal risk-related expertise to develop an ERM profile, and will continue to work on completion of the profile in FY 2018. Further, the agency recently gathered employee opinion and preference data regarding the efficacy of a range of internal communications, and it will use these data in FY 2018 to inform the agency's exploration into optimizing information flow across FSIS organizations on key priorities, policies, projects, and major changes.

Goal 1
Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health

OUTCOME 1.1: PREVENT CONTAMINATION

RESULT 1 — Drive Compliance With Food Safety Statutes and Regulations

This multifaceted Result primarily focuses on the work of thousands of FSIS inspectors across the United States verifying industry compliance with applicable food safety regulatory requirements, which extends to both imported and domestically produced food products. As such, this Result includes activities in both arenas. Key areas of emphasis to drive compliance and reduce the risk of FSIS-regulated product contamination include the following:

- Conducting PHREs and Food Safety Assessments (FSAs)[7] to ensure regulated establishments have developed and implemented food safety systems that reduce food safety hazards or prevent them from occurring.

- Ensuring an effective international equivalence process for determining initial equivalence and verifying ongoing equivalence through document review, onsite audits, and once eligible, point of entry (POE) product reinspection.

- Strengthening existing efforts in sampling imported products.

- Continuing review of State Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) Programs.

- Enhancing outreach to small and very small establishments and other domestic stakeholders about food safety requirements.

PHREs: When conducting PHREs, the agency generates a monthly prioritized list of establishments to consider for potential "for cause" FSAs based on public health risk determinants or triggers. PHREs and FSAs often result in improvements to Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system design and process controls and/or reduction in non-compliance that help to reduce hazards present in food. In FY 2018, FSIS will continue to perform activities and take steps to reduce non-compliance and for-cause FSAs based on these public health risk determinants.

State MPI Programs: FSIS work in the area of compliance also includes State MPI Programs. The agency will continue its work to ensure that the 27 States with an MPI Program maintain "at least equal" status with Federal food safety requirements. As in FY 2017, FSIS will continue to ensure it meets annual onsite audits and State self-assessment verification requirements in FY 2018, and to audit State MPI laboratory programs.

Strategic Plan Measures and FY 2018 Targets

- At most, 1.2% of establishments are scheduled for a PHRE due to public health risk determinants[8] (Strategic Plan Measure 1.1.1.1)

- 21% of product combinations tested from equivalent countries for biological and chemical hazards[9] (1.1.1.2)

- 1% increase in overall participation in FSIS international outreach activities by foreign governments and officials (1.1.1.3)

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[7]The PHRE is a decision making process that FSIS uses to determine whether an FSA needs to be scheduled. It is a distinct, separate activity from an FSA. See FSIS Directive 5100.4 Rev. 1. The purpose of an FSA is to assess and analyze an establishment's food safety system to verify that the establishment is able to produce safe and wholesome meat or poultry products in accordance with FSIS statutory and regulatory requirements. See FSIS Directive 5100.1 Rev. 4.

[8]This measure calculates the percentage of establishments scheduled for a PHRE due to specific public health criteria out of all establishments eligible for a PHRE, using Public Health Information System (PHIS) as the data source. Expected performance is downward in small partial percentage increments through FY 2021.

[9]This measure calculates the percentage of all country/product combinations submitted through import reinspection that are assigned lab analysis for biological and chemical hazards.

Grinding Logs: One specific effort aimed at industry compliance was FSIS' move to amend recordkeeping requirements to require all official establishments and retail stores that grind raw beef products for sale in commerce to maintain specific information about grinding activities. FSIS will continue activities it started in FY 2017 to review grinding logs at retail stores, educate retailers on the rule, and conduct targeted outreach to retail industry organizations, slaughter and processing industry trade organizations, and academia on these requirements.

Outreach: For domestic stakeholders, including small and very small establishments, FSIS will continue to deploy innovative approaches to develop and deliver outreach that is focused on enhancing the communication of technical scientific and regulatory compliance information. The agency will also utilize advanced technologies to simplify how stakeholders receive technical assistance and resources. Specifically, FSIS intends to enhance its delivery of technical information, resources, and assistance by utilizing digital applications and the FSIS Small Plant Help Desk. FSIS will also continue to exhibit and conduct outreach at industry conferences, conventions, and meetings that cater to small and very small plant establishments and the associations that represent these businesses. FSIS will also conduct webinars for establishment owners and operators and other industry partners that highlight relevant agency initiatives and recently published agency policy and regulations. FSIS will measure the effectiveness of its outreach by surveying stakeholders and partners on value, efficiency, quality of delivery, and if expectations were met. FSIS will adapt measurement tools to better quantify the number of stakeholders reached and the impact of information sharing.

Imported Products: FSIS' food safety mission also extends to ensuring the safety of imported products. In FY 2018, FSIS expects to see continued growth in the number of foreign countries that are seeking an equivalence determination from FSIS necessary to become eligible to export meat, poultry, or processed egg products to the United States. FSIS' equivalence process ensures that eligible foreign countries maintain equivalence and compliance through continuous monitoring that includes document review, POE reinspections, and an onsite audit of each eligible country at least triennially. In FY 2018, FSIS will leverage the new, improved Self-Reporting Tool (SRT) that crosswalks previously submitted information for equivalent countries exporting FSIS-regulated products to the United States.

A significant component in ensuring the safety of imported products is FSIS's reinspection of products at official import inspection establishments. In FY 2017, FSIS reduced the number of Failures-to-Present that required recall from commerce, and developed strategies for reducing POE violations. FSIS seeks to implement these strategies in FY 2018, which include proactive education and outreach to foreign government counterparts to focus their attention on mitigating POE violations before they occur. Additionally, FSIS will utilize baselines and data analytics tools to monitor point of entry reinspection activities.

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measures and Targets
State Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) Programs

- Complete 90% of planned onsite audits, annual Self-Assessments, and Quarterly New Issuances Verifications to ensure compliance

Outreach to Small and Very Small Establishments

- Provide outreach through attendance at a minimum of eight high-impact conferences and exhibits[10] to, in part, increase awareness of the Small Plant Help Desk and to disseminate technical resources for regulatory compliance

Enforcement

- Ensure 85% of enforcement actions address food safety violations

Import Safety

- Maintain Failures-to-Present resulting in a recommended recall action to below 20%

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[10]FSIS considers exhibits and conferences high impact when they attract large numbers of small and very small plant owners and operators. Impact is also measured by the quantity of resources disseminated, and the increased call volume to the Small Plant Help Desk after information dissemination.

Sampling Imported Food:[11] FSIS will enhance its import food sampling program that its import program personnel accomplish through the collection of samples at the U.S. border. This sampling, combined with ongoing audits by FSIS auditors in countries that have been determined to be eligible to ship meat, poultry, and/or processed eggs to the United States, verifies to FSIS that these countries are maintaining equivalent food safety inspection systems. FSIS will continue to support a risk-based sampling plan for imported foods. This plan consists both of samples that are planned based on country profiles that include amenable species, volume shipped, and that are unplanned for-cause samples triggered by recent violative samples, issues identified during FSIS audits, and/or data or information received. FSIS will utilize baselines and analytics tools to identify trends of concern from data obtained through foreign country audits and POE reinspection activities to direct sampling in the agency's annual sampling plan and support decisions on further for-cause sampling initiatives.

International Outreach: FSIS will continue working with foreign regulatory counterparts to share information about FSIS regulatory requirements and about how the agency uses the latest technology to ensure protective public health standards for food safety. This will be done through technical assistance exchange programs, meetings with foreign government officials and organizations, educational seminars, and FSIS-sponsored visits to U.S. laboratories and regulated establishments. FSIS aims to increase the overall participation of foreign governments and officials in FSIS international outreach activities in FY 2018. FSIS also intends to continue reaching out to international regulatory counterparts who are currently implementing or working to modernize existing food safety inspection programs to inform them of our best practices and technological advances and work with them in an effort to improve food safety standards and vital health protections worldwide.

[11]Import samples are collected to verify that eligible countries are maintaining equivalent food safety inspection systems. See also Result 2.

RESULT 2	**Strengthen Sampling Programs**

This Result focuses on how FSIS is expanding its sampling programs to better address gaps in testing for pathogens and chemical residues in FSIS-regulated products. Many FSIS sampling programs include collecting samples of a variety of product types and testing these samples for multiple microbiological hazards and chemical residues. However, there are some combinations of establishments, hazards, and products that the agency does not currently sample or test. For example, FSIS maintains certain exclusions or exceptions for different regulatory and policy reasons. FSIS will continue to use a risk-based approach in closing these exceptions, to the extent practicable. As FSIS increases the percentage of different products the agency tests, FSIS will also increase the percentage of establishments at which it collects samples to close identified sampling gaps, reduce exceptions to what it samples and tests, and gather knowledge on the relative risk of contamination of regulated products. Approaches include unifying testing so that FSIS only collects one sample for each product and tests it for multiple microbiological hazards or chemical residues, and leveraging new technology to increase precision, gain efficiencies, and better identify and define hazards to decrease their presence in food.

In FY 2017, FSIS implemented new sampling projects for religious-exempt and low-volume poultry establishments and Phase II of its Raw Pork Exploratory Sampling Program. In FY 2018, FSIS plans to analyze the data from these projects and determine next steps, including the need to continue sampling or develop industry guidelines or performance standards.

In FY 2018, FSIS will conduct an internal evaluation to assess its past allocation and use of domestic and import sampling resources to ensure the agency allocates and uses its sampling and inspection resources as effectively as possible. As part of this evaluation, the agency will review its sample prioritization criteria. FSIS will use the evaluation results to modify future annual sampling plans as needed, and the results of this evaluation will drive development of possible measures and targets for the FY 2019 Annual Plan. To better manage sampling resources, FSIS will develop and implement a plan to regularly monitor its sampling activities throughout the fiscal year to ensure planned samples are collected and analyzed as scheduled. These activities will help improve resource allocation, close sampling gaps, and maximize the public health benefit through prioritizing testing by degree of hazard.

Using the sampling project assessment priorities list developed in FY 2017, FSIS plans to assess comminuted chicken and beef bench-trim sampling in FY 2018. For each project, FSIS will examine the current sample design and associated outcomes of assigned samples within various categories, such as by establishment type and product volume. Based on the findings, FSIS will make recommendations for stratification or other design improvements to improve collection rates.

Strategic Plan Measure and FY 2018 Target

- 47% of products from FSIS-regulated establishments are subject to sampling (1.1.2.1)[12]

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[12]The measure calculates the percent of all product/establishment pairs in domestic slaughter and production that are subject to sampling. In FY 2017, new projects started included poultry low-volume and religious-exempt products, which had been excluded from FSIS sampling.

In addition to increasing the percentage of products and establishments that are subject to sampling, the agency made improvements to current sampling projects to ensure that it is focusing on the products most likely to be positive. In FY 2017, the sampling algorithm for Ready-to-Eat (RTE) products was updated to refocus sample collection, giving greater weight to product alternatives, product type percent positive, and establishment size.

FSIS will also continue to work through its current partnerships and programs, such as the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring Program (NARMS) and the National Residue Program (NRP), and aims to develop new partnerships or programs in FY 2018. For example, NRP will continue to identify priority compounds of public health concern in conjunction with partner agencies and utilize this information to develop domestic and import scheduled sampling plans. Additionally, FSIS will continue to work with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to use their sampling results in dual jurisdiction establishments to target sampling of FSIS-regulated products or food contact surfaces.
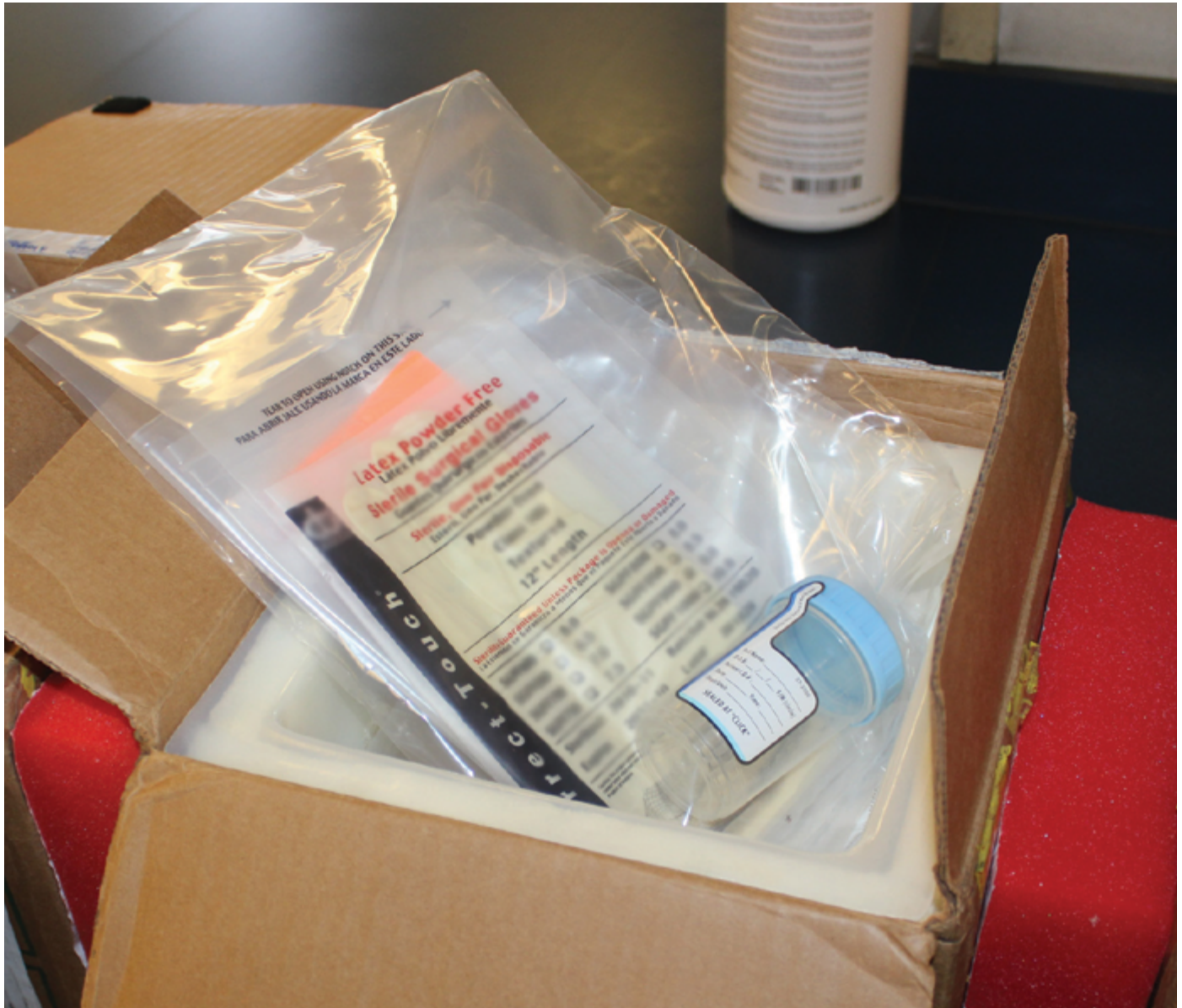
RESULT 3

Ensure Establishments Are Meeting Pathogen Reduction Performance Standards

This Result focuses on using pathogen reduction performance standards to assess the food safety performance of establishments that slaughter and process poultry and meat products.

Poultry: *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*

In FY 2017, in addition to implementing routine sampling and a moving-window assessment approach to chicken and turkey carcass sampling projects, FSIS implemented six new performance standards for *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in comminuted chicken and turkey, and chicken parts. Further, in responding to establishments that do not meet the performance standard for *Salmonella* in carcasses, FSIS is scheduling and conducting a PHRE focusing on the establishment's planned corrective actions.[13] FSIS may also conduct an FSA when deemed appropriate. In addition, in FY 2017, FSIS has been assigning and collecting followup samples at all establishments that process carcasses that do not meet the *Salmonella* performance standard.

In FY 2018, FSIS will finalize and implement an overall assessment and enforcement strategy for *Salmonella* reduction performance at establishments slaughtering and processing raw poultry that has been under development in FY 2017. These activities will inform the development and implementation of new policies, or help to update existing policies to prioritize evaluation and enforcement in establishments that slaughter or process raw poultry. FSIS also plans to analyze and communicate the results of analysis regarding the effect of neutralizing Buffered Peptone Water (nBPW) on the performance standards for chicken poultry carcasses and parts. Similarly, FSIS will continue to assess establishments that slaughter and/or process raw poultry to determine whether they are meeting current *Campylobacter* performance standards.

Meat: *Salmonella*

In FY 2017, FSIS completed a risk assessment for *Salmonella* in ground beef, and an analysis of the veal/beef carcass baseline study data. These revealed that beef still contributes to salmonellosis and that FSIS will not reach the HP2020 goals for reducing salmonellosis without further reductions in *Salmonella* contamination on beef. To facilitate continual improvement, FSIS will develop an action plan that outlines the hurdles associated specifically with *Salmonella* in beef and options for how FSIS might move forward. FSIS recently implemented sampling for the baseline phase of the Raw Pork Products Exploratory Sampling Project for *Salmonella* in intact and non-intact pork cuts and comminuted pork.[14] The related study will be completed in FY 2018, and data gathered will be used to inform FSIS policies regarding pork products and to develop industry guidance and/or performance standards.

Strategic Plan Measures and FY 2018 Target

- 78% of establishments meet pathogen reduction performance standards[15]

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measures and Targets

- All establishments newly assigned to Category 3 based on any *Salmonella* performance standard are scheduled for a PHRE within 60 days of internal notification[16] 95% of the time

- Ensure 95% of the PHIS-scheduled pathogen and residue samples are collected and submitted to the laboratory when applicable product is available

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[13]See also Result 1.

[14]See also Result 2, and FSIS Notice 30-17.

[15]For each pathogen/product pair with a performance standard, this measure is calculated by dividing the number of establishments that passed all of their included moving windows by the total number of establishments with at least one completed moving window that either passed or failed. (A moving window is an approach to sampling in which FSIS evaluates a set number of sequential results from a single establishment to assess process control. For example, if FSIS chose to evaluate 20 results under the moving window approach, FSIS would assess the most recent 20 FSIS results for a particular establishment. The "moving window" approach provides FSIS with more flexibility for scheduling sample collection at different establishments.) Consistent with FSIS' approach to posting aggregate performance standard results for chicken parts and comminuted poultry, initial calculations will incorporate pre-verification sampling data from exploratory sampling through PHIS during completion of the first 52-week moving window.

[16]See also measures 1.1.1.1 and 2.1.1.2.

RESULT 4 — Promote Food Defense Practices

This Result focuses on how FSIS will remain vigilant and sustain progress made in the area of food defense and preparedness to respond to acts of intentional contamination of food. The evolving threat landscape and emerging risks demand that the agency maintain and enhance its capability and capacity to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from all hazards. FSIS continues to monitor and analyze food defense tasks at establishments, as well as align policies, outreach, and partnerships to improve understanding and communication of food defense best practices. The agency also focuses on collaborating with other agencies on food defense and preparedness activities, such as on validating response and recovery plans through conducting exercises across the country. FSIS' work with Federal and State partner networks to identify threats through surveillance activities and to respond to non-intentional and intentional food contamination events and outbreaks are also key components that help reduce risks associated with potential events. The agency will continue to promote agency preparedness, and that of the regulated industry, to drive enhanced capabilities and capacities to respond to and recover from threats and hazards of greatest risk.

In FY 2017, FSIS began implementing a multi-year strategy for food defense, which included modifications to food defense tasks; further integration of food defense into, and increased effectiveness of, FSIS policies; further outreach by developing, revising, and distributing tools, resources, and guides; and collaboration with FDA and other agencies and organizations, and it will continue these activities in FY 2018. In addition, the agency shifted from measuring the voluntary adoption of functional food defense plans by industry to focusing on the importance of implementing and maintaining food defense practices in all FSIS-regulated establishments. This shift will allow FSIS to develop a better understanding of gaps that need to be addressed and will allow the agency to better assess preparedness for intentional contamination. As a result of this new focus, FSIS established a baseline of the percent of FSIS-regulated establishments that voluntarily maintain food defense practices. Additionally, preparedness activities include data analyses of food incidents to prioritize agency efforts, exercises to validate response and recovery plans, and food defense-targeted threat surveillance at National Special Security Events.

In FY 2018, FSIS will continue its work in aligning and integrating key food defense concepts and activities into day-to-day inspection operations, and it will continue to update critical food defense policies, as needed. By conducting food defense surveillance activities in regulated establishments, the agency will continue to identify food defense practices in use. FSIS will conduct vulnerability assessments to identify critical risks and immediately identify the best practices to reduce them. Also in FY 2018, FSIS will continue to seek out and enhance collaborative opportunities with stakeholders.

Strategic Plan Measure and FY 2018 Target

- 85% of establishments maintain food defense practices[17] (1.1.4.1)

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measure and Target

- Perform 5,000 surveillance testing samples at FERN Cooperative Agreement Laboratories

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[17]In FY 2017, FSIS revised the food defense task for inspection personnel, which resulted in the establishment of a baseline of the percent of FSIS-regulated establishments that voluntarily maintain food defense practices as the basis of this measure.

These activities will include providing information to public and private partners to emphasize the importance of food defense and highlight tools and resources available on the FSIS website, support for foreign governments to protect the supply of food to the United States, and publishing food defense articles in multiple sources.

FSIS will also continue to improve capabilities to respond to and recover from any hazards through preparedness activities, including conducting analyses of food incidents to prioritize agency efforts and conducting exercises to validate response and recovery plans and to minimize negative public health and economic impacts. Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) laboratories will continue to perform surveillance testing of food at the cooperative agreement laboratories by analyzing samples from retail for various chemical, biological, and radiological agents. They will also collaborate with the FDA to provide training and proficiency tests.

RESULT 5   Improve Food Safety at In-Commerce Facilities

Proper handling of meat, including Siluriformes fish, poultry, and egg products at in-commerce firms like warehouses, distributors, and retailers, is critical to preventing foodborne illnesses. Product volumes at some types of these facilities can be very high, and the ways that products are handled or even further processed at some facilities can introduce additional hazards. FSIS focuses its surveillances, investigations, enforcement, and other in-commerce activities on those facilities that present the greatest risk to consumers. FSIS conducts followup surveillance activities at firms where conditions have been observed that could lead to unsafe products. FSIS also collaborates with State and local authorities to ensure that all types of in-commerce firms are routinely monitored. FSIS also promotes safe food handling practices at in-commerce firms through outreach and education.

A particular agency priority is verifying that retail locations that operate delis are safely handling ready-to-eat (RTE) meat and poultry for sale to consumers. For example, *Listeria monocytogenes (Lm),* an illness with a higher fatality rate than most other foodborne illnesses, can survive and grow at cool temperatures and can persist in retail deli environments. Safe food-handling practices, thorough cleaning and sanitation procedures, proper maintenance of the facility and equipment, and good employee practices can and have decreased the likelihood of RTE food contamination.

FY 2017 FSIS activities included participating in several meetings, conferences, and trade shows with key audiences to provide information on improving retail deli food safety practice efforts,[18] and distributing several thousand Retail Deli Best Practices Brochures to retailers across the country as our investigators performed surveillance activities to verify food safety in commerce. FSIS will continue these activities in FY 2018 to expand outreach, education, and training about in-commerce food safety, especially safe practices at retail delis; on FSIS rules, regulations, and guidance affecting in-commerce firms; and will encourage improvements to the FDA Food Code to enhance public health in retail. This will occur through building on established partnerships and initiating new relationships with national and regional associations representing city, county, and State health agencies; food marketers; grocery stores; delis; and restaurants.

In serving in an advisory role on the Executive Board for the Conference of Food Protection (CFP), FSIS works with the FDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to recommend changes to the Food Code that impact the safety of meat and poultry products in-commerce. In FY 2018, FSIS will continue to support workshop and biennial meeting planning, including presenting recommended changes to the Food Code and assessing changes proposed by other groups (e.g., industry and academia), and meeting monthly with the FDA on CFP issues of mutual interest.

Strategic Plan Measure and FY 2018 Target

- 61% of retailers are following all 8 of the most important FSIS Deli *Lm* guidelines[19] (1.2.1.1) and 91% of the 33 recommendations in the guidelines

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measure and Target

- 70% of not-for-cause surveillance activities are at the highest risk (Tier 1) firms

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[18]This included meetings with the Association of Food and Drug Officials, State and local officials, the Food Marketing Institute, and other organizations.
[19]The Strategic Plan measure tracks the percentage of retailers that are following all eight of the most important retail deli *Lm* guidelines. These 8 are among the 33 recommendations in the AP measure that follows. The large difference between the targets is in part because all eight need to be followed to be counted in the percentage. The AP measure with a 91% target reflects an aggregate of recommendations being followed that are weighted equally. The recommendations cover product handling, cleaning and sanitizing, facility and equipment controls, and employee practices.

FSIS will continue to conduct most of its surveillance at the highest risk business types that handle the largest product volumes, and that State or local authorities do not routinely visit. FSIS will also continue performing followup surveillance activities at firms where initial surveillance reveal food safety violations, and take product control actions when appropriate and necessary to remove unsafe food from commerce. The agency will conduct approximately 15% of its surveillance activities at retailers to continue to track progress on safe-handling practices at retail delis, enforce recordkeeping requirements for retailers that grind beef and document violations, and educate retail deli operators.

FSIS will assess the data from its surveillance activities and use the findings to enhance surveillance activity strategies and further focus its outreach materials. FSIS plans to work with FDA and other public health partners to jointly develop specific outreach materials for retailers (e.g., for slicers). The agency will also develop guidelines for other products produced at retail that have been linked to foodborne illness investigations. FSIS will also collect and analyze surveillance data to assess the effectiveness of the agency's efforts with respect to retail and inform the agency's development of strategies to improve those efforts.

OUTCOME 1.2: LIMIT ILLNESS FROM REGULATED PRODUCTS

RESULT 6 — **Improve Response to Foodborne Illness Outbreaks and Adulteration Events**

This Result underscores the complex nature of responding quickly and effectively to reports of foodborne illness. FSIS' work includes collaborating with public health partners, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), FDA, and State and local departments of health and agriculture to ensure timely sharing of information related to foodborne illness investigations. By increasing the availability of information, including on trends of public health importance, FSIS can collaborate and communicate more effectively with partners about emerging risks and strategies for control and prevention. Collection of evidence from case-patient interviews, product traceback, environmental inspection and sampling, and laboratory testing are essential to identifying and controlling the sources of foodborne illness.

In FY 2017, FSIS began or continued implementing several strategies to improve communication and collaboration with public health partners, with the aim of enhancing foodborne illness reporting and increasing effectiveness of foodborne illness investigations. FSIS conducted a series of focus groups with healthcare providers to better understand healthcare provider decision making with regard to the diagnosis, treatment, and reporting of patients with potential foodborne illness. After FSIS completes analysis of data from these groups in early FY 2018, the agency will use the results to inform development of foodborne illness guidance materials for healthcare providers that are easy to access and practical to encourage early detection, reporting, and diagnosis of foodborne-related illness. The agency also continues to utilize advances in technology, such as whole genome sequencing (WGS), to better understand and respond to foodborne hazards that are of greatest concern to public health.

FSIS also began a number of activities in FY 2017 to encourage partners to notify FSIS promptly of illnesses associated with FSIS-regulated products, since early notification can enable FSIS to take more rapid and effective action to protect public health. To obtain insight into information gaps that FSIS may address through partner outreach, the agency began administering an annual survey to gather information from key State partners. FSIS will use these survey results to help focus on areas of greatest need, to better plan, and to promote early reporting by partners of adverse events associated with FSIS product, as well as provision of investigative information that will facilitate agency action. FSIS will also continue to utilize recently developed information-sharing procedures to expedite information exchange with partners in State and local health and agriculture agencies during investigations. FSIS also intends to continue to engage with public health partners through various outreach opportunities to increase visibility of FSIS services available to stakeholders.

Strategic Plan Measure and FY 2018 Target

- 73% (35) of State partners indicate that they routinely report to FSIS illness outbreaks that may be associated with FSIS-regulated products[20] (1.2.2.1)

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measure and Target

- Respond within 7 calendar days to 90% of requests from State and local health and agriculture partners for information regarding foodborne illness investigations[21]

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[20]Strategic Plan Measure: Number/percentage of State and local partners who, because of FSIS outreach efforts, can provide information that improves identification of contaminated product. The FY 2017 survey provided a baseline from which FSIS defined targets and is measuring progress.

[21]FSIS Notice 45-16. Sharing Information with State or Local Agencies, Foreign Government Officials, and International Organizations.

RESULT 7

Increase Public Awareness of Recalls, Foodborne Illness, and Safe Food-Handling Practices

FSIS continues to increase public awareness of recalls, foodborne illness, policies, and safe food-handling practices through a broad range of communications channels with the goal of reducing the rates of foodborne illness. The agency will continue strategic outreach through traditional media, social media, events, partnerships, educational materials, mobile applications, seasonal outreach, and other forms of public engagement to communicate the importance of food safety messages and inform the public of current recalls and public health alerts.

In FY 2018, FSIS will expand its proactive outreach efforts to the press; will continue to work with partners to serve as message multipliers to extend and expand the reach of safety messaging; and engage with the public and key stakeholders through traditional and new media. In FY 2017, the agency began a social science survey effort to conduct annual observational research on consumer adoption of safe food-handling practices. While this effort experienced delays in the planning phases of the project, the research is now underway and in FY 2018, FSIS will analyze the results to better understand ways to explain food safety risks to consumers. By making these changes, FSIS will reach more consumers with actionable and tested safety messages to increase public awareness of recalls, foodborne illness, and safe food-handling practices and promote positive behavior change.

Key activities for FY 2018 include achieving more proactive placements of stories about recalls, foodborne illness, and safe food-handling practices with national, regional/State, and local media; tracking the impressions these placements achieve; and training a limited number of field staff to serve as spokespeople during local interviews and food demonstrations. FSIS will also continue to increase engagement with the public and other key stakeholders through digital communications outreach and proactive briefings, and execute three food safety outreach-related initiatives. Other key activities will include tracking the quantity and quality of partnership activities/grassroots activities promoting safe food handling and establishing strategic plan baselines and targets to increase the percent of consumers identified through observational research who follow safe food-handling behavior goals. Results from this social science research will allow the agency to better explain consumer food-handling practices to the public and inform the creation of future communication materials.

Strategic Plan Measures and FY 2018 Targets

- 5% increase in public awareness of safe food-handling guidance and recalls through communications channels[22] (1.2.3.1)

- % of consumers identified who follow safe food-handling behaviors[23] (1.2.3.2)

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[22]This indexed measure includes weighted metrics primarily of impressions, including direct connections, website traffic, application downloads, event participation, physical and digital educational material distribution, social media engagement, media impressions and emails distributed. The percentage represents more than 48 million weighted impressions as its target for FY 2018.

[23]The unexpected delay in starting work did not allow for a baseline and targets for this measure to be set. FSIS will set them in FY 2018 using the social science research that is underway.

OUTCOME 2.1: IMPROVE FOOD SAFETY AND HUMANE HANDLING PRACTICES THROUGH ADOPTION OF INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

RESULT 8 — **Modernize Scientific Techniques and Inspection Procedures**

This Result focuses on identifying or developing innovative tools, techniques, and methodologies or approaches to support continued modernization. More specifically, FSIS will expand our WGS capacity, explore innovative inspector tools through pilot projects, and identify, pilot and, as appropriate, implement the use of new and innovative methodologies to improve hazard detection and response. This Result also focuses on enhancing Public Health Information System (PHIS) functionalities and data system interoperability. The goal is to provide our inspectors; enforcement, investigation, and analysis officers; and regulatory partners with the information they need to support decision making in a timely manner. Key activities in this Result aim to reduce consumer risks by ensuring that FSIS uses up-to-date practices, technology, and science to inform regulatory requirements, and inspection procedures and to systematically control and prevent hazards associated with FSIS-regulated products.

Tools and Techniques
Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS)

In FY 2017, FSIS used WGS to characterize 100% of pathogen isolates, including *Salmonella, Campylobacter, Lm,* and Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) originating from regulatory samples. In addition, FSIS used WGS to characterize *Salmonella, Campylobacter,* and a subset of indicator isolates from non-regulatory samples.[24] In FY 2018, FSIS, in consultation with appropriate stakeholders, will explore how to broaden the application for WGS in our regulatory framework and develop an action plan. In the short term, the agency plans to continue to use WGS to better understand *Lm* harborage in regulated establishments producing RTE products. In addition, FSIS plans to work with FDA and other partners to develop specific procedures for sharing WGS information involving dual jurisdiction establishments. Consistent with a Federal Register Notice (81 FR 7285), FSIS will develop criteria for determining when serotype, pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE), antibiotic resistance, and WGS results should trigger a PHRE, and procedures for communicating actionable results from the laboratory to the field. In addition, FSIS will use WGS data to support enforcement actions in Category 3 establishments when applicable. More specifically, for poultry establishments that are Category 3 for *Salmonella*, FSIS will explore the use of WGS analysis with other existing techniques to determine if product isolates contain *Salmonella* of relevance to public health. The agency will use this information to develop a framework for regulatory considerations and subsequent inspection assignment actions.

Strategic Plan Measures and FY 2018 Targets

- 100% of all regulatory and 60% of non-regulatory isolates that FSIS sampling generates are subject to WGS (2.1.1.1)

- 71.4% of establishments' non-compliance rate decreases 120 days after receiving an Early Warning Alert[25] (2.1.1.2)

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measure and Target

- Implement NPIS in 95% of establishments that opted in and are ready to adopt the new system

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[24]Additionally, all *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, and a select few *E. coli* and *Enterococcus* were also subject to WGS from the NARMS program, and a small fraction of *Salmonella* from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service.

[25]This measure is calculated as the percent of establishments receiving a PHR Early Warning Alert whose PHR noncompliance (NC) rate is below the lower threshold for receiving an Early Warning Alert 120 days after receiving the alert.

Potential Inspector Tools

In FY 2017, FSIS assessed the utility of certain tools, such as for adenosine triphosphate (ATP) sampling of surfaces, and an imaging device that may be used to provide inspectors and other field staff with information to help them make sampling decisions in a timely manner. FSIS determined that the tools tested did not meet FSIS' evaluation criteria (suitability, time to results, and usability by inspectors). In FY 2018, FSIS plans to explore other tools to assess their applicability in slaughter and processing establishments. The agency also plans to continue exploring the development and application of real-time microbiological testing methodology for field application. FSIS plans to continue the development of these tools in collaboration with USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and other partners. Other activities related to modernization of procedures include establishing functionality in PHIS for tracking *E. coli* O157:H7 Positive Suppliers (STEPS), Recall Management, and Industry Notification of Adulteration applications.

Inspection Procedures and Approaches

FSIS will continue to monitor the number of establishments whose non-compliance rate decreases 120 days after receiving an early warning alert (EWA) for Public Health Regulations Noncompliance Records (PHR/NRs). Inspectors use EWAs to help plan their day-to-day activities with a focus on addressing specific food safety concerns. FSIS plans to begin assessing performance of individual establishments that fail to show improvement. In addition, FSIS is developing an early notice alert for Inspection Program Personnel (IPP) in poultry establishments whose performance is declining from Category 2 to Category 3.

FSIS will also continue to modernize inspection procedures and develop new approaches to assess the industry's control of hazards. Specifically, FSIS will continue to implement NPIS in establishments that opt in and are ready to adopt the new system. This inspection system is designed to facilitate pathogen reduction in poultry products by focusing the agency's online activities to provide for more efficient and effective carcass-by-carcass inspection, allowing some of the agency's online resources to be used to perform additional offline inspection activities that are more effective in ensuring food safety.

FSIS will also explore alternatives for evaluating the effectiveness of process control, and for identifying conditions that may lead to cross-contamination of product during slaughter and processing. This may include using food-contact-surface sampling at pre-op for *Salmonella* and STEC in select establishments. Similarly, FSIS recently assessed surface-sampling methods as a potential alternative to N-60 or grab sampling for collecting trim and other raw ground beef components. The agency plans to continue its collaboration with USDA's Agricultural Research Service to perform a pilot study in FY 2018 to determine the applicability of this method to collect samples in FSIS-regulated establishments. FSIS also plans to explore how to best expand the Accredited Laboratory Program to include microbiological testing and to update analytic methods. This will provide FSIS additional flexibility to have commercial laboratories accredited to perform FSIS methods in the event that the agency requires additional analytical capacity.

RESULT 9 — Increase Adoption of Humane Handling Best Practices

This Result primarily focuses on livestock slaughter through using humane methods, with a specific focus on restraint and/or stunning of livestock to improve establishment compliance and reduce the risk of humane handling incidents at slaughter establishments. FSIS will communicate and train staff on these important requirements.

This year, the agency will continue its enhanced education and outreach strategy recently designed to target small and very small establishments to ensure more consistent application of humane handling best practices and compliance with humane handling regulatory requirements. To support these efforts, FSIS plans to collect additional data from small and very small slaughter facilities through a survey, to solicit information on their knowledge gaps regarding humane handling regulations and policies and the format they would like to receive additional guidance from FSIS. Using the survey results, the agency will develop an action plan for implementing a new educational strategy focused on preventing multiple stun events resulting in FSIS enforcement actions.

FSIS also recently launched an initiative to increase understanding of signs of consciousness in livestock during the process of slaughter through a well-received training to approximately 65% of agency Public Health Veterinarians (PHVs), which will continue in FY 2018 to ensure the agency reaches the entire PHV population. FSIS will also begin training other field personnel responsible for livestock humane handling verification duties. FSIS will create and establish the training in AgLearn and make it available to assigned employees by early quarter 2 FY 2018. In support of this effort, FSIS will design, create, and implement reference material on recognizing signs of consciousness in livestock on the IPP Help Button.

Last, the agency will also publish a Federal Register Notice (FRN) regarding its intent to hold livestock owners, transporters, haulers, and other persons not employed by an official establishment responsible if they inhumanely handle livestock in connection with slaughter while on the premises of an official establishment.[26] The FRN will also describe any clarifications or revisions made in response to comments received in FY 2017, and announce the implementation date. The FRN should enhance the agency's ability to ensure the humane handling of livestock in connection with slaughter and will not replace the agency's existing humane handling enforcement responsibilities.

Strategic Plan Measure and FY 2018 Target

• 90% of slaughter establishments are compliant with all livestock restraint and/or stunning requirements (2.1.2.1)

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measure and Target

• Deliver refresher training to 40% of the 1,000 IPP in livestock slaughter establishments that are responsible for Humane Handling verification

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[26]When livestock are handled inhumanely on official establishment premises, FSIS historically has taken enforcement action solely against the establishment, regardless of whether the establishment employs or otherwise holds a contractual relationship with the person that inhumanely handled the livestock.

RESULT 10	Improve the Reliability, Access, and Timely Collection and Distribution of Information and Data

This Result focuses on improvements to systems, tools, and communications that will enable FSIS employees and external stakeholders to more easily access and apply agency information. Improvements in the content, format, and delivery of information allow for more consistent implementation and better understanding of policy by both field employees and industry. Leveraging technology by developing and enhancing systems and tools (1) facilitates the timely distribution and coordination of information among agency employees, and (2) equips analysts with ways to synthesize the large volume of data and present quality analyses for informed and sound regulatory decision making and policy development for food safety.

In FY 2018, FSIS plans to continue several activities it began in FY 2017. This includes development of more tools to aid in access and visualization of FSIS data to assist IPP in performing inspection tasks, and to provide innovative ways of presenting guidance for industry, information to inspectors and consumers, and analysis with partners, such as:

- Improving a server-based visualization program and integrating a Geographic Information System modeling functionality, deploying an Analytics Portal, and expanding data visualization access for FSIS analysts in headquarters and district offices.

- Developing IPP job aids, continuing use of the IPP Help Button, and implementing a protocol to receive field input on priorities for Directives and Notices.

- Redesigning the Compliance Guideline Index webpage to aid in making guidelines easier to find and more accessible and in reformatting and condensing a key directive on safe and suitable ingredients for use in FSIS-regulated products to make information easier to find for industry and IPP.

- Developing an action plan to promote industry control of allergens, including revising directives and guidelines and identifying research needs.

- Adding a Spanish version of the electronic Consumer Complaint Monitoring System (CCMS) form—which allows consumers to provide FSIS feedback on food safety issues—and fully migrating approved CCMS functionality into PHIS.

Strategic Plan Measures and FY 2018 Targets

- An increase of 1.2, up to 20 from a score of 18.8, of analysts are able to access, analyze, and visualize FSIS data[27] (2.2.1.1)

- 70% of employees have online access to FSIS-approved systems (2.2.1.2)

- Four establishment-specific and other FSIS datasets are made publicly available (2.2.1.3)

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measure and Target

- Ensure that 97% of all employees who need a working LincPass have one[28]

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[27]This measure calculates a weighted score, from survey results of FSIS data analysts who have access to and use FSIS' major data systems (such as PHIS), who can and have verified that they analyze and visualize FSIS data using statistical or other software. FSIS will assess progress in achieving this measure through an annual survey of FSIS analysts. FSIS developed this measure because of its focus on continually modernizing the agency's use of scientific approaches.

[28]FSIS anticipates increasing the number of employees issued LincPass with the deployment of credentialing stations, combined with an eDevice initiative for Food Inspectors. This 97% level represents an increase from FY 2017.

- Further developing and exploring new applications for the T-Cube web interface, in collaboration with the CDC and States, to support illness outbreak analysis, as it enables the analysis and visualization of large datasets and the needs of public health labs and epidemiologists at State, tribal, and Federal levels.

- Continuing work on integrating data from a legacy system on residue violators into FSIS' Analytics Portal.

After filming two videos in FY 2017 to provide guidance to industry on wet-bulb temperatures and humidity monitoring tools, FSIS also plans to develop and film additional video guidelines to be published online for easy access to industry, and to develop other innovative ways to present instructions to inspectors and guidelines to industry in FY 2018. FSIS also plans to develop and hold webinars with several stakeholders on STEC issuances and on policy concerning intended use. Finally, FSIS will continue sharing key datasets and reports, having posted six establishment-specific datasets in FY 2017. Sharing these data allows FSIS better engagement with its stakeholders and enables them to have quality information on an ongoing basis.

FSIS aims for more employees to gain online access to FSIS-approved systems through increasing the availability of electronic devices to allow for use of such devices and to ensure access to FSIS training materials, data reports, and other information on the FSIS intranet. FSIS plans to implement a pilot program in two locations in the first quarter of FY 2018 to test a new method for obtaining eAuthorization certification and LincPass for employees within their first week on the job through the e-Onboarding program. If successful, this adjusted methodology will be implemented agency-wide, with LincPass credentialing stations placed in each District Office, allowing employees to obtain their LincPass during initial orientation at the District Office. Once established and operating nationwide, FSIS will establish a new baseline to determine the timeframe within which FSIS will expect that employees will obtain a LincPass after their first day of work.
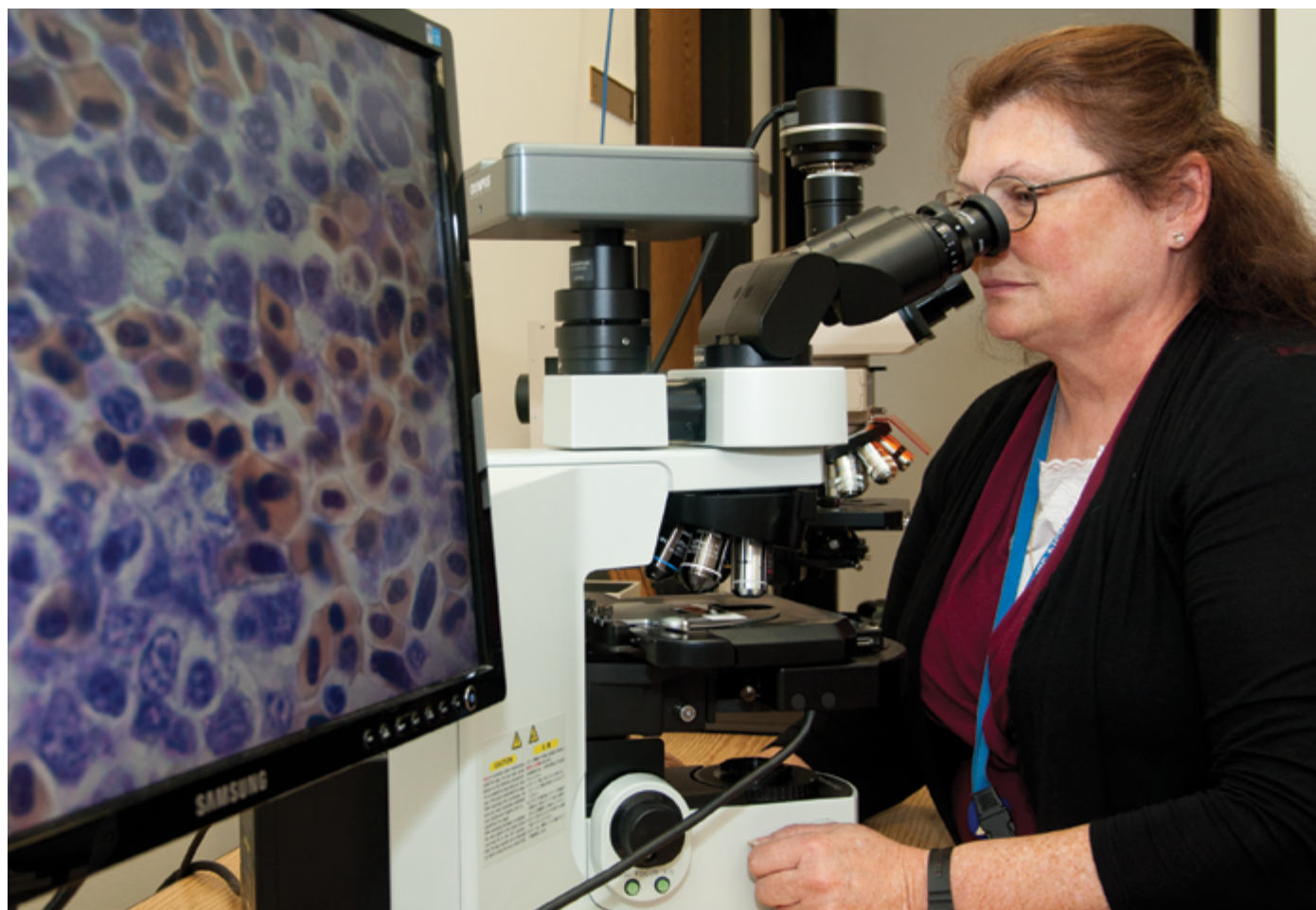
Goal 3
Achieve Operational Excellence

OUTCOME 3.1: MAINTAIN A WELL-TRAINED AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE

RESULT 11

Improve Recruitment and Retention for Mission Critical Positions

This Result primarily focuses on continuing to implement an expanded set of incentives, strategies, and initiatives that will sustain or improve mission-critical hiring and improve retention, including for hard-to-fill locations. It also focuses on recruitment activities for specific populations, such as veterinarians, veterans, and IT professionals to support FSIS' ability to maintain a diverse and highly qualified workforce. As a large majority of FSIS' workforce is critical to the day-to-day oversight of inspection operations, these strategies help reduce the inherent risks the agency faces in ensuring a sufficient number of inspectors are in place to conduct inspection activities to prevent FSIS-regulated product contamination and ensure animals are humanely treated before slaughter.

In FY 2017, FSIS launched a comprehensive hiring initiative to target veterinarians; one feature of the initiative has been to compress the pre-employment timeline by conducting an end-to-end recruiting event that provided individuals an opportunity to apply, and be evaluated, interviewed, and medically examined within the same week—and be able to make a tentative job offer. This business model provides a foundation for activities in FY 2018 and beyond, utilizing teams composed of human resources (HR) professionals and field inspection experts to educate individuals on the mission and job requirements. The end-to-end model will target specific hard-to-fill locations; FSIS is using this model to acquire and fill its vacant veterinarian positions, with one related strategy being the continued acquisition of Malak scholars to fill veterinarian positions in FSIS hard-to-fill locations. In FY 2018, FSIS will also deploy additional recruiting, hiring, and retention strategies. These include the following:

- Planning and executing two "onsite" targeted hiring events for mission critical occupations.

- Obtaining certifications from the U.S. Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs for the Army Apprenticeship program to target transitioning military service members for food inspector and consumer safety inspector positions, including building a cohort of up to 20 candidates from separating service members to complete the program.

- Further developing and implementing a retention program that enables FSIS to best utilize incentives, including for what duration and for what occupations. This includes increasing marketing and providing incentives that require continued Federal service agreements to improve retention.

Across both recruiting and retention, FSIS aims to provide sufficient incentives across defined time periods, for specific positions, and in hard-to-fill locations, including Student Loan Repayment opportunities, with caps on allocations across incentive categories.

Strategic Plan Measures and FY 2018 Targets

- 95% of mission critical frontline positions are filled (3.1.1.1)

- 76% of employees remain with FSIS for 2 years or more (3.1.1.2)

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measure and Target

- 25 candidates complete pre-employment activities for each end-to-end recruiting and hiring event conducted, either onsite or within 30 days of participating in the event

RESULT 12	## Enhance Training and Development Opportunities Across Competency Areas

This Result focuses on delivering a range of training and development activities to FSIS employees, as well as developing and deploying competency models and skill gap assessments for key occupations to enhance employee training and development. FSIS continues to enhance and expand its training offerings through using new training delivery mechanisms and frequent course offerings. The FSIS workforce is critical to the day-to-day oversight of inspection operations, and these training strategies help reduce the inherent risks the agency faces in ensuring that its inspection workforce is sufficiently trained to prevent FSIS-regulated product contamination and to ensure animals are humanely treated before slaughter.

This year, FSIS will continue to focus on expanding and transforming training programs and offerings. To date, FSIS has delivered training and established competency models in certain mission-critical occupations. The agency will maintain these training offerings while expanding programming to additional critical and non-mission-critical occupations and transforming how the agency delivers training. FSIS plans to complete training transformation of two courses in FY 2018. FSIS will support a range of training and development activities, including:

- Implementing a redesigned, interactive formal classroom program and delivering courses for PHVs 4 times and Inspection Methods 10 times.

- Posting quick, on-demand, online refresher trainings and reference materials.

- Employing alternative delivery methods and training approaches that are suitable to the content and audiences FSIS is reaching—such as Virtual Reality, a USDA-redesigned AgLearn, and an interactive learning platform.

- Marketing and promoting increased Office of Field Operations participation and use of online technical materials available through the IPP Help Button, PHIS Help Button, FSIS Intranet, and AgLearn.

- Supporting external training offerings to both maintain competencies and fill key gaps in key areas.

- Promoting and monitoring Individual Development Plan (IDP) participation for non-bargaining unit employees to reach a level at which 95% of employees who want IDPs have them, and considering enhancements to the IDP process and its effectiveness.

- Further developing the agency's Supervisor Help Button.

- Providing access to visuals such as photographs, animations, videos, point-of-view reference materials, and 360-degree videos.

Strategic Plan Measures and FY 2018 Targets

- Achieve a 2% increase in knowledge gained in key occupations within 180 days[29] (3.1.2.1)

- 25% of the workforce's skill gaps have been assessed (3.1.2.2)

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[29]The baseline for this measure is 77.8%. FSIS aims to reach 80.9% in FY 2018.

Leadership training will focus on offerings/opportunities to improve leadership and management competencies in the areas of accountability, vision, problem solving, and leveraging diversity. Inspection and technical training will focus on competencies in staff through new and expanded offerings, such as in data and information analysis, animal pathology, regulation compliance, consumer safety knowledge, and critical thinking.

To measure progress, FSIS will assess knowledge gained from these efforts using updated methods to analyze training results to better interpret and measure training outcomes, such as factoring supervisor assessment survey results with pre-and post-training test scores. FSIS will also continue to analyze and use Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results and employee responses to training and FSIS' annual surveys to advance content development and training delivery, and to interpret and measure outcomes.

Due to an unexpected delay, initial work on competency gap assessments and development of specific new competency models was not completed in FY 2017. FSIS will continue its work on competency gaps in the PHV and IT occupations, and will continue to develop a competency model for food inspectors. FSIS plans to substantially complete the PHV and IT competency assessments this year and to complete a portion of Consumer Safety Inspector and Food Inspector competency assessments.

RESULT 13

Ensure Equal Opportunity and a Diverse and Inclusive Environment

This Result focuses on ensuring and enhancing FSIS' commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and employee engagement. The agency will continue required activities, such as distributing policy statements and conducting compliance reviews, and will continue to promote the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and ensure fair, timely, and efficient processing of EEO complaints. This Result also focuses on activities that increase and enhance employee engagement, such as i-Impact, Special Emphasis Programs (SEP), promoting work/life and wellness programs, and other related activities, and determining means by which to meaningfully assess their effectiveness. In FY 2017, FSIS launched key enhancements to its EEO and diversity activities, such as developing a comprehensive ADR marketing plan and enhancing its EEO and civil rights training program to help prevent complaints. To increase the use of ADR to resolve EEO complaints, FSIS developed a plan for publicizing its ADR program and communicating the effectiveness of its ADR services in resolving workplace conflict. FSIS also began utilizing competency assessment questions in its EEO and civil rights training to gauge employees' understanding of key EEO and civil rights concepts and to ensure that employees understand that discrimination is illegal and prohibited in the workplace. FSIS also increased the number of annual EEO compliance reviews it conducts to help ensure compliance across programs and districts with EEO and civil rights policies, regulations, and laws.

In FY 2018, FSIS will continue these efforts and other key activities. FSIS will continue to issue USDA EEO and civil rights policies; meet with leadership to review open complaint activity and potential barriers to equal employment; complete mandatory EEO and civil rights reports; ensure fair, timely, and efficient processing of complaints; and manage key programs such as the EEO Advisory Committees and the SEP. In implementing its ADR marketing plan, FSIS will issue mandatory ADR training to all employees and host an ADR lunch-and-learn series. The agency will also continue to refine its training program by assessing training competency data to inform development of future trainings. In addition, using an FY 2017 internal assessment of its EEO compliance review process, FSIS will streamline the process to ensure that the agency conducts compliance reviews of programs and districts in an effective manner that delivers valuable, actionable recommendations aimed toward improving the agency's overall EEO and civil rights results.

In FY 2017, FSIS made key strides in employee engagement by launching Phase II of i-Impact, which included introducing agency employees to the new Strategic Plan through in-person briefings. In FY 2018, FSIS will use data from feedback it has gathered on i-Impact, as well as 2017 Customer Service Survey results, to further target engagement on how employees receive information and on what topics. FSIS also plans to launch a process for more standardized new employee orientation so that more employees across the country have a basic and consistent introduction to FSIS activities and functions.

Strategic Plan Measures and FY 2018 Targets

• Achieve a 43% Alternative Dispute Resolution acceptance rate for formal and informal EEO complaints (3.1.3.1), and resolve 61% of informal complaints

• 78% of employees who completed mandatory training satisfied the EEO/CR competency requirements[30] (3.1.3.2)

• Achieve 68.66% on key employee engagement FEVS questions[31] (3.1.3.3)

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measure and Target

• Counsel a minimum of 99% of all informal EEO complaints in the required timely manner

[30]FSIS is assessing progress in achieving this measure through use of scenario-based and other questions embedded in mandatory training for employees, to assess their understanding of the material.

[31]FSIS' FY 2017 target was 67.95%. The online survey had a 60% response rate for 6,957 recipients for the electronic version and a 48% response rate for 2,000 recipients for the paper version of the survey.

RESULT 14

Enhance Efficiency and Effectiveness of Key Business Processes and Systems

This Result focuses on ensuring FSIS' business practices and systems are efficient and effective, and increasingly enabling FSIS personnel—in particular its frontline workforce—to dedicate more of their time to day-to-day mission activities. FSIS continues to further align and enhance organizational business and management processes, data flows, and technology to support sound operations, with a particular focus on HR, IT, and procurement. These activities will help reduce inherent risks associated with processes and systems by better optimizing them to improve reliability or accessibility and to ensure FSIS adequately supports its personnel.

FSIS will leverage progress from FY 2017 activities to enhance strategic human capital planning activities; procurement, IT, and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) processes; external audit and internal evaluation processes; and further build out or complete budget and financial management system enhancements in FY 2018. Examples include the following:

Human Resources: In FY 2018, FSIS anticipates completing a full position review based on forecasted requirements and modernization initiatives to proportionally align its front line and non-frontline workforces. The subsequent workforce reshaping will progress as FSIS implements modernization efforts that provides for a sustainable frontline-to-support ratio.

Procurement: After a review of previous years' acquisitions, and to better project the upcoming FY 2018 acquisition workload, FSIS will hold meetings with each program area to develop an acquisition plan for upcoming acquisitions early in the fiscal year, and by mid-year or earlier, will have designed and developed acquisition strategies for all FY 2018 procurement actions in collaboration with program stakeholders.

IT: FSIS will continue to evaluate and refine its processes and IT Roadmap, including increasing the use of cloud and mobile technologies as possible, to ensure its business technology and enterprise architecture will continue to meet its evolving mission and increasingly mobile workforce. FSIS will design these streamlined processes and innovative technologies to help support workforce productivity and, in FY 2018, respond to updated Departmental and Federal requirements. This also includes launching version 2.0 of the IT Procurement Process Toolkit and doing further IT roadmapping activities, such as a multi-year transition plan to more cloud and mobile technology and continuing the transition to more Agile methodologies.

Strategic Plan Measure and FY 2018 Target

- 75% of defined process times met for hiring, procurement, and IT[32] (3.2.1.1)

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measure and Target

- FSIS took actions on 70% of FSIS-administered surveys and evaluations

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[32]FSIS uses an indexed measure to drive improvements related to meeting defined process times for hiring, procurement, and IT. In FY 2017, FSIS set an initial baseline for specific components of these processes, and it is conducting additional work on remaining components in FY 2018. **Hiring:** FSIS has assessed and targeted the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)-required time of 80 days, and added assessment of pre-recruit activities, which captures activities prior to submission of the manager's request to fill a position. FSIS is using 131 days as a baseline, which includes the 80 days under OPM hiring guidance. The FSIS target is meeting 131 days or less for 75% of the hiring actions. **IT:** This measure calculates the process times for which development, modernization, and enhancement investments are met for specific projects. The FY 2018 target is 80%. **Procurement:** FSIS is defining this baseline in Q1 FY 2018. Separately, FSIS will also continue to use internal process time metrics for resolving grievances and unfair labor practices complaints as well as preparing and deciding on discipline cases.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): FSIS will focus its FOIA efforts this year on improving customer service through an enhanced FOIA process and continued training of FSIS personnel. This enhanced FOIA process will include making public the types of sampling data FSIS collects, consistent engagement of a broader array of subject matter experts from across FSIS, and enhanced communication with stakeholders. FSIS will also conduct several training sessions with FSIS staff that highlight all employees' responsibilities under FOIA, ensuring knowledge of FSIS processes and requirements, and improving the quality and timeliness of FOIA responses.

Evaluation and Audit: FSIS continues to use enterprise-wide approaches to process and program evaluations, audit recommendations, and other areas to improve how FSIS does business. For example, in FY 2018, the agency plans to conduct at least three new evaluations, several surveys, and other analyses in high-priority areas to help enhance program or process efficacy.

Financial Systems: FSIS will continue work on building or modifying interfaces and automating business processes, increasing analysis capabilities, and gaining efficiencies in transforming complex financial data into practical information. This includes completing several large Department-wide and FSIS-specific projects related to budgeting and financial management, such as the implementation of a new Department-wide relocation tracking and execution system and a major Financial Reporting Improvements Optimization project. The agency will also continue to support the modernization of its export certificate process and industry billing processes.

RESULT 15 — Improve Service Delivery

In parallel with Result 14, this Result focuses on the delivery of high-quality services in a responsive manner—particularly, but not only, in acquisition management, human resources, and IT. FSIS continues to develop and maintain a more robust service standard that is more attuned to individual and organizational needs. In addition, FSIS has emphasized more and better communication across mission and servicing organizations to ensure informational needs are met, mutual accountabilities are clearly known, and outcomes are shared and mutually beneficial.

The agency will leverage progress from FY 2017 activities to enhance customer satisfaction in HR, procurement processes, and IT governance analyses in FY 2017 into FY 2018. In HR, FSIS will utilize the results of the Departmental competency gap assessment for HR specialists to develop approaches to close gaps and thus improve the quality of recruiting and staffing service delivery. Additionally, FSIS will maintain or improve upon its survey results for hiring managers and applicants as provided through the Office of Personnel Management. In IT, FSIS will improve its approval process and customer support procedures to increase customer satisfaction and workforce productivity. For example, FSIS plans to use recent survey results to inform how to make improvements to the customer experience when requesting new hardware or software. It further includes working with FSIS program areas to launch and implement innovative ways to visually display information to support decision making.

In FY 2018, FSIS will analyze data from recent surveys on services within FSIS; these data will inform decisions on potential enhancements and whether the agency may, for example, have sufficient demand to develop and offer courses on specific skills within FSIS, rather than individually or in specific program areas on an ad hoc basis. Further, FSIS will use survey data on employee preferences related to course access and delivery. The agency also gathered new data on employee views of the individual development plan process that may inform decisions on how programs may enhance their processes, as well as several other areas. FSIS will use the survey information to continue to incorporate on-demand, online resource information and customer feedback materials into the IPP Help and new Supervisor Help button to increase customer satisfaction.

Strategic Plan Measure and FY 2018 Target

- 60% satisfaction with key FSIS services (3.2.2.1)

FY 2018 Annual Plan Measure and Target

- Improve timeliness and thoroughness of IT representative support after escalation subscores for IT desk by 1.5% to 54.5%

RESULT 16 — Enhance Collaboration With Our Partners

FSIS maintains a multitude of partnerships and collaborations, many of which are referenced throughout this Annual Plan. The information below represents activities in this area beyond those in Results 1 through 15, especially those related to foodborne illness surveillance and monitoring, interagency data and analysis coordination, and additional scientific activities.

Foodborne Illness Surveillance and Monitoring

PulseNet: Continue to engage and participate in this molecular subtyping network through data sharing, participation in meetings and trainings (both as trainees and serving as faculty), and network enhancements (software validations and multi-agency pilot projects). FSIS will continue collaborations with public health partners at CDC through annual in-person visits with PulseNet and NARMS staffs to exchange ideas and knowledge concerning technologies and public health concerns.

Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet): Continue engagement in the recently launched multi-year FoodNet Population Survey to more precisely estimate the burden of acute diarrheal illness, to describe the frequency of important exposures, and to assess diarrheal illness, healthcare-seeking behaviors, and food consumption and handling practices. When the survey is completed, FSIS will use the data to assess consumer behavior related to key food safety steps and engage with partner foodborne illness outbreak investigators using the data to explore potential sources of infection.

Partnership for Food Protection (PFP):[33] Continue involvement in PFP's Surveillance, Response, and Post-response workgroups in FY 2018 in working on best practices and new and ongoing deliverables.

Interagency Data and Risk Analysis Coordination

Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC): In FY 2018, FSIS will chair the Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration, as well as continue to actively participate in the IFSAC Steering Committee and Technical Work Group. This includes work on ongoing projects to incorporate multi-ingredient foods into foodborne illness attribution estimates; new projects using WGS to estimate *Salmonella Enteritidis* attribution; hosting technical webinars; and publishing work on harmonized attribution estimates in peer-reviewed journals and on the IFSAC website.

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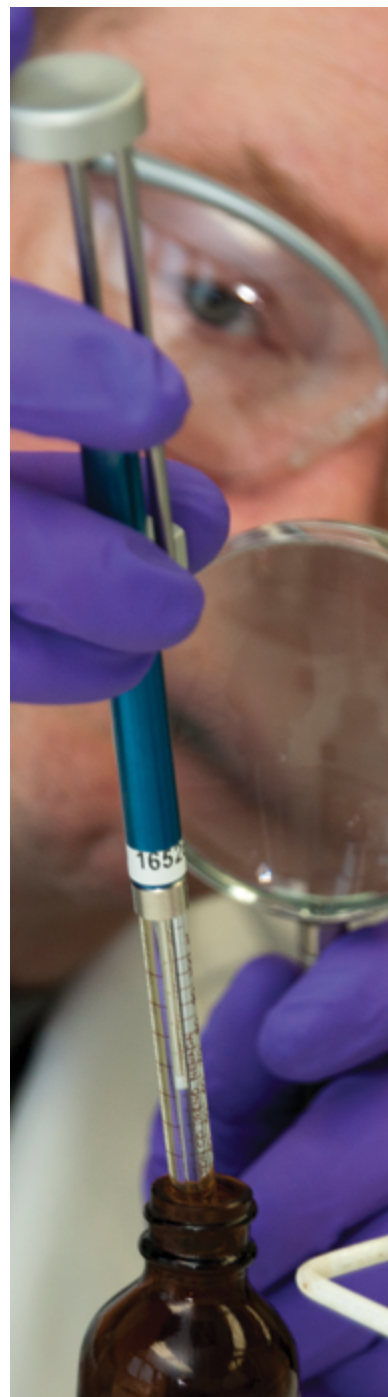
[33]The Partnership for Food Protection (PFP) is a group of professionals from Federal, State, and local governments with roles in protecting the food supply and public health. PFP is the structure used to coordinate representatives with expertise in numerous specialties—food, feed, epidemiology, laboratory, animal health, environment, and public health—to integrate activities in the food safety system. PFP is led by a Governing Council of members from Federal, State, and local agencies, for which FSIS has a non-voting representative; Governing Council is responsible for oversight and management of the overall Partnership.

Interagency Risk Assessment Consortium (IRAC): In FY 2018, FSIS will continue to co-chair the Interagency Risk Assessment Consortium Policy Council with FDA, providing leadership IRAC decision making and governance among 22 Federal agencies and sub-agencies. FSIS will also actively participate in the IRAC Technical Committee to strengthen cross-agency coordination and communication with the sharing of information, data, modeling, and tools to support national assessments of existing and emerging food safety risks and exposure to foodborne hazards. In FY 2018, FSIS' primary focus will be to further working group efforts to advance the conduct of food safety risk assessments through the application of whole genome sequence data.

Interagency Collaboration on Genomics for Food and Feed Safety (Gen-FS):[34] In FY 2018, FSIS will continue to engage Gen-FS' shared vision to further strengthen coordination, data leveraging, and harmonization of activities across partners, and formalize the most current Gen-FS charter.

Additional Scientific Activities

FSIS Research Priorities: FSIS reviews and updates its Research Priorities annually. Recent updates focus on humane handling, allergens, and foodborne outbreaks associated with rotisserie chicken and roaster swine. In FY 2018, these updates will be communicated to USDA ARS and USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture as well as government, academic, and industry food safety researchers. These efforts facilitate research that provides a science-based foundation for FSIS policy development and implementation. In addition, FSIS will explore options to collaborate with food safety research partners to develop multiple species identification methodology into a single analytical platform.

Advisory Committees: In FY 2018, FSIS will act in accordance with direction from USDA in continuing to lead the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods with FDA, CDC, and the U.S. Departments of Commerce and Defense, and to provide administrative staff support to committee and subcommittee meetings. FSIS will similarly act as directed by the Department on leading and providing administrative support for the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection.

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[34]Gen-FS is an interagency group with agency leaders from FDA, CDC, FSIS, ARS, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and the National Center for Biotechnology Information at the National Institutes of Health, with the primary function to coordinate, strengthen, and lead U.S. WGS efforts among Federal and State partners and further improve public health. The group works on crosscutting priorities for molecular sequencing of foodborne and other zoonotic pathogens causing human illness—for data collection and analysis and for the use of these data in support of surveillance and outbreak investigation activities.

Notes

Notes

FSIS CORE VALUES

ACCOUNTABLE
FSIS holds itself accountable in fulfilling its regulatory
mission and in serving the public interest.

COLLABORATIVE
FSIS actively promotes and encourages collaboration
within our agency and with our partners to prevent
illness and protect public health.

EMPOWERED
FSIS employees are empowered with the necessary
training, tools, and approaches they need to make and
carry out informed decisions that protect public health
and promote food safety.

SOLUTIONS-ORIENTED
FSIS is committed to deploying effective,
evidence-based solutions to ensure that the Nation's
food supply is safe.

November 2017