Food Safety and Inspection Service
Protecting Public Health and Preventing Foodborne Illness
Thank you for your interest in learning how to complete the Self-Reporting Tool, or SRT, for initial, reinstatement, and ongoing equivalence. In this presentation I will first explain what the SRT is. Then I’ll discuss recent improvements to the SRT. I’ll next discuss how to complete and update the SRT. Following that, I’ll discuss the Food Safety and Inspection Service’s (FSIS) procedures for translating submitted SRT responses, programs, or supporting documentation into English and how it affects the review time. Next, I’ll walk through how to become e-authenticated and gain access to the Public Health Information System (PHIS). Finally, I’ll show you how to submit the SRT through PHIS.
For countries that have not exported meat, poultry, or egg products to the United States (US) before, you are probably wondering what the SRT is.
The SRT is a questionnaire that provides an organized means for the country’s government to demonstrate that its inspection system achieves an equivalent level of protection.

The SRT is a questionnaire that provides an organized means for the country’s government, or Central Competent Authority (CCA), to demonstrate that its inspection system achieves an equivalent level of public health protection as applied domestically in the US. The CCA is the country’s national government authority that is responsible for ensuring the safety and truthful labeling of the food supply. The CCA is expected to answer all component questions in the SRT in order for an effective determination of equivalence.
The SRT is arranged into six components that define a food safety inspection system. The six (6) defined components are:

1. Government Oversight (e.g., Organization and Administration)
2. Government Statutory Authority and Food Safety and Other Consumer Protection Regulations (e.g., Inspection System Operation, Product Standards and Labeling, and Humane Handling)
3. Government Sanitation
4. Government Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System
5. Government Chemical Residues Testing Programs
6. Government Microbiological Testing Programs

The questions under these six components are called component questions. The component questions are the food safety objective-based criteria that FSIS uses to determine equivalence in the form of a question. The food safety objective-criteria are based off of FSIS’s laws and regulations. This includes FSIS’s Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA), Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA), Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA), Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HSMA), and Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 300 through 590.

The CCA is expected to answer all component questions in the SRT in order for effective determination of equivalence.
How to Complete and Submit the SRT Using PHIS:
What is PHIS?

- A comprehensive data analytics system
- Uses real time data to help identify food safety issues and trends
- FSIS maintains the CCA’s SRT responses, including submitted supporting documentation in PHIS.
- Countries with access to PHIS can review and update SRT responses and supporting documentation 24/7.
Countries wishing to export meat, poultry, or egg products are to send a formal written request to FSIS’s Office of International Coordination (OIC) to start the equivalence determination process. FSIS will then provide the country with a packet of information that includes a copy of the SRT and guidance materials to assist you with the equivalence process.

Countries wishing to reinstate previous equivalence determinations, or that want to change a procedure that the US has previously determined to be equivalent are to send a formal written request to OIC.

Written requests need to include the type of equivalence determination process (for example, initial or reinstatement), as well as the specific commodity (or commodities) the equivalence request is for. For example, reinstatement of equivalence for raw beef, or initial equivalence for heat treated and thermally processed poultry.
As a result of helpful feedback from CCAs, FSIS has significantly improved the current version of the SRT.
Specifically, FSIS significantly reduced the number of questions by revising the questions to focus on the food safety objective-based criteria to be achieved. Food safety objective-based criteria are the standards that FSIS uses to determine whether the country’s food safety inspection system is equivalent. The component questions, that is, the questions listed under the six components in the SRT, are the food safety objective-based criteria that FSIS uses to determine equivalence in the form of a question.

These changes are designed to help countries better understand the food safety objective-based criteria that FSIS uses to evaluate whether the country’s food safety inspection system is equivalent. These changes have also greatly reduced redundancy and make the questions more understandable. The revised SRT is available in PHIS for countries to use.

We will discuss later in this presentation how to gain access to PHIS, and the steps on how to complete and submit the SRT in PHIS.
So, you have sent a formal request to FSIS’s Office of International Coordination, and received a copy of the SRT to complete. How do you respond to the SRT?
The questions under the six components are called component questions. The CCA is expected to answer all component questions in the SRT in order for an effective determination of equivalence. The CCA should provide complete responses to SRT questions. Complete responses include a short narrative, accompanied by supporting documentation, to characterize how a country’s food safety inspection system is implemented. Responses should include references to where in the supporting documentation the answer to the question is found. For example, answers should include the page number, section number, or chapter from the relevant supporting documentation.
The CCA should submit all supporting documentation concerning its food safety inspection system in the SRT.

The following list identifies types of supporting documentation that the CCA should provide in the SRT to show how its food safety inspection system is equivalent to the US domestic food safety inspection system.

- food safety and inspection laws and legislation
- regulations, policies, standards, decisions, annexes, and decrees
- inspection procedures, manuals, and directives
- control programs
- inspection training programs
- mechanisms for documenting compliance/noncompliance
- enforcement and compliance programs
To submit the SRT with all applicable programs and supporting documentation, the CCA can either use the Microsoft Word version of the SRT or upload the information into the web-based PHIS. FSIS encourages countries to submit the information through PHIS by inserting the responses directly. If the Microsoft Word version is submitted to FSIS, FSIS then extracts the information and places it into an SRT in PHIS. Consequently, this extra handling may contribute to added error or missing information. In addition, to extract and upload the SRT responses and supporting documentation into PHIS, will delay the review process up to a couple of weeks if submitted in English.

The benefits for using PHIS to submit the information includes an expedited SRT review, transparency, and security. To ensure an expedited review of a submitted SRT, particularly an SRT submitted in PHIS, FSIS encourages countries to submit SRT responses and supporting documentation in English.
FSIS acknowledges that most countries’ native language is not English. However, to expedite the equivalence review process, FSIS encourages countries to submit SRT responses and supporting documentation in English through PHIS. If you submit an SRT and supporting documentation in a language in other than English, FSIS will have to have the information translated and then have the country verify that the translations are accurate. This can result in significant delays and possible errors.
The following steps describe the process FSIS follows to ensure that translations are accurate.

1. First, the CCA submits the SRT and documents to FSIS in a language other than English.
2. Next, FSIS sends the SRT and documents for translation into English.
3. Upon receiving the translated SRT and documents, FSIS inserts the English translated SRT responses into the SRT in PHIS.
4. Next, FSIS provides the CCA the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the English translated SRT responses and documents.
5. Finally, the CCA responds to FSIS concerning the accuracy of the translated SRT and documents. If the CCA provides corrections to the translated SRT in a language other than English, FSIS will send the corrections for translation, and the process will start over until the CCA agrees with the translations.

FSIS maintains all countries SRT responses and submitted supporting documentation in PHIS. Through PHIS the CCA will have the opportunity to verify that the translated responses are accurately captured by FSIS in PHIS. For countries that submitted paper SRT
responses, the CCA will be provided an opportunity to verify a paper copy of the English translated SRT responses entered into PHIS. Note that by not communicating the SRT responses in English and by using a paper copy rather than PHIS for inputting SRT information by the CCA, the equivalence review process could be delayed by weeks and possibly months. Importantly, regardless of how the CCA manages the SRT, FSIS relies upon the PHIS English version of the SRT responses when making equivalence decisions. Countries are encouraged to gain access to PHIS in order to ensure completeness of documentation of the SRT.
I’ll next discuss how to become e-authenticated and how to access PHIS which is available 24/7. As I said earlier, FSIS recommends that countries enter their SRT responses and upload documentation into PHIS to expedite the review process. However, even if countries do not enter their SRT responses into PHIS, FSIS relies upon the PHIS SRT responses for its equivalence evaluation. Thus, countries can view the information in PHIS 24/7.
The benefits for using PHIS include an expedited SRT review, transparency, and security. Countries that use PHIS to submit their SRT only need to review and affirm SRT responses or revise certain questions to reflect changes in their inspection system in order meet the annual deadline of May 18th to update the SRT. Also, participating countries will be able to log into PHIS at any time to view their SRT and its status.

Countries that do not already have access to PHIS and level 2 eAuthentication credentialing need to complete the following steps in order to start using PHIS to complete the SRT.

It is important to understand that the level 2 eAuthentication credentialing and PHIS enrollment are two separate processes. It is important to note that when the designated CCA official becomes level 2 eAuthentication credentialed, the PHIS enrollment process is not automatically initiated. As these processes are independent from one another, it will take time to complete both of these processes.

To start the level 2 eAuthentication credentialing process, a country first needs to identify a designated CCA official. This identified official will be responsible for entering the SRT responses and uploading supporting documents into PHIS. This official is responsible for first obtaining level 2 eAuthentication credentials, and then requesting to be enrolled in PHIS to complete the SRT.
To begin the process for obtaining level 2 eAuthentication credentialing, the country’s designated CCA official first needs to complete the registration form at [http://1.usa.gov/1rbeFcL](http://1.usa.gov/1rbeFcL).

After completing the form, the designated CCA official will receive a confirmation e-mail. Typically, this happens within an hour after submitting a complete form. The official **MUST** respond to the e-mail within 7 days of receiving the confirmation e-mail.

The designated CCA official will be asked to create a username and password. It is important to remember this username and password in order to log into PHIS.
Once your designated CCA official receives a confirmation e-mail and has responded to the confirmation e-mail, please contact Ms. Monica Marcelli with the Office of Policy and Program Development at monica.marcelli@fsis.usda.gov or 1 (202) 720-0473. Ms. Marcelli will help the designated CCA official to schedule the appointment with the LRA to verify his or her government issued photo identification. If the designated CCA official is based at an embassy in Washington DC, or visiting Washington DC, he or she can meet with the LRA at the United States Department of Agriculture building to complete the eAuthentication credentialing process. If the designated CCA official is not in the US, FSIS can make arrangements to complete the credentialing process while in country.

If your designated CCA official does not receive a confirmation e-mail within 24 hours after submitting the complete registration form, please contact Ms. Marcelli.
Once your designated CCA official receives an e-mail confirming his or her level 2 e-Authentication credentials, he or she is now able to enroll in PHIS. To begin the PHIS enrollment process, open a web browser and go to https://phis.fsis.usda.gov. The eAuthentication login page will appear. Enter your level 2 eAuthentication username and password that the designated CCA official created while completing the level 2 eAuthentication form.
On the Welcome to the FSIS Enrollment Application page, click **Submit Enrollment Request**.
On the FSIS Enrollment Request Wizard (Step 1) page, click **Next**.
On the FSIS Enrollment Request Wizard (Step 2) page, for the Account Type field, select Foreign Country from the drop-down list and click Next.
On the FSIS Enrollment Request Wizard (Step 3) page, for the Role field, select Central Competent Authority from the drop-down list and click Next.
On the FSIS Enrollment Request Wizard (Step 4) page, for the Country field, select your country from the drop-down list and click **Next**.
On the FSIS Enrollment Request Wizard (Step 5) page, complete any of the optional fields and click Next.
On the FSIS Enrollment Request Wizard (Step 6) page, for the Comments field, type any additional information and click Next.
Once you have completed the Enrollment Request Wizard, steps 1 through 6, you are taken to an Enrollment Request Summary page. Review the information. If you need to edit the information, click Previous until you get to the desired page and edit the information. Otherwise, click Finish and then click Logout eAuth.

After you have submitted your enrollment request for PHIS, it will be reviewed by FSIS. You will receive a confirmation e-mail once your request has been approved. This typically happens within an hour. Upon receiving your confirmation e-mail, you can log in and begin using PHIS at https://phis.fsis.usda.gov.

If you do not receive a confirmation e-mail 24 hours after submitting your request, please contact Ms. Marcelli for assistance.
Please check junk e-mail for confirmation e-mails regarding level 2 eAuthentication credentialing and PHIS enrollment.

Log into PHIS at least every 60 days to prevent your account from being disabled. If your designated CCA official’s PHIS account becomes disabled, he or she must make sure that his or her level 2 eAuthentication password is up-to-date, and then contact Ms. Marcelli for further assistance.

For designated CCA officials that are enrolled in PHIS, FSIS will send reminder e-mails to log into PHIS. For security reasons, eAuthentication will occasionally prompt you to change your password. If it is time to change your password, the system will prompt you to change your password.

Failure to log into PHIS at least annually may result in loss of level 2 eAuthentication credentials. If the designated CCA official loses their level 2 eAuthentication credentials, they will need to complete the level 2 eAuthentication registration process again.

If the designated CCA official is not able to log into PHIS because he or she has locked the level 2 eAuthentication account by trying to enter his or her password too many times, please contact the eAuthentication Help Desk at 1-800-457-3642, and select Option 1 or e-mail eAuthHelpDesk@ftc.usda.gov. Your designated official may be prompted to answer security questions that he or she set up while completing the eAuthentication registration form.
Lastly, the USDA does not permit sharing accounts or passwords.
Now that you (meaning the designated CCA official) have successfully received level 2 eAuthentication credentialing and are enrolled in PHIS, you can now log into PHIS and start to complete the SRT.
To log into PHIS, open a web browser and go to https://phis.fsis.usda.gov. Log into PHIS with your Level 2 eAuthentication user ID and password that you created while completing the level 2 eAuthentication registration form.
Once you're logged into PHIS, the first page you see is the Homepage. I’ll refer to this as your Dashboard.
Your dashboard contains a menu on the left side of the page and status notifications in the center. All designated officials are to have a PHIS user role of a Central Competent Authority. My Dashboard displays a history of all SRT Notifications for initial, or ongoing SRTs.

PHIS tracks the status of each country’s SRT at the following points:

- **Sent Request** – FSIS has created a new version of an SRT for a country, but you have not made any edits yet.
- **With Country** – You have opened the SRT and answered at least one question or uploaded at least one document.
- **Submitted** – You have clicked Submit, but FSIS has not started the review process. You can continue to edit your SRT or upload additional documents during this phase.
- **Under Review** – FSIS has started reviewing the SRT. You can continue to edit your SRT or upload additional documents during this phase.
- **Under Review-Locked** – FSIS is reviewing the SRT and has locked the SRT. When an SRT is locked, you cannot make any changes to the SRT.
- **Archived** – FSIS has completed its review of the SRT and has archived the SRT. After an SRT is archived, you can no longer make any changes to the SRT.

All new status notifications are in bold. Once you have read a notification, you can mark it with a check mark. At that point, the status notification will no longer be in bold, so you can differentiate between read and unread notifications. Notifications appear on your
dashboard for **180 days** before they are removed.

**NOTE:** Blurred items on example screen shots are done to protect private information and will not appear when you view PHIS.
Next I will discuss how to respond to the SRT questions using PHIS.
Once FSIS receives a country’s formal written initial equivalence request, an SRT will be generated in PHIS. FSIS will notify the country after the SRT has been created in PHIS.

Countries that already have equivalence for a specific commodity and are either wishing to update their SRT information or requesting initial equivalence for another commodity are to verify that the responses and the selected supporting documents in PHIS for the specific SRT questions are correct. If the responses or supporting documents no longer reflect the country’s current food safety inspection system practices, then the country needs to update the responses and supporting documents.

To answer SRT questions, from the left menu, select SRT Survey.
Clicking SRT Survey from your Dashboard (Homepage), you are brought to the SRT Survey page.

Select the info icon for each SRT to add commodity specific information.

Select the view icon for each SRT to complete or make changes to the SRT questions.
When the **info icon** is selected, the **SRT Information** window appears. Here you are to provide information related to the products and process categories relevant to the selected SRT.

To begin, **select products to be exported** and **select process categories** applicable to the SRT and add **Additional Product Description**, if necessary. For more information about the process categories and types of meat, poultry, or egg products that would fall under each process category, please review the **Product Categorization** guide which can be found on FSIS’s website at [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/abbf595d-7fc7-4170-b7be-37f812882388/Product-Categorization.pdf?MOD=AJPERES](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/abbf595d-7fc7-4170-b7be-37f812882388/Product-Categorization.pdf?MOD=AJPERES).

If information needs to be added or changed, do so and click **Save**. If you do not need to make any changes, click the **X** button in the top right corner and go to the next step. Clicking **Save** brings you back to the **SRT Survey** page.

**NOTE:** The options on this page vary based on the selected inspection system (meat, poultry, or egg products).
When you select the view icon for an SRT, the SRT Survey Details page appears.
The SRT Survey Details page is a table of contents for the SRT. Expand the survey tree until you find the question you want to answer.

The survey tree is organized by the Equivalence Component Level (Government Oversight, Government Statutory Authority and Food Safety and Other Consumer Protection Regulations, Government Sanitation, Government Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems, Government Chemical Residues Testing Programs, and Government Microbiological Testing Programs). Within each component is the Equivalence Criteria Level that contains instructions on whether the SRT questions within that component are required or voluntary and the SRT Question Level. The SRT Question Level includes the questions that contain the criteria FSIS uses to evaluate the equivalence of a country’s SRT response. Pictured here is an example of an expanded survey tree with all the levels expanded and the questions visible.

Answered SRT questions will display a green checked circle next to Select in front of the question. Click Select next to the SRT question that you want to answer, review, or update.
Scroll down to the Answer section and answer the question.

**NOTE:** The system is only able to save responses in languages with a letter-based alphabet. At this time, the system is not able to save responses in languages that use a symbol-based script.

To respond to an SRT question in a language other than English, you need to reference a word or PDF document. I will discuss later how to upload and reference documentation. If you intend to reference a document that contains your SRT question response, please type in the textbox in English “See attached response.”
There are two categories of questions:

1. Required questions are marked with a red asterisk (*). If left unanswered, the system will not go to the next page until you answer all the required questions on the page.
2. Level of Advancement (LOA) are optional questions and are marked with the phrase “This is a scoreable question. It is an optional question. Select all that apply.”

Although these LOA questions are voluntary, a complete response by the CCA to these questions provides FSIS with more context as to how the design of the country’s inspection system functions beyond the minimum expectations to ensure food safety.
If you try to move onto the next page in the SRT without answering all required SRT questions, an error message appears.
To return to a specific question at a later time, select the Mark for Review checkbox. For required questions, Mark for Review must have something entered into the text box in order to move to the next page of the SRT. See example placeholder.

If you want to jump to the top of the page, select ↑Top.
At the top of each SRT questionnaire page is the following:

**Questionnaire** – the SRT Questionnaire version.
**Document** – a system generated document title.
**Status** – a progress tracker that identifies the percentage of SRT questions that have been responded to.
**Started on** – the date when the SRT was started (meaning when FSIS assigned the SRT to the country).
**Completed on** – the date when the SRT was completed (meaning submitted in PHIS).
Once you are in the SRT survey, there are several different ways to navigate through the SRT survey. At the bottom of each SRT survey page, the following navigation options appear.

Click **Next** to go the next page of the SRT questionnaire. Clicking Next moves you to the next page in the survey and saves your answers on the current page.

Click **Previous** to move to the previous page.

Click the blue arrows to go to either the very first page, or the last page of the SRT with unanswered SRT questions.

Type in a page number in the designated **Page No.** box, then click **Go** to jump to a specific page in the SRT questionnaire.

Click the pdf **Reports** symbol to view a pdf copy of the SRT questionnaire and the populated responses to each SRT question that you have completed thus far.

Click **Cancel**, then **SRT Import** on the left side to return to the FSIS equivalence component and question survey tree.

When your are ready to exit, click **Save & Close** to save your SRT question responses and return to the Home page.
If you clicked the pdf Reports symbol to view a pdf copy of the SRT questionnaire, this page appears. To return to the SRT Questionnaire, click Go Back to Questionnaire at the bottom left corner of the page.
When you click **Cancel** or **Submit** your SRT questionnaire, this page appears.

To return to the SRT questionnaire that you were working on, click **Requested Questionnaire**.

To view and open “in-progress” SRT questionnaires (meaning SRT questionnaires that have not been submitted for review), click **My Questionnaires**.

To return to the SRT questionnaire equivalence component and question survey tree that you were currently working on, click **SRT Import**.

To return to your homepage, click on **FSIS Dashboard**.

All in-progress SRT questionnaires are listed in the center of your screen under **My In-Progress Questionnaires**. To access the first page of an In-Progress SRT questionnaire, select **Open** on the right hand side.
A complete response to an SRT question should reference programs and supporting documentation. If a country does not provide all relevant programs and supporting documentation in its SRT submission, the review process takes longer. To expedite the review process, it is important that the country upload all programs and supporting documentation into PHIS and reference the supporting documentation as part of its answer to the relevant SRT question. The following steps demonstrate how to upload and reference programs and supporting documentation.
You’ll first need to upload programs and supporting documentation in order to be able to reference them as part of your answer to an SRT question. To upload programs and supporting documentation, select **Documents** located on the left side on your dashboard.
This brings you to the **Country Documents** page. To add a document, preferably in Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, or pdf, click **Add Attachment**.

From this page, you can also download, view, or delete listed documents on the **Country Documents** page by selecting either the **download** icon or **trash can** icon next to the document.

**NOTE**: Example screen shots are intentionally blurred to protect private information. Screens will not appear blurry when you view PHIS.
To add a document, scroll to the bottom of the page. In the File Name field, click Browse.

Locate the file you want to upload and click Open.

For the Document Title field, type a meaningful title.

Click Upload. It may take a few minutes for the document to upload. The page refreshes with the newly attached file in the grid. If the document does not appear after the page finishes loading, click Refresh and the document should appear.

If a document does not appear after clicking Upload, or you receive an error message, the file may be too large. Therefore, you may need to break up files over 5 MB into smaller files to be able to upload them into PHIS.
After you have uploaded all documents, click on SRT Survey on the left to return to the SRT. You’re now ready for the second step, add a reference to the supporting documentation.
This brings you to the SRT Survey page. Select the View icon next to the SRT that you want to add, update, or remove references to programs and supporting documentation.
Clicking the View icon brings you to the SRT Survey Details page. Expand the survey tree until you find the question you want to add, update, or remove referenced programs and supporting documentation. Then click Select to go to that specific question in the SRT.
After your question loads, click **Add Reference** below the answer field. A grid appears with a list of all uploaded programs and supporting documents.
Locate the document that you wish to reference.
Next, if applicable, select a **Category** that best describes the associated document.

**NOTE:** Countries can only add categories to documents that are referenced to an SRT question.
After clicking **Select**, the grid disappears and the Questionnaire page refreshes with the document appearing in the reference grid. The bookmark name for a selected bookmark appears after the file name. The category, if selected, appears in parentheses to the right of the file name in the grid.

To delete a referenced document, click the red X next to the document from this grid. This does not remove the document from PHIS. This action only deletes the reference between the document and that specific question.
After you have responded to each question and referenced all relevant programs and supporting documentation in the SRT, you are now ready to submit the SRT to FSIS for review.
Navigate to the last page of questions in the SRT questionnaire and click Next.

If you have marked questions for review, PHIS displays the Questions Marked for Review page with a grid of all the questions that were marked for review. If you do not have any questions marked for review, proceed.
To review a question, click **Review** in the far right column. PHIS opens the SRT on the page that contains the question under review.

Review your answer and make any necessary changes. Then uncheck the **Mark for Review** checkbox and click **Next**. PHIS opens the SRT at the next question that was marked for review. Repeat these steps until all checkmarks have been removed.

If you do not wish to review checked **Mark for Review** questions, then click **Remove All Marks** on this page.

After you have addressed all questions marked for review, click **Continue**.
On the Submit Questionnaire page, click Submit.
Congratulations! You have successfully submitted the SRT in PHIS. At this point, the SRT is submitted to FSIS for review. Please notify OIC after you have submitted the SRT. You can monitor the status notification changes made to your SRT during the review process on your dashboard.

Clicking **Submit** brings you to the **My Questionnaires** page.
How to Complete and Submit the SRT Using PHIS:
How to Submit the SRT in PHIS
Key Points

Key Points

- PHIS is a live system, and times out after 30 minutes of no use. This means that you need to save your responses frequently.

- To save responses, click Next, or Save and Close.

- All questions with a (*) need a response.

- First, upload programs and supporting documents to the Documents tab. Then, for each relevant question, Select applicable programs and supporting documents.
Countries are to contact FSIS's Office of International Coordination for:

1. All questions and requests for technical assistance,
2. To submit formal equivalence requests,
3. To submit a paper copy of an SRT and supporting documentation for review, or
4. To notify FSIS that an SRT was submitted in PHIS.
How to Complete and Submit the SRT Using PHIS: Questions