



# Food Safety and Inspection Service **STRATEGIC PLAN** 2023-2026





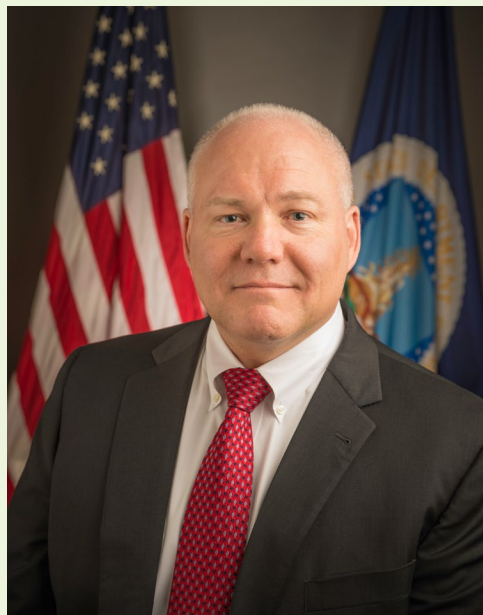


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## MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR



I am proud to introduce the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) 2023–2026 Strategic Plan. This plan expands upon the great progress FSIS has made over the past 5 years and continues to emphasize the use of science and data to implement advanced and innovative approaches to food safety. As the public health regulatory agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), FSIS is responsible for ensuring the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products, and thereby reducing foodborne illness linked to FSIS-regulated products. Our employees work hard every day to conduct a broad range of food safety activities to achieve FSIS' vision that everyone's food is safe.

During the past 5 years, the Agency has made remarkable strides in optimizing our inspection systems. Not only did we further the implementation of new poultry inspection procedures, but we also finalized rules to innovate swine slaughter inspection and update egg products inspection, plus, we enhanced labeling evaluation and approval procedures. We also implemented

inspection in establishments that process Siluriformes. Collectively, these actions allow for more efficient and effective inspection of meat, poultry, and egg products. Challenges from the coronavirus pandemic that began in 2020 highlight how important our employees' work is to ensure the safety of our Nation's food supply. Throughout the pandemic, FSIS has prioritized employee safety, and FSIS employees continue to rise to the challenges posed by the pandemic, demonstrating dedication, ingenuity, and resiliency.

Our achievements have been guided by science, as we made data-driven improvements to sample collection, pathogen testing, and food safety education. FSIS also invested in technology as we expanded the Public Health Information System (PHIS), upgraded information technology (IT) infrastructure at FSIS laboratories, and equipped field personnel with electronic devices.

As we step into the next 4 years, our strategic goals will continue to focus on reducing illness from meat, poultry, and egg products, further enhancing our inspection systems and ensuring compliance with food safety regulation. In particular, the Agency is currently focused on retooling our strategy to more effectively reduce *Salmonella* illnesses attributable to poultry; guided by public health impact, we will consider targeting other pathogen-product pairs. FSIS will continue to use data to inform decisions, regulations, policies, outreach, and education materials, while prioritizing data sharing and transparency. We look forward to strengthening ongoing collaboration with our many partners to enhance and promote food safety. Finally, we will continue to focus on hiring qualified and talented individuals, as well as developing and retaining our current employees. Recruitment and retention for all positions will remain a high priority, and we will ensure that our employees have the tools and training they need to perform their jobs safely and effectively in a diverse and inclusive environment that is free from discrimination and harassment.

The qualities FSIS employees demonstrated during the pandemic will drive us forward over the next 4 years and move us toward the goals we lay out in this strategic plan, and toward our vision that everyone's food is safe.

Sincerely,

Paul Kiecker

## ACRONYMS

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AMS	Agricultural Marketing Service
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
APHL	Association of Public Health Laboratories
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
BIEC	Border Interagency Executive Council
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CFP	Conference for Food Protection
CIFOR	Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EG	Enterprise Governance
EHS-Net	Environmental Health Specialists Network
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPIA	Egg Products Inspection Act
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FERN	Food Emergency Response Network
FMIA	Federal Meat Inspection Act
FoodNet	Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network
FR	Federal Register
FSIS	Food Safety and Inspection Service
FSA	Food Safety Assessment
FY	Fiscal Year
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
HMSA	Humane Methods of Slaughter Act
HP FSWG	Healthy People Food Safety Workgroup
IAFP	International Association for Food Protection
ICLN	Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks
IFSAC	Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration

IFORC	Interagency Foodborne Outbreak Response Collaboration
INFOSAN	International Food Safety Authorities Network
IRAC	Interagency Risk Assessment Consortium
IT	Information Technology
<i>Lm</i>	<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>
LRN	Laboratory Response Network
MPI	Meat and Poultry Inspection
NACMPI	National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection
NARMS	National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System
NRP	National Residue Program
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PFP	Partnership for Food Protection
PHIS	Public Health Information System
PHRE	Public Health Risk Evaluation
PPIA	Poultry Products Inspection Act
RRT	Rapid Response Team
RTE	Ready-to-Eat
STEC	Shiga Toxin-producing <i>Escherichia coli</i>
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WGS	Whole Genome Sequencing
WTO	World Trade Organization



## INTRODUCTION

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the public health regulatory agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) responsible for ensuring that domestic and imported meat, poultry, and egg products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled. Consistent with its role, FSIS' mission is to protect public health by preventing illness from meat, poultry, and egg products. That mission guides FSIS' actions—from implementing and enforcing the Acts from which it gets its regulatory authority (Box 1), to incorporating data and science into Agency decision making, and to continuously improving its operations to ensure it functions in the most efficient and effective manner. It is through that mission and the actions guided by it that FSIS works toward its vision that everyone's food is safe.

### Statutes Providing FSIS' Regulatory Authority

- Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA)
- Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA)
- Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA)
- Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA)

To provide the direction to fulfill its mission, FSIS identified three strategic goals, each with its outcomes and objectives developed to accomplish these goals (Table 1). The first goal, "Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health," focuses directly on FSIS' public health mission and its activities, including verification, enforcement, investigation, and outreach to prevent and respond to foodborne illnesses linked to the products it regulates, and ensures that a culture of food safety remains at the forefront. The second goal, "Transform Inspection Strategies, Policies, and Scientific Approaches To Improve Public Health," ensures FSIS' activities are designed to improve how the Agency conducts food safety activities. This involves assessing the results of the Agency's verification, enforcement, and other activities and combining those assessments with the best available data and science to develop policies and regulations that best protect the public's health. The third goal, "Achieve Operational Excellence," recognizes that having a strong foundation through internal FSIS functions is necessary to provide the support the Agency needs to meet Goals 1 and 2. This includes focusing on all internal services from information technology (IT) to financial management; having an empowered, diverse, and well-trained workforce; and implementing a strong governance structure.

As a public health agency, FSIS continuously monitors foodborne illnesses using data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In addition, FSIS collects and analyzes over 115,000 microbiological



samples and over 15,000 chemical residue samples each year. The Agency's actions are designed to help ensure that industry decreases contamination from pathogens and chemicals. In addition to using those sampling results at the individual establishment level, the Agency monitors the sampling results at a national level to provide an indication of progress in reducing food-safety hazards associated with FSIS-regulated products.

FSIS ensures food safety through the authorities of the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA),<sup>1</sup> the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA),<sup>2</sup> and the Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA),<sup>3</sup> as well as humane animal handling through the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA).<sup>4</sup> To carry out these congressional mandates, FSIS employs approximately 9,000 full-time employees, including a frontline workforce in federally regulated establishments, FSIS laboratories, and in-commerce facilities nationwide. FSIS personnel possess diverse skill sets and competencies that complement one another. FSIS has a large number of food and consumer safety inspectors; public health veterinarians; enforcement, investigations, and analysis officers; chemists, microbiologists, and epidemiologists; and a range of other public health professionals. In addition, FSIS has personnel skilled and trained in policy development; data, scientific, and lab analysis; and a range of financial, human resources, administrative, investigative, technical, communications, and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) roles, as well as in other functions that support FSIS' food safety and public health mandates and policies.

The strategic goals, outcomes, and objectives set forth in this Fiscal Year (FY) 2023–2026 Strategic Plan (hereafter referred to as the Plan or Strategic Plan) provide an integrated framework for understanding how FSIS is fulfilling the Agency's mission and addressing 21st century public health challenges.

## FSIS Vision

Everyone's food is safe.

## FSIS Mission

Protect public health by preventing illness from meat, poultry, and egg products.

The FSIS Vision and Mission—underpinned by FSIS' Core Values: *Accountable, Collaborative, Empowered, and Solutions-Oriented*—were designed to move the Agency closer to accomplishing its goals and the associated outcomes and objectives presented on the next page.

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<sup>1</sup>Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA, P.L. 90-492).

<sup>2</sup>Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA, P.L. 90-492).

<sup>3</sup>Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA, P.L. 91-597).

<sup>4</sup>Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA, P.L. 85-765).

## VISION

Everyone's food is safe.

## MISSION

Protect public health by preventing illness from meat, poultry, and egg products.

## 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.

GOAL	1 Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health	2 Transform Inspection Strategies, Policies, and Scientific Approaches To Improve Public Health	3 Achieve Operational Excellence
OUTCOME	1.1: Prevent Adulteration and Misbranding  1.2: Limit Illness From FSIS-Regulated Products	2.1: Improve Food Safety Through the Adoption of Innovative Approaches and Technologies  2.2: Optimize Data Use at Every Level of Agency Decision Making	3.1: Sustain and Advance an Adaptable, High-Performing and Engaged Workforce  3.2: Optimize Service Delivery
OBJECTIVE	1.1.1: Strengthen Compliance With Food Safety Statutes and Regulations 1.1.2: Achieve Pathogen Reduction 1.1.3: Assure Labeling Is Truthful and Not Misleading  1.2.1: Strengthen Food Safety Practices Throughout the Supply Chain 1.2.2: Enhance Collaborative Response to Foodborne Illness Outbreaks and Other Public Health Incidents 1.2.3: Raise Consumer Awareness of Food Safety	2.1.1: Advance and Adopt Innovative Regulatory Policies and Inspection Verification Procedures 2.1.2: Foster the Adoption of Advanced Scientific Techniques  2.2.1: Improve the Integrity, Accessibility, and Utility of Data 2.2.2: Strengthen Data Analyses and Evaluations 2.2.3: Optimize the Design of Sampling Programs for Decision Making	3.1.1: Expand Recruitment and Increase Retention for Mission-Critical Positions 3.1.2: Enhance Employee Training and Professional Development 3.1.3: Ensure Equal Opportunity, Civil Rights, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Work Environment  3.2.1: Enhance Effectiveness and Efficiency of Key Business Processes 3.2.2: Improve Customer Service 3.2.3: Transform Business Infrastructure and Information Technology



## PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION

### Plan Development

To develop this Strategic Plan, FSIS articulated its vision, mission, and shared core values as the foundation from which to align its goals, outcomes, and objectives. The Agency considered internal and external stakeholder partnerships and collaborations during the development of this Strategic Plan to ensure applicable initiatives were included. FSIS then identified and incorporated relevant data-driven performance measures to address current and emerging food safety concerns and operational challenges.

### Implementation

FSIS will implement this Strategic Plan by using its performance management framework, which includes monitoring and reporting processes supported by the Agency's enterprise governance (EG) process. FSIS fosters a performance-based environment 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.

FSIS uses its EG process to present public health and other mission-related initiatives to executive leadership—particularly those topics that cut across programs and/or have Agency-wide implications—for the purpose of collaborative decision making and implementation. All new investments, major projects, proposed policy initiatives, and major changes to existing policies go through the EG process. Three governance boards regularly meet to deliberate and, along with their associated workgroups and committees, provide key analysis, evaluation, and recommendations regarding program enhancements to support data-driven decision making.

FSIS' annual plans will directly align with this Strategic Plan and highlight activities the Agency intends to conduct in a given year. FSIS will continue to align its annual executive and employee performance plans to strategic and annual plan activities to ensure accountability.



## Performance Tracking and Monitoring

FSIS is committed to a performance-based environment and will track progress on a regular basis. To ensure transparency, FSIS executives and senior staff will monitor progress and enable timely and necessary adjustments to objectives, activities, or approaches, to achieve FSIS' goals and maximize outcomes. The Agency will adjust strategies, as necessary, to achieve desired outcomes and ensure a scientific approach to safe food. Linking strategic initiatives, metrics, and desired outcomes to data and analytics will foster a more productive, results-driven environment.

## Evaluation

FSIS is committed to evaluating programs, processes, and policies to verify that programs are working as intended, policies are relevant, and that the Agency is maximizing efficiency. FSIS' EG process ensures that the changes and improvements to its programs, processes, and policies are working and using the best available data on which to make decisions.

As part of the EG process, FSIS evaluation staff will standardize Agency evaluations to ensure that they are relevant, use sound methodology, and that findings, conclusions, and recommendations are considered when developing future action plans.

## Enterprise Risk Management

The Agency will continue to focus on compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Circular No. A-123, [\*Management's Responsibility for Enterprise Risk Management and Internal Control\*](#), to better inform decisions regarding Agency performance and provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of FSIS' strategic objectives. Through the EG process, FSIS will ensure that the Enterprise Risk Management Program is implemented in compliance with Office of Management and Budget guidelines.



## GOAL 1: PREVENT FOODBORNE ILLNESS AND PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH

FSIS' first strategic goal, “**Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health**,” and its associated outcomes and objectives emphasize the commitment of the Agency and its employees to FSIS' public health regulatory mission: ensuring that only safe and wholesome meat, poultry, and egg products reach consumers, and that product labeling is truthful and not misleading. By pursuing this mission, the Agency will reduce the number of preventable foodborne illnesses linked to FSIS-regulated foods. Thousands of FSIS inspectors across the United States work every day to achieve this goal by carrying out tasks to verify that imported and domestically produced products comply with applicable U.S. food safety regulatory requirements.

To enhance the effectiveness of these efforts, FSIS strives to ensure that:

- its inspection activities are informed by data and science;
- it communicates effectively with its domestic and foreign food safety partners;
- it enhances the effectiveness and usefulness of its sampling programs; and
- it more effectively communicates important information to consumers.

Specifically, FSIS will:

- Advance a proposed regulatory framework for a new strategy to reduce *Salmonella* infections attributable to poultry. FSIS is considering: (1) requiring that incoming flocks be tested for *Salmonella* before entering an establishment; (2) enhanced establishment process control monitoring and FSIS verification; and (3) an enforceable final product standard. This proposed strategy is aimed at moving the Agency closer to achieving the national target of a 25-percent reduction in *Salmonella* illnesses set by Healthy People 2030 and is expected to be in place by May 2024.
- Strengthen compliance with food safety statutes and regulations by:
  - » Regularly assessing domestic food safety systems to determine how well they are maintaining process control as well as leveraging data from the Public Health Information System (PHIS) to identify patterns and trends in noncompliance with FSIS regulations among establishments; and
  - » Conducting outreach, technical assistance, and information sharing with other countries to improve understanding of FSIS' regulatory requirements and policies. This is to ensure food safety standards for imported products are equivalent to those of domestic products to reduce foodborne infections attributable to FSIS-regulated products, specifically for *Salmonella* illnesses attributable to poultry.

- Improve food safety at in-commerce facilities by using a risk-based approach to target FSIS resources—including resources used for surveillance, investigative, and enforcement activities.
- Enhance response to outbreaks by improving information sharing and collaboration with public health partners during investigations to remove contaminated product more quickly from commerce.
- Sustain progress in food defense by assuring that establishments adopt and incorporate food defense practices into their day-to-day operations, and that Agency personnel and industry are prepared to respond to an act of intentional contamination.
- Increase public awareness of recalls, public health alerts, foodborne illness outbreaks, and consumer adoption of safe food handling practices, by identifying the best approaches to influence behavior and deploying proactive strategies based on behavioral science research.

## Outcome 1.1: Prevent Adulteration and Misbranding

FSIS must continually revise its strategies to better ensure that the Nation's food supply is safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled. FSIS will continue to enhance how these updated inspection systems function to prevent product contamination and misbranding and help ensure that adulterated or misbranded product does not enter commerce. FSIS will continue to protect public health through reducing foodborne illness by:

- Enhancing the effectiveness of in-plant inspection—as well as Public Health Risk Evaluations (PHRE)<sup>5</sup> and food safety assessments (FSA)<sup>6</sup>—in verifying that domestic establishments are effectively implementing food safety programs and process controls and identifying hazards associated with their operations.
- Implementing sampling programs that continue to be effective in assessing how well establishments are addressing food safety hazards.
- Ensuring that FSIS updates labeling regulations and guidance, so meat, poultry, and egg product labels are truthful and not misleading.

### Objective 1.1.1: Strengthen Compliance With Food Safety Statutes and Regulations

FSIS will strive to further improve the effectiveness of its inspection activities. FSIS' PHIS includes data that (1) indicate how well establishments are maintaining their process control and implementing their food safety programs, and (2) highlight aspects of establishments' food safety systems that may require more focused attention. These data are readily available to personnel who conduct in-plant inspections, PHREs, and FSAs to ensure that regulated establishments have developed and implemented food safety systems that prevent food safety hazards from occurring. FSIS will continue to look at this data internally to develop new tools and processes that will help in-plant personnel focus on potential food safety issues.

Additionally, FSIS will continue its outreach efforts focused on small and very small establishments to help ensure they have sound Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems and food safety programs resulting in compliance with the regulations and improved food safety. To assist with outreach, FSIS has developed compliance guidelines focused on small and very small establishments in support of the Small Business Administration's initiative to provide small businesses with compliance assistance under the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act. However, all meat and poultry establishments may

<sup>5</sup>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. 2](#).

<sup>6</sup>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, poultry, or egg products in accordance with FSIS statutory and regulatory requirements. See [FSIS Directive 5100.1, Rev. 4](#).



apply the recommendations in these guidelines, as appropriate. It is important that small and very small establishments have access to a full range of scientific and technical support, and the assistance needed to establish safe and effective HACCP systems. Although large plants can benefit from the information, focusing the guidelines and resources on the needs of small and very small establishments provides them with assistance that may be otherwise unavailable to them.

FSIS enforces Federal laws and Agency regulations to verify the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products, whether produced and consumed domestically or internationally. FSIS-regulated products are imported from more than 35 countries, and FSIS-regulated establishments export U.S. product to over 200 countries worldwide. The Agency must also meet food safety commitments that the United States has made in trade agreements and trade protocols, as well as obligations as members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Codex Alimentarius. FSIS has processes in place to conduct regular equivalence reviews and audits of foreign countries' food safety inspection systems. FSIS also conducts point-of-entry reinspection of all shipments of FSIS-regulated product prior to products entering U.S. commerce.

Over the next 4 years, FSIS plans to continue its outreach activities to facilitate the understanding of FSIS food safety policies, strategies, and import criteria, as well as to facilitate FSIS compliance with foreign countries' import conditions and other international obligations. FSIS has increasingly received requests from foreign governments and organizations to learn more about the United States' inspection system, including regulatory oversight, enforcement, verification, equivalence, and sampling approaches. Such outreach and technical consultations with foreign governments can play an important role in enhancing the safety of imported products, facilitating the equivalence process, and increasing the confidence in the safety of U.S. exports. FSIS continues to strengthen U.S. and international food safety standards and align with increased emphasis on regulatory cooperation efforts by routinely engaging in outreach with domestic audiences, including industry groups, relative to FSIS and foreign food safety requirements. FSIS will continue to proactively conduct outreach through various means such as technical exchanges, meetings with foreign government officials and organizations, and educational seminars.

### **Objective 1.1.2: Achieve Pathogen Reduction**

In FY 2021, the Agency announced its intent to rethink its strategy for driving down *Salmonella* illnesses associated with poultry in the United States. *Salmonella* in poultry remains a significant food safety concern in the United States. More than 1 million consumer *Salmonella* illnesses occur annually, with over 23 percent attributed to poultry consumption. FSIS has initiated several activities to gather data and information necessary to support future action through collaborating extensively with stakeholders (industry, consumer groups, and academia) to develop a "systems-based" approach to *Salmonella* control in poultry with multiple, complementary steps.

Historically, FSIS has relied on pathogen reduction performance standards as one way to assess process control (i.e., that an establishment is producing safe food) at establishments that prepare meat and poultry products. FSIS also collects routine samples at establishments subject to applicable performance standards as well as for other regulatory purposes. These samples are used to assess and categorize each establishment's performance to the standard and prevent foodborne illness.

Once FSIS begins to implement its revised strategy for reducing *Salmonella* illnesses linked to poultry, it plans to reevaluate its approach to controlling other pathogens associated with significant illness, such as *Campylobacter* in poultry.

FSIS has proposed new *Salmonella* performance standards for certain raw pork products. FSIS will continue to determine how best to address *Salmonella* in beef. FSIS remains committed to implementing pathogen reduction initiatives that will have a positive impact on the safety of regulated products and lead to illness reduction.

FSIS is analyzing comments and preparing a final rule related to a Federal Register notice (June 2020) stating intentions to expand non-O157 Shiga Toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) testing to all beef products that are currently sampled for O157:H7 because of outbreaks and to prevent foodborne illness. The Agency continues to prioritize ready-to-eat (RTE) sampling for *Salmonella* and *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*) as they are pathogens of particular concern for RTE products because it is capable of growth at refrigerated temperatures. FSIS has several sampling programs to test for *Lm* in RTE product, including samples taken from food contact surfaces and from non-food contact environmental surfaces in RTE meat and poultry processing establishments.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2026 MEASURE**

- SP-1.1.2.1: Reduction in the proportion of poultry samples with *Salmonella* serotypes commonly associated with human illness (Desired Trend: Down)

### **Objective 1.1.3: Assure Labeling Is Truthful and Not Misleading**

Accurate labeling is critical to ensuring that FSIS-regulated products are wholesome and safe for consumption (e.g., do not contain undeclared allergens). Consumers rely on the information on the label when they purchase FSIS-regulated products and reasonably expect it is truthful and not misleading. If it is not, consumers are not getting what they thought they paid for and competitors who follow labeling rules and guidance will be disadvantaged by those that do not.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2026 MEASURE**

- SP-1.1.3.1: Implement new policies to clarify labeling claims and other labeling information for consumers (Desired Trend: Up)

## **Outcome 1.2: Limit Illness From FSIS-Regulated Products**

FSIS focuses not only on preventing contamination in regulated products but also on acting to limit illnesses when contaminated products leave establishments. When illnesses associated with FSIS-regulated products do occur, the Agency investigates them and quickly focuses on containing related illnesses. When doing so, FSIS relies on its collaboration with public health partners, Federal, State, and local governments, as well as with industry, to identify the contaminated product and quickly ensure that a recall or public health alert is initiated to take contaminated product off the market and out of consumers' kitchens.

### **Objective 1.2.1: Strengthen Food Safety Practices Throughout the Supply Chain**

FSIS conducts extensive investigations, compliance activities, and outreach at in-commerce facilities, such as warehouses, distributors, food transporters, and retail stores and delicatessens. If these activities identify potential issues, the Agency focuses on removing from commerce any adulterated and misbranded meat, poultry, and egg products in these facilities and takes appropriate regulatory action to deter future

food safety violations. FSIS intends to target a larger number of higher risks at in-commerce facilities for surveillance and conduct follow-up investigations, as warranted, to reduce the rate of food safety violations.

FSIS will take steps to further educate the industry on its *Lm* guidelines and associated best practices<sup>7</sup> by making educational materials available. In addition, the Agency plans to expand outreach and education to increase awareness of the final rule on grinding logs, to improve compliance with its requirements. FSIS intends to broaden its reach by partnering with retail trade associations and State regulatory authorities to assist in the distribution of educational materials for both initiatives. FSIS will collaborate with partners and stakeholders to promote food safety in food recovery efforts, continue to develop food safety outreach materials, and reach out to food banks to provide information. FSIS will continue to work with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to recommend changes to the Food Code relevant to meat, poultry, and egg products.

### **Objective 1.2.2: Enhance Collaborative Response to Foodborne Illness Outbreaks and Other Public Health Incidents**

FSIS will enhance the timeliness and quality of information sharing between public health partners; improve the effectiveness of foodborne illness investigations; and reduce the potential for consumer exposure to adulterated products. This collaboration occurs not only when there is pathogenic contamination of food but also in other situations where the public is exposed to a foodborne hazard (e.g., undeclared allergens, intentional contamination, and foreign materials). By leveraging new technologies and improving communication and collaboration with public health partners, FSIS will enhance its capacity to take prompt, effective action toward protecting the public from contaminated products in commerce. Specific actions include the following:

- Annually implement a coordinated plan to ensure there is an established process among partners to conduct outreach activities and effectively collaborate during outbreaks.
- Update web pages to share foodborne illness resources and information on ongoing investigations with public health partners and stakeholders.
- Share appropriate investigative information and lessons learned with partners to strengthen relationships and improve public health response.
- Conduct evaluations to collect feedback from partners to assess trends and identify where improvements are needed to maintain successful partnerships for effective outbreak response. These evaluations will be incorporated as part of FSIS outbreak after-action reviews, which are conducted to identify lessons learned from outbreaks to help prevent future illness and improve outbreak response.

### **Objective 1.2.3: Raise Consumer Awareness of Food Safety**

FSIS' outreach and educational activities extend to consumers. Such efforts can help prevent or reduce foodborne illness. FSIS' strategic communications with the public about Agency actions, including current recalls and dissemination of information that encourages safe food handling practices through a broad range of channels in English and Spanish, can help reduce illness. The Agency will continue to extend and expand its food safety messaging to larger and more diverse audiences. FSIS will continue to use public service announcements, media outreach, events, partnerships, and campaigns that include social media channels to convey food safety information to consumers. Additionally, the Agency will tailor safe food handling messages to consumers and plans to broaden its engagement with key stakeholders to educate the public.

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<sup>7</sup>See FSIS Best Practices Guidance for Controlling *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*) in Retail Delicatessens, June 2015, for more information.





## GOAL 2: TRANSFORM INSPECTION STRATEGIES, POLICIES, AND SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH

For FSIS to achieve its mission to protect public health by preventing illness from meat, poultry, and egg products, it needs to ensure that the decisions it makes and the actions it takes are based on the best, most up-to-date science and data. To that end, FSIS' second strategic goal, **“Transform Inspection Strategies, Policies, and Scientific Approaches To Improve Public Health,”** and its associated outcomes and objectives focus on how this data and science will continue to inform all Agency decisions—from what FSIS inspectors do day-to-day, to how FSIS sampling programs are designed, what methods FSIS laboratories use, and what policies and regulations the Agency implements—to ensure that FSIS' actions are enhancing food safety and thereby improving public health. Specifically, FSIS will:

- Continue to optimize the allocation of inspection resources.
- Update Agency regulations to provide flexibility and facilitate innovation while continuing to ensure the safety and accurate labeling of regulated products.
- Update the Agency's scientific capabilities, including adopting new laboratory detection technologies.
- Evaluate Agency programs, including sampling programs, with the goal of continuous improvement.
- Enhance FSIS' data governance strategy to ensure it continues to serve Agency and stakeholder needs.

### Outcome 2.1: Improve Food Safety Through the Adoption of Innovative Approaches and Technologies

FSIS seeks to adopt innovative approaches to inspection to verify that regulated establishments meet the Agency's requirements and produce safe and accurately labeled products. FSIS continually updates its regulations, policies (and associated implementation instructions to field personnel), and guidance to industry, to ensure these all reflect the latest scientific advancements, support food safety in the most effective and efficient manner, and ultimately reduce illnesses related to FSIS-regulated products.

FSIS continues to evaluate innovative approaches and technologies to improve the Agency's sampling and testing for food safety hazards to make sure the Agency has the best information it needs for decision making. Through laboratory technological advancements, including rapid microbial diagnostics and whole genome sequencing (WGS), FSIS can more efficiently and effectively detect, characterize, and track food safety hazards

in regulated products than it has in the past. In addition, FSIS will collaborate with other organizations on information sharing, as well as scientific and technological developments.

### **Objective 2.1.1: Advance and Adopt Innovative Regulatory Policies and Inspection Verification Procedures**

As part of ongoing efforts to improve inspection and make the best use of inspection resources, FSIS will continue to improve how it allocates resources in inspected establishments. The Agency will engage in several activities to improve both the efficiency and the public health effectiveness of inspection activities. Optimization studies will increase FSIS' understanding of the resources required to accomplish inspection activities. FSIS will also identify and update procedures for allocating inspection resources that will result in swifter responses to changing staffing trends and ensure more effective use of inspection program personnel's time to verify and ensure regulatory compliance. FSIS will identify new methods to provide clear instruction to field supervisors to reduce public health risks in establishments, allocate inspection resources, and lead their teams. Concurrently, FSIS will update and modify PHIS to improve the assignment of tasks based on establishment characteristics, public health considerations, and other relevant criteria.

FSIS will continue its efforts to ensure Agency regulations provide the necessary flexibility, facilitate industry innovations, and require that regulated products be safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled. When appropriate, FSIS will propose more flexibility to industry and eliminate unnecessary requirements when such changes in the regulations will not negatively affect food safety and will not result in misbranded product. In addition, FSIS will continue to evaluate petitions to determine whether they identify changes that should be made in the regulations.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2026 MEASURE**

- SP-2.1.1.1: Increase in estimated health benefits from reduced illnesses based on FSIS policies (Desired Trend: Up)

On an annual basis, FSIS will determine the need for new policies (e.g., Federal Register notices) or instructions that establish new Agency procedures to address food safety hazards. FSIS will continue to provide guidance to industry on the latest available best practices related to food safety and other information that will help industry understand applicable requirements. Each year, FSIS will issue new or updated guidance materials to ensure industry has the most current information on Agency policies or scientific developments.

### **Objective 2.1.2: Foster the Adoption of Advanced Scientific Techniques**

As food production technologies and scientific knowledge advance, FSIS needs to keep abreast of those developments, and ensure its laboratory infrastructure and methods incorporate advancements to best protect public health and accomplish the Agency's food safety mission. FSIS will continue to evaluate and implement new laboratory methods to increase the speed, scope, and accuracy of its laboratory detection technologies. Examples include innovations in microbial characterization techniques, microbial enumeration, expansion of the Agency's IT systems, and upgrades in laboratory facilities. Through these advancements, FSIS will continue to provide FSIS inspectors, public health partners, and other stakeholders with the best available information to reduce food contamination and foodborne illnesses; define and assess risk of a pathogen based on its genetic attributes, which could include virulence factors; and deliver

tailored data and information to improve accuracy of food safety decision making. On an annual basis, FSIS will identify the advanced scientific techniques it intends to implement, based on evaluation of potential changes to increase capability, efficiency, speed, or integrity of sample collection and analysis. Key areas of focus are as follows:

- As microbial characterization technology continues to evolve, FSIS will consider these new technologies that could potentially enhance and complement WGS to use resources more effectively, reduce time to results, and expand policy options. As FSIS adopts these technologies, the Agency will develop communication strategies to educate both internal and external stakeholders on the benefits and applications.
- The regulated industry has made significant advancements with new technologies to update processes and produce new products. Each advancement is potentially associated with new or emerging types of risks. FSIS will continue to update its existing framework for developing policies, supporting laboratory techniques, and furthering scientific expertise to address new food safety risks.
- Third party laboratories generate data that could be useful to Agency decision making, such as State inspection and establishment data. To address this, FSIS will strive to update its IT infrastructure and incorporate results from such sources. Incorporating this data would provide FSIS with the ability to collate information from various sources and provide information more rapidly, which will support more efficient Agency policy, enforcement, and other decision timelines.
- Maintaining the infrastructure at FSIS' three field service laboratories is a major priority. Improvements to these facilities support other mission critical modernization efforts, such as new lab detection methods and technologies, and provide FSIS with greater scientific capacities to perform current and future sampling. Specifically, FSIS will physically relocate the Midwestern Laboratory to a location that will allow for these improvements. FSIS also plans to implement infrastructure improvements within the existing facilities at each of the other two laboratory locations. These projects will keep FSIS on the forefront of technologies and provide the best laboratory capabilities in protecting public health.

## **Outcome 2.2: Optimize Data Use at Every Level of Agency Decision Making**

FSIS relies on science and data to develop well-supported policies and procedures that advance food safety. Over the past 5 years, FSIS has been working to share data with the public that the Agency uses in decision making. FSIS will continue to analyze the data that it collects and share the data that is used in its decision-making process. The Agency will strive to present the data in a way that shows the public how the data was used, and how it will be used to protect public health. In addition, FSIS will use advanced analytics to provide more targeted, near real-time information for both operational and policymaking activities.

During the previous strategic planning period (FY 2017–2021), FSIS began developing frameworks for evaluating various programs and operations. Using previously developed and new frameworks, FSIS will evaluate its programs, including its sampling programs, and improve upon them. Additionally, FSIS will continue to evaluate and improve upon its operations by conducting administrative audits, which will strengthen how FSIS assesses data reliability by focusing on training, creating data validation processes, and quality assurance reviews.

### **Objective 2.2.1: Improve the Integrity, Accessibility, and Utility of Data**

Effective and efficient information flow throughout the Agency is critical to harnessing data for day-to-day work and to answer important questions about programs, policies, and intended outcomes. That effective and efficient information is essential to stakeholder understanding of and confidence in the Agency's actions



and decisions. Therefore, FSIS will focus on enhancing communication of key information and analyses not only among FSIS employees but also with external stakeholders.

Specifically, during this strategic planning cycle, FSIS will focus on enhancing the integrity, accessibility, and utility of FSIS data for internal and external users alike. The Agency will leverage its EG process<sup>8</sup> to prioritize key data quality evaluation recommendations for implementation. FSIS will also harness existing data to conduct data analysis, disseminate results internally, and promote appropriate access to data to the public while protecting privacy, confidentiality, and proprietary interests. Beyond information and data sharing within the Agency, FSIS will create a comprehensive data governance strategy with a focus on developing detailed technical documentation and data files for both public and internal use and will provide a list of annual data postings on its website. Through these actions, the Agency aims to continuously improve data quality and collection. Further, FSIS will enhance personnel and stakeholder abilities to utilize FSIS data, gain a deeper understanding of changing trends in data, and increase the availability of data analyses for policy development.

### **Objective 2.2.2: Strengthen Data Analyses and Evaluations**

FSIS will conduct mission critical evaluations, audits, surveys, and other analyses identified through the governance process to help strengthen Agency actions. Assessing the efficacy of evaluations is critical to ensuring that key stakeholders trust that data are reliable, valid, and accurate, and are willing to adopt the evaluation conclusions and recommendations. FSIS will track evaluation quality based on three primary criteria: design, implementation, and conclusions. In its annual plans, FSIS will discuss changes to the process that will strengthen these criteria.

FSIS conducts administrative audits of individual FSIS office operations and systems to improve efficiency and effectiveness of operations, as well as to ensure compliance with laws, regulations, and Agency objectives. During administrative audits, FSIS will conduct tests of data reliability to ensure that Agency data are sufficient, complete, and reliable to make informed decisions.

### **Objective 2.2.3: Optimize the Design of Sampling Programs for Decision Making**

FSIS will optimize sampling by gaining inspection, laboratory, and other resource efficiencies while continuing to verify that establishments and foreign countries are effectively addressing hazards. To achieve this optimization, FSIS will continue to identify Agency sampling and testing protocols that can be initiated, modified, or discontinued to improve FSIS' ability to verify that establishments and foreign countries meet regulatory requirements and thereby protect public health. FSIS completed a strategic assessment of sampling resources in FY 2019. That assessment provided the foundation and framework that FSIS continues to build upon under this Strategic Plan to ensure that its sampling resources are designed and used in the most efficient and effective manner. FSIS has identified the following key focus areas:

- FSIS will conduct further in-depth assessments of the sampling and testing protocols identified through the [Strategic Assessment of Sampling Resources](#). These assessments will identify product sampling and testing that can be initiated, modified, or discontinued. This multi-year assessment effort's findings will then be used to develop additional strategies to optimize, strengthen, or discontinue specific sampling and testing, thus improving how Agency resources are allocated.
- A comprehensive, product-based review of sampling will help FSIS determine an efficient approach to

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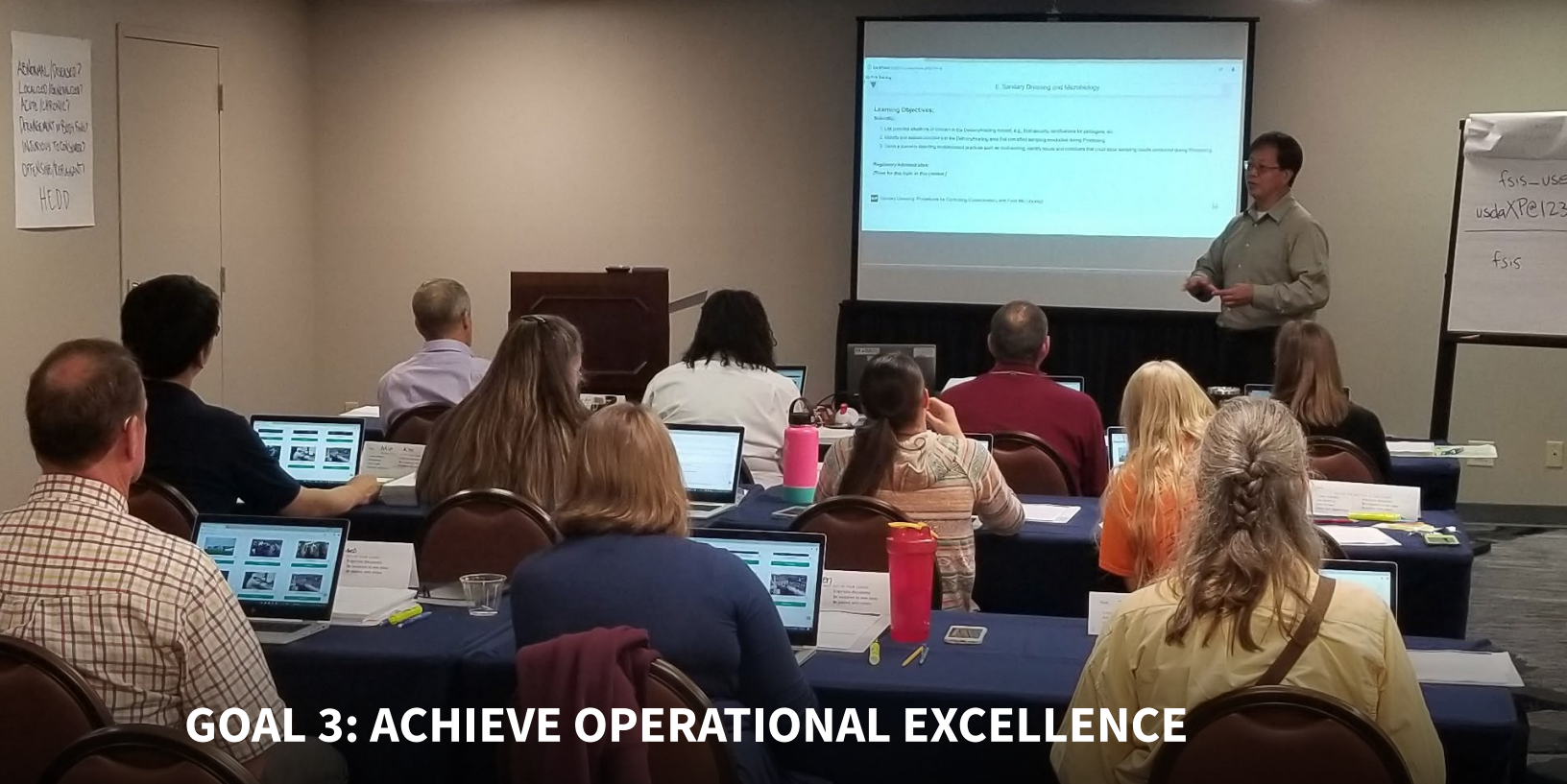
<sup>8</sup>FSIS' EG process is used to review Agency mission-related projects that affect multiple offices. The process involves Agency executives and support staff that meet to move these projects through clearance.

assess or verify FSIS-regulated establishments' HACCP systems' control for hazards, including whether those hazards are microbiological, chemical, or physical in nature. While the previous assessment focused on individual sampling projects, this new assessment will look holistically at all sampling projects in relation to each other to ensure efficiencies are gained and redundant sampling is avoided when verifying establishment controls.

- Understanding hazard control during food production provides FSIS with information on how to continually evolve policies impacting industry controls and FSIS verification. Since implementing HACCP in 1996, industry has progressed significantly in hazard control, with particular emphasis on microbiological hazards. At the time of HACCP implementation, FSIS selected *Salmonella* as the target organism because it was present in all products and is a common cause of foodborne illness. Using outbreak data through 2019, the Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC) estimates that approximately 43 percent of foodborne salmonellosis in the United States is attributed to meat and poultry products. *Salmonella* is present to varying degrees in all major species and interventions targeted at reducing *Salmonella* may support reducing contamination by other enteric pathogens. Since implementing HACCP in 1996, FSIS has documented a substantial decline in *Salmonella* positive samples associated with FSIS-regulated products. However, the decline in positive samples has not resulted in fewer illnesses.
- The Agency remains committed to reducing *Salmonella* in FSIS-regulated products. FSIS published studies<sup>9</sup> that show an association between a change in the concentration of certain indicator organisms and the presence of *Salmonella* in beef products. These studies, and other advancements in science, provide FSIS an opportunity to explore a pathway to identify new criteria for documenting hazard control and generating information useful for measuring the public health performance of U.S. food safety systems for meat and poultry products.
- Despite consistent reductions in the occurrence of *Salmonella* in poultry products, more than 1 million consumer illnesses due to *Salmonella* occur annually and it is estimated that over 23 percent of those illnesses are due to consumption of chicken and turkey. The effort to reduce *Salmonella* in poultry will leverage USDA's strong research capabilities and strengthen FSIS' partnership with the Research, Education, and Economics mission area to address data gaps and develop new laboratory methods to guide future *Salmonella* policy. Meanwhile, the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods, will advise on how FSIS can build on the latest science to improve its approach to *Salmonella* control.

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<sup>9</sup>Effects of Antimicrobial Interventions on Indicator Organisms during Beef Carcass Dressing. J. Mark Carter; Naser Abdelmajid; Christian Gonzalez-Rivera; Selena Kremer-Caldwell; Scott A. Seys; Rachel Whitaker. *J Food Prot* (2021) 84 (4): 664–673. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4315/JFP-20-281>.



## GOAL 3: ACHIEVE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

FSIS' third strategic goal, “**Achieve Operational Excellence**,” and its associated outcomes and objectives identify key areas to use FSIS' talent and resources effectively and efficiently to better fulfill the Agency's mission. FSIS will focus on developing and sustaining a high-performing, trained, and diverse workforce, while providing valuable support to FSIS' frontline personnel and external customers, such as industry and foreign governments. Specifically, FSIS will:

- Significantly expand the Agency's efforts to acquire, develop, and retain top talent.
- Build a highly skilled, adaptable, diverse, and capable workforce by enhancing training effectiveness, creating opportunities for professional growth, and recognizing the value delivered by FSIS employees.
- Create and sustain an inclusive workplace that values diversity and optimally leverages the unique attributes, backgrounds, and life experiences of all employees.
- Enhance the Agency's export certification (e-certification) process by leveraging PHIS and electronic data transfer, improving the efficiency of the e-certification process while also increasing the security of data and certificates.
- Redesign laboratory infrastructure with innovative hardware and software.

### Outcome 3.1: Sustain and Advance an Adaptable, High-Performing, and Engaged Workforce

FSIS will continue to foster an inclusive workplace where individuals are respected, trusted, valued, and work together collaboratively to achieve Agency goals. FSIS is dedicated to recruiting and retaining excellent talent to carry out the Agency's mission to protect public health. FSIS takes pride in its diverse workforce and is deeply committed to upholding and promoting the values of equity, inclusion, and equal opportunity among the workforce and those the Agency serves.

FSIS is committed to building and shaping a high-performing, diverse and inclusive workforce that will not only provide the capabilities, capacity, and adaptability required to advance the Agency's public health and food safety mission but also ensure that employees reach their full potential. The Agency will focus on recruiting and selecting highly qualified individuals that represent the diversity throughout America, and training them to be



proficient, agile, and responsive. Additionally, FSIS strives to drive accountability through rigorous performance management, ensuring fair workplace practices and equal opportunity, and investing in the retention of its top talent. By acquiring and growing individuals who bring a broad range of attributes, backgrounds, and experience required to advance the FSIS mission and sustaining a culture of respect in which individuals are treated fairly and valued for the unique contributions they bring, the Agency will continue to uphold its commitment to performance excellence, promoting equity, and fostering an inclusive, discrimination and harassment-free work environment.

### **Objective 3.1.1: Expand Recruitment and Increase Retention for Mission-Critical Positions**

FSIS is committed to its mission of protecting public health, which is dependent upon attracting and retaining a diverse, qualified, inclusive, and competent workforce. FSIS will build on recent progress addressing frontline staffing shortages by expanding targeted recruitment at field locations; collecting and analyzing data to look for time efficiencies in the hiring process; and implementing data-driven staffing plans that include hiring in advance of attrition. The adoption of these practices, as well as new workplace flexibilities for in-plant inspection personnel and the use of multiple grade positions to establish career development opportunities throughout the Agency organizational structure, will complement retention and relocation incentives offered to employees in specific mission-critical occupations.

FSIS is taking proactive steps to strengthen employee retention, engagement, and satisfaction. The Agency redesigned its assessment tools to attract better qualified candidates for front line inspector positions, and FSIS will implement those new biographical data assessments in collaboration with USDA and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for compliance with Executive Order 13932. FSIS will expand programs to attract and retain its mission-critical workforce, including offering recruitment and retention incentives. FSIS offers student loan repayment to a select number of current in-plant public health veterinarians annually. FSIS will continue to use the new Pre-Apprenticeship Program in collaboration with the Department of Defense—a first-of-its-kind program across the Federal Government—that allows uniformed servicemembers during their transition out of the military to apply to a 4-week food inspector/consumer safety inspector training program, which serves as a pathway into the 1-year FSIS Apprenticeship Program for veterans that was launched in FY 2020. Additionally, the Agency offers a Continuing Education Program that was previously for food inspectors, consumer safety inspectors, and veterinarians, which has now been expanded to all employees, pending availability of funds. Supervisors and leaders are evaluating all Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey feedback to implement Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility changes to reflect the Secretary's priorities.

FSIS is using feedback from electronic exit surveys to identify methods to develop an Equity Action Plan to improve employee retention, engagement, and morale. Career pathway charts will quickly and easily show avenues employees can use to develop a career in FSIS. Consistent orientation and onboarding processes will enhance new hires' initial experience with FSIS and provide a more comprehensive way to understand the FSIS mission and values.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2026 MEASURE**

- SP-3.1.1.1: Percentage of mission-critical frontline inspection positions that are filled (Desired Trend: Up)

### Objective 3.1.2: Enhance Employee Training and Professional Development

This objective focuses on developing and sustaining a highly skilled and diverse workforce as the Agency's most important asset. Without training and retaining the right people in the right jobs with the right skills, an organization cannot succeed. FSIS will not only maintain, but also strengthen, its already talented and skilled workforce by using several strategies focused on training the workforce of today and tomorrow. FSIS is redesigning its training apparatus, both from a delivery and content standpoint, to accommodate the changing demands of today's environment, while anticipating future needs.

To date, FSIS has expanded training and education opportunities to employees in mission-critical and other occupations by implementing best practices and developing innovative training modules. In addition, FSIS will continue to leverage technology to facilitate employee development and assess knowledge gained from these efforts. FSIS maintains a continuous development approach in all its efforts for employee educational growth and adjusts its training and development initiatives on a regular basis, with the goal of ensuring the Agency is providing high-quality training in a responsive manner to all FSIS employees throughout the country.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2026 MEASURE

- SP-3.1.2.1: Percent knowledge gain in key occupations (Desired Trend: Flat)

### Objective 3.1.3: Ensure Equal Opportunity, Civil Rights, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Work Environment

FSIS places great emphasis on building and maintaining a fair and safe work environment that ensures equal opportunity and values diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for all employees. FSIS continues to strive toward its goal of modeling EEO excellence by educating supervisors in diversity and inclusion; promoting EEO, civil rights, and diversity outreach to affinity groups to reach under-represented populations, including persons with disabilities, when advertising job opportunities; and increasing visibility of FSIS career options at specific representational universities and colleges.

Rapidly addressing interpersonal conflict in the workplace helps FSIS achieve a model EEO program. To this end, the Agency will continue to utilize best practices to market the benefits of FSIS' Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program over traditional counseling approaches. Employees' knowledge and awareness of the ADR program and its services will increase through training, dissemination of ADR brochures, promotional materials, and newsletter articles. These methods will also highlight the availability and benefits of ADR as a means of resolving EEO complaints. The Agency will explore additional tools to promote ADR and implement them. The rate at which ADR is accepted when offered, the rate at which parties participate, and participants' feedback regarding their involvement with the ADR process will be tracked by the Agency. Adjustments will be made based on analysis and feedback obtained, if necessary. By consistently promoting the ADR program, employees will be aware of an additional avenue for addressing workplace disputes expeditiously. These actions will contribute to the resolution of EEO complaints and improved workplace communication and enable employees to focus on accomplishing the Agency's mission.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2026 MEASURE**

- SP-3.1.3.1: Percentage of ADR acceptance rate for informal EEO complaints (Desired Trend: Up)
- SP-3.1.3.2: Percentage of supervisors and managers who complete Diversity and Inclusion training (Desired Trend: Up)

## **Outcome 3.2: Optimize Service Delivery**

FSIS promotes transparency, accountability, and sound stewardship of taxpayer dollars through continuous improvements in leadership, governance, internal controls, and records management. The Agency's mission support elements play a critical role by equipping all FSIS personnel with the full spectrum of human capital, administrative management, financial management, and technology services they require. FSIS strives to create and sustain a work environment characterized by excellence and responsiveness to customer needs through a variety of avenues, including flexible application of human resources and procurement authorities, and improvements in computer and connectivity capabilities for field employees. To strengthen its readiness to address unanticipated threats and uncertainties, FSIS adopted a data-driven enterprise risk management framework underpinned by a comprehensive review of risks and development of mitigation strategies to address identified risks. FSIS will continue to update and expand its business infrastructure and information technology to maximize efficiencies and make the processes more useful to internal and external stakeholders. The Agency is committed to improving inspection task scheduling, visualization of information, and processes involved in domestic and international inspection activities, such as expanding the use of the PHIS Export Module and electronic certification.

### **Objective 3.2.1: Enhance Effectiveness and Efficiency of Key Business Processes**

In pursuing a highly qualified workforce with diverse perspectives, FSIS will continue to create efficiencies, where possible, to streamline the end-to-end hiring process and reduce time-to-hire. The Agency will continue to pursue maximum hiring flexibilities for frontline occupations and provide data-driven business decisions when requesting human resource flexibilities from OPM. FSIS will further leverage use of technology to improve the quality and diversity of the candidate pool and reduce time to enter on duty through validated candidate assessments and screening. FSIS is evaluating automating and streamlining voluntary relocation programs, developing pictorial storyboards, participating in virtual career and job fairs at colleges and universities that offer public health and food science programs, and creating new online tutorials on how to use USAJobs. Future enhancements to FSIS hiring processes may also include candidate notifications and pre-populated automated forms. Targeted solutions may include staggered enter on duty dates based on anticipated attrition and use of formulas to determine how many new hires are needed and when.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2026 MEASURE**

- SP-3.2.1.1: Number of calendar days in process time (average days) from tentative job offer to the date a selectee enters on duty (Desired Trend: Down)

### **Objective 3.2.2: Improve Customer Service**

The delivery of strategic employee development and training to internal customers is key to the Agency's ability to achieve its mission. A key component of internal customer service is the delivery of strategic



employee development and training efforts. A well-trained workforce is best positioned to serve FSIS' external customers.

FSIS will strive to use innovative training methods to engage employees for learning and development. Doing so ensures that employees actively participate during training, which instills new knowledge and improves skills. With the move to virtual technology-based training delivery methods, the Agency will focus on equipping employees for learning by focusing on customer service, support, and responsiveness, and by expanding virtual training opportunities. FSIS will also regularly gather employee feedback, identify trends, and implement updates on training as needed. These intentional and strategic efforts are designed to establish an upward trend in employee satisfaction with training. FSIS will measure its progress in this area through a satisfaction index derived from training assessments.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2026 MEASURE**

- SP-3.2.2.1: Percentage of FSIS employee satisfaction with the training services FSIS offers throughout the Agency (Desired Trend: Up)

### **Objective 3.2.3: Transform Business Infrastructure and Information Technology**

FSIS is enhancing its export certification process by improving and expanding the use of the PHIS Export Module. FSIS Form 9060-5: Meat and Poultry Export Certificate of Wholesomeness within the PHIS Export Module can now incorporate attestations and be digitally signed. The improvements will decrease the time it takes to issue export certificates while increasing the security around those certificates. These improvements will also provide the Agency with the ability to track exports to identify trends and facilitate recalls when needed. In addition, those changes will serve as a gateway to move toward an electronic process of directly transferring data to many of the Agency's trading partners (e-certification), creating further efficiencies and enhanced security. These efforts will be complemented by work to add countries from which FSIS receives import electronic certification directly into PHIS.

FSIS realizes there is a continuing need to transform its laboratory information technology systems, as well as remain current with mission technological needs. The Office of the Chief Information Officer will coordinate with the Office of Public Health Science on emerging technologies and implementing systems that will assist FSIS in the advancement of its mission while ensuring systems meet the required security standards.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2026 MEASURE**

- SP-3.2.3.1: Number of additional countries for which exports are processed through the PHIS Export Module (Desired Trend: Up)
- SP-3.2.3.2: Number of countries for which imports and the number of countries for which exports are processed through electronic certification (eCert) (Desired Trend: Up)



## FSIS PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

FSIS collaborates with a multitude of partners to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of food safety outcomes. FSIS engages with Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial agencies and stakeholders at meetings, conferences, and in working groups with the goal of improving prevention and response to foodborne illness and protecting public health. FSIS also collaborates with food safety regulators and organizations around the world to prevent foodborne illness and protect public health. Each year, FSIS builds on its successes from existing partnerships and initiates new relationships to further its strategic goals to achieve FSIS' mission. Over the next 4 years, FSIS will focus on the following collaborations that will further U.S. food safety efforts.

### Goal 1 Partnerships and Collaborations

#### Federal Partners

##### **BORDER INTERAGENCY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

The Border Interagency Executive Council (BIEC) is an interagency Executive Advisory Board formally established by Executive Order 13659: Streamlining the Export/Import Process for America's Business, that includes all U.S. participating government agencies. The BIEC serves as the decision-making body charged with enhancing coordination across Federal customs, transport security, health and safety, sanitary, conservation, trade, and phytosanitary agencies with border management authorities and responsibilities to measurably improve supply chain processes and the identification of illicit and non-compliant shipments. FSIS is actively involved at the BIEC executive level, as well as the working level.

##### **FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION**

FSIS works closely with FDA on a number of cross-disciplinary collaborations, including review of the FDA Food Code relevant to meat (including Siluriformes fish), poultry, and egg products; activities related to human food produced using animal cell culture technology; national foodborne disease surveillance; and foodborne illness outbreaks. Additionally, the Agency will continue collaborating with FDA on new initiatives for consumer education and looking for new and creative ways to engage consumers and amplify consumer messages through new partnerships. Additional collaborations with FDA are mentioned in other partnerships below.

## **FOODBORNE DISEASES ACTIVE SURVEILLANCE NETWORK**

The Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet) conducts surveillance for *Campylobacter*, *Cryptosporidium*, *Cyclospora*, *Lm*, *Salmonella*, STEC O157 and non-O157, *Shigella*, *Vibrio*, and *Yersinia* infections diagnosed by laboratory testing samples from patients. The network was established in July 1996 and is a collaborative program among CDC, 10 State health departments (Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Tennessee, and selected counties in California, Colorado, and New York), FSIS, and FDA. FoodNet accomplishes its work through active surveillance, surveys of laboratories, physicians, and the general population; and population-based epidemiologic studies.

## **FOODSAFETY.GOV**

FoodSafety.gov is the cross-Federal website operated by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that FSIS uses to promote safe food handling to consumers. Representatives from FSIS, CDC, and FDA serve as the subject matter experts on the editorial board of the website. It serves as the centralized gateway to food safety information provided by Federal agencies. FoodSafety.gov was launched after a working group of Federal partners identified confusion from consumers about where to find reliable information on food safety topics. The website is a one-stop shop for consumers on food safety and covers consumer-facing information from FSIS and FDA to promote safe food handling and share recall information. The website is frequently used as the call-to-action in social media messages, blogs, and press releases.

## **HEALTHY PEOPLE FOOD SAFETY WORKGROUP**

Healthy People is a long-standing government-wide initiative aimed at improving the health of all Americans through establishing and monitoring science-based, 10-year national objectives organized across a range of health topics. The food safety topic area is managed by the Healthy People Food Safety Workgroup (HP FSWG), which includes subject matter experts from FSIS, FDA, CDC, and other HHS and USDA entities. The goal of the HP FSWG food safety topic area is to reduce foodborne illness in the United States by improving food safety-related behaviors and practices.

## **DUAL JURISDICTION ESTABLISHMENTS**

FSIS recently updated its memorandum of understanding (MOU) with FDA to increase interagency collaboration and coordination to achieve improved regulatory efficiency and effectiveness involving establishments under dual jurisdiction. This MOU will improve upon previous information exchange by adding headquarters-level contacts for each agency to improve awareness of findings or emerging issues that may warrant more than local or regional coordination and updating the types of findings to be shared to reflect advances in understanding microbiological food hazards which may provide information about sanitary conditions in those establishments or indicate serious adverse health consequence of products under either agency's jurisdiction. Specifically, the FSIS-FDA Dual-Jurisdiction Establishment Workgroup harmonizes jurisdictional decisions under FSIS and FDA's respective authorities.

## **HUMAN FOOD PRODUCED USING ANIMAL CELL CULTURE TECHNOLOGY**

As a first step toward addressing how Federal regulatory agencies will assure the safety and accurate labeling of human food produced using animal cell culture technology and the inspection of establishments involved in the production of these products, FSIS and FDA entered into a formal agreement in 2019 that describes the roles of FSIS and FDA with respect to the regulatory oversight of these products. FSIS and FDA established three workgroups to refine regulatory frameworks and develop more exact specifications. Specifically, FSIS and FDA established working groups tasked with developing processes and procedures for: (1) premarket food safety

assessments by FDA, (2) inspections and the transition of oversight from FDA to FSIS during the cell harvest stage, and (3) labeling oversight by FSIS.

### **INTERAGENCY FOODBORNE OUTBREAK RESPONSE COLLABORATION**

Interagency Foodborne Outbreak Response Collaboration (IFORC), chartered in 2013, represents an important effort to improve coordination of Federal foodborne-outbreak responsibilities of CDC, FSIS, and FDA. IFORC works to improve activities by CDC, FSIS, and FDA concerning multistate foodborne outbreak detection, hypothesis generation, hypothesis testing, food vehicle identification, control measures to prevent illnesses and deaths, root cause analyses, and the dissemination of information on identified food safety systems gaps, to inform efforts to prevent future outbreaks.

### **NATIONAL ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE MONITORING PROGRAM**

The National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring Program (NARMS) is an interagency, collaborative partnership with State and local public health departments, FDA, CDC, and USDA. This national public health surveillance system tracks changes in antimicrobial susceptibility of select foodborne enteric bacteria found in ill people (CDC), retail meats (FDA), and food animals (FSIS).

The primary objectives of NARMS are to monitor trends in antimicrobial resistance among enteric bacteria from humans, retail meats, and animals; disseminate timely information on antimicrobial resistance to promote interventions, which reduce resistance among foodborne bacteria; conduct research to achieve better understanding of emergence, persistence, and spread of antimicrobial resistance; and provide data that assists FDA in decision making involving the approval of safe and effective antimicrobial drugs for animals. The NARMS findings from all the agency partners are published on a periodic basis in a single NARMS Integrated Report. The NARMS program at USDA focuses on sampling and testing of intestinal cecal contents, carcasses, and meat and poultry by FSIS. The NARMS program at FSIS also monitors and investigates outbreaks of recurring, emerging, and persistent strains of bacteria, as defined by CDC, which cause illness in humans and are suspected to be caused by FSIS-regulated products.

### **PULSENET**

PulseNet is a national laboratory network, consisting of 83 laboratories in 7 U.S. regions and headquartered at CDC, that connects foodborne illness cases to detect outbreaks. PulseNet has recently transitioned to using only WGS which improves FSIS' food safety systems through identifying outbreaks early. This allows investigators to find the source, alert the public sooner, and identify gaps in FSIS' food safety systems that would not otherwise be recognized.

### **RAPID RESPONSE TEAMS**

Rapid Response Teams (RRT) are FDA-supported, State-led multi-agency, multi-disciplinary teams that operate using Incident Command System/National Incident Management System principles and a Unified Command structure to respond to human and animal food emergencies. The teams can be comprised of partners from Federal, State, and local agencies, including FSIS, as well as stakeholders from academia and industry. The desired outcome of RRT activities is to minimize the time between agency notification of a human food or animal feed contamination event and implementation of effective control measures.

### **RETAIL FOOD SAFETY ALIGNMENT**

FSIS works with its public health partners at CDC and FDA to increase outreach at retail. The group discusses joint areas of interest, including pathogen controls at retail and operations and technologies to enhance tracing foodborne outbreaks to specific food sources or practices (e.g., grinding logs, shopper cards, smart labels,



etc.). The agencies work together to develop joint outreach materials on key food safety issues and share these materials with industry and State and local health departments. This coordinated approach helps protect public health by increasing awareness and distribution of food safety materials at retail facilities.

## **International Partners**

### **ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) provides forums to strengthen food safety standards among member economies. As an active participant in food-safety related APEC activities, FSIS lends its food safety expertise and learns from the expertise of others through regular meetings, subject-specific workshops, and forums.

### **ASSOCIATION OF FOOD AND DRUG OFFICIALS**

The Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) is an international, non-profit regulatory organization that connects food and medical products safety stakeholders. AFDO works collaboratively with public and private sectors to make a positive impact on food and medical product safety laws, rules, and regulations. FSIS employees are actively involved in AFDO workgroups that identify opportunities for preventing foodborne illnesses, such as reduction of salmonellosis in chicken.

### **INTERNATIONAL FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITIES NETWORK**

FSIS is a member of the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), which establishes formal communication channels to facilitate the rapid exchange of information across borders and between members during hundreds of food safety events. Through efficient reporting of urgent food safety events of potential international significance, having members respond to information requests around verification and assessment of potential food safety events, and providing international assistance, INFOSAN allows the implementation of risk management measures around the globe to prevent foodborne illness and save lives.

### **WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION**

Working with its U.S. Government partners led by the U.S. Trade Representative, FSIS participates in WTO activities to help ensure that international regulations and potential trade barriers have the appropriate scientific underpinning and are as closely aligned with FSIS' food safety regulations as possible. FSIS accomplishes that by reviewing and commenting on WTO notifications and participating in WTO meetings.

## **Other Partners**

### **ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORIES**

FSIS serves on the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) Food Safety Committee in a liaison capacity. The committee is comprised of representatives from State agriculture, environmental, and public health laboratories. The committee's purpose is to share information, promote beneficial strategies, coordinate training, and develop methods standardization across labs. In the past, FSIS has collaborated through APHL to provide coordination for Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) activities and to ensure the Agency maintains a robust and state-of-the-art laboratory capacity.

### **CONFERENCE FOR FOOD PROTECTION**

The Conference for Food Protection (CFP) is a non-profit organization created to provide a formal process for representatives from the food industry, government, academia, and consumer organizations to identify and address emerging problems associated with food safety and formulate recommendations. Though the

conference has no formal regulatory authority, it significantly influences food safety guidance, provides review of the FDA Food Code, models laws, and affects regulations among all government agencies, and minimizes disparate interpretations and implementation. FSIS will continue to serve on the executive board and participate on CFP councils and committees.

### **COUNCIL TO IMPROVE FOODBORNE OUTBREAK RESPONSE**

The Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response (CIFOR) is a multidisciplinary collaboration of national associations and Federal agencies, including FSIS, working together since 2006 to improve methods at the Federal, State, and local levels to detect, investigate, control, and prevent foodborne disease outbreaks. Council member representatives include experts in epidemiology, public health laboratory, environmental health activities, and food regulation at the Federal, State, and local levels. CIFOR was created to develop and share guidelines, processes, and products that will facilitate effective and collaborative foodborne outbreak response.

### **FOOD EMERGENCY RESPONSE NETWORK**

FERN is a network of food testing laboratories consisting of more than 160 Federal, State, local, and Tribal laboratories jointly administered by FSIS and FDA. Its members have the capability to test for microbiological, chemical, and radiological contaminants in foods. The network has worked to increase the food defense capabilities of food testing laboratories throughout the Nation, accomplished through training, method development, and method validation programs. Cooperative agreements between FSIS and State laboratories have increased the States' capacities and capabilities for both select and threat agent testing. The network has worked to protect the food system through targeted surveillance activities associated with imported foods, the National School Lunch Program, retail samples, and National Special Security Events.

### **INTEGRATED CONSORTIUM OF LABORATORY NETWORKS**

Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks (ICLN) was established in June 2005 by a Memorandum of Agreement among 10 Federal departments/agencies. Signatories work cooperatively to optimize national laboratory preparedness, promote common standards of performance, and fill gaps in coverage across all response phases. FSIS participates in Laboratory Network Coordinating meetings hosted by the ICLN. This group primarily develops and proposes policies and procedures, but also establishes common operating guidelines/standard operating procedures for the ICLN. FSIS participates in tabletop exercises, functional proficiency events, and leveraged training coordinated by the ICLN.

### **INTEGRATED NETWORKS FOR FOODBORNE OUTBREAK RESPONSE AND MANAGEMENT**

The biannual Integrated Networks for Foodborne Outbreak Response and Management Conference and PulseNet/OutbreakNet regional meetings bring Federal, State, and local agency laboratorians, epidemiologists, environmental health specialists, and regulatory officials together to share the latest best practices in surveillance and outbreak detection and response to enteric diseases, with a focus on those caused by contaminated foods, water, and animals.

### **LABORATORY RESPONSE NETWORK**

The Laboratory Response Network (LRN) was established by CDC in accordance with Presidential Decision Directive 39: U.S. Policy on Counterterrorism, which outlined national anti-terrorism policies and assigned specific missions to Federal departments and agencies. The LRN is charged with the task of maintaining an integrated network of State and local public health, Federal, military, and international laboratories that can respond to bioterrorism, emerging infectious diseases, chemical terrorism, and other public health emergencies. FSIS has maintained its status as an LRN member lab since 2002.

## **PARTNERSHIP FOR FOOD PROTECTION**

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. The Governing Council is responsible for oversight and management of the overall Partnership.

## **PRE-HARVEST ENGAGEMENTS**

The goal of the Cross-Sector Farm to Fork Food Safety Working Group is to enhance communication and collaboration among industry, animal, and public health officials along the farm-to-fork continuum. Participants represent USDA (FSIS and the USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)), CDC, State departments of public health and agriculture, and livestock and poultry industries. The overarching goal is to improve food safety—specifically, to reduce pathogen transmission between animals and humans. In addition, FSIS will work collaboratively with APHIS, CDC, and working group members to create an online learning module on preharvest food safety targeted toward private practice veterinarians. The module will be housed on APHIS' National Veterinary Accreditation Program website and will provide credit towards veterinary accreditation for licensed veterinarians.

## **SHOPPER HISTORY OUTBREAK PARTNERSHIP**

The Shopper History Outbreak Partnership is a collaboration between FSIS, FDA, CDC, and State departments of health and agriculture, with the goal of identifying and promoting best practices for the use of consumer purchase information to assist with investigating foodborne outbreaks. The partnership was initiated in 2016 to establish a forum for Federal and State partners to share experiences and resources regarding the use of purchase histories obtained via shopper/loyalty cards to assist with hypothesis generation and traceback of suspect food vehicles during outbreak investigations. Since then, the scope of the workgroup has expanded to include data from all purchases, including those made via credit/debit cards and online.

## **STATE MEAT AND POULTRY INSPECTION PROGRAMS**

FSIS engages with State, local, Tribal, and territorial agencies and stakeholders to enhance outreach and partnership with the 29 State Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) programs. The MPI programs operate under a cooperative agreement with FSIS and must enforce requirements “at least equal to” those imposed under the FMIA, PPIA, and HMSA of 1978. Product produced under State Inspection is limited to intrastate commerce unless the establishment opts into an additional cooperative program.

# **Goal 2 Partnerships and Collaborations**

## **Federal Partners**

### **INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION ON GENOMICS FOR FOOD AND FEED SAFETY**

Interagency Collaboration on Genomics for Food and Feed Safety is an interagency group with agency leaders and scientists from FDA, CDC, FSIS, APHIS, the USDA, Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and the National Center for Biotechnology Information at the National Institutes of Health. The collaboration's primary objective is to coordinate, strengthen, and lead WGS efforts among Federal and State partners.

## **INTERAGENCY FOOD SAFETY ANALYTICS COLLABORATION**

IFSAC is the collaboration of CDC, FDA, and FSIS to enhance the food safety. The goal of this collaboration is to improve coordination of Federal food safety analytic efforts and address cross-cutting priorities for food safety data collection, analysis, and use. The current focus of IFSAC's activities is foodborne illness source attribution, defined as the process of estimating the most common food sources responsible for specific foodborne illnesses.

## **NATIONAL RESIDUE PROGRAM**

FSIS partners with FDA and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the primary Federal agencies that manage the National Residue Program (NRP). Each year, representatives from FSIS, FDA, EPA, ARS, USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), and CDC convene a meeting of the Surveillance Advisory Team to evaluate chemical compounds for inclusion in the NRP for the following fiscal year.

## **International Partners**

### **CODEX ALIMENTARIUS**

The Codex Alimentarius<sup>10</sup> is a collection of internationally adopted food standards and related texts presented in a uniform manner. These food standards and related texts aim at protecting consumers' health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. The publication of the Codex Alimentarius is intended to guide and promote the elaboration and establishment of definitions and requirements for foods to assist in their harmonization and in doing so to facilitate international trade. FSIS, together with FDA technical experts, represent the interests of the United States to participate in Codex Alimentarius meetings and workgroups to develop science-based food standards and related texts. In addition, OFS and FSIS are active members of the U.S. Codex Policy Committee, led by the Under Secretary for Food Safety, and the Technical Steering Committee.

## **Other Partners**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS NETWORK**

Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net) is a CDC-led collaborative forum of State and local environmental health specialists and Federal agencies, including FDA and FSIS. The mission of EHS-Net is to improve environmental health practices. EHS-NET specialists collaborate with epidemiologists and laboratorians to identify environmental factors that contribute to foodborne illness outbreaks. EHS-NET works with restaurants and other food safety programs to implement preventive measures.

## **Academia and Research Partners**

### **NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MEAT AND POULTRY INSPECTION**

The purpose of the Committee is to provide advice to the Secretary concerning State and Federal programs with respect to meat and poultry inspection; food safety; and other matters that fall within the scope of the FMIA and PPIA.

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<sup>10</sup>Codex Alimentarius (Codex) is a joint program of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization, with more than 180 country members and observer organizations. The United States is a founding member of Codex and currently hosts three committees. The interagency Codex program involves many key regulatory and trade agencies, including FDA, CDC, AMS, Foreign Agricultural Service, EPA, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the U.S. Department of State, and others.



## **NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MICROBIOLOGICAL CRITERIA FOR FOODS**

The National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods provides impartial, scientific advice, and/or peer reviews to Federal food safety agencies for use in the development of an integrated national food safety systems approach that assures the safety of domestic, imported, and exported foods. The committee reports to the Secretary of Agriculture through the Under Secretary for Food Safety and to the Secretary of Health and Human Services through the Assistant Secretary for Health.

## **FSIS RESEARCH PRIORITIES AND RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS**

FSIS maintains and publishes a list of food safety research priorities to promote research in areas of importance to the FSIS mission. FSIS convenes its Research Priorities Review Panel annually to identify research priorities and associated studies to FSIS management for approval. To facilitate support, research priorities are communicated to the food safety research community via the FSIS website, scientific meetings, and university/industry outreach. These priorities are also communicated to the ARS Food Safety National Program and the USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture Food Safety Program via regularly scheduled meetings. FSIS often facilitates accomplishment of priority research by collaborating with food safety researchers. Such collaborations may include contributing samples, data, microbiological isolates, and scientific expertise.

## **FOOD FORUM**

The Food Forum—part of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine—convenes scientists, administrators, and policymakers from academia, government, industry, non-profits, professional societies, and consumer groups on an ongoing basis to discuss issues related to food (including safety, regulation, systems, nutrition, and health) and identifies approaches to address them. It provides a unique way to identify areas of concordance among these diverse interest groups. The Food Forum does not make recommendations, nor does it offer specific advice. It compiles information, develops options, and brings interested parties together.

## **INTERAGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM**

The Interagency Risk Assessment Consortium (IRAC) is a network of U.S. Federal agencies, institutes, and centers, with responsibilities or interests in developing food safety risk-assessment tools or conducting or using food safety risk assessments. IRAC is a central coordinator and technical resource for collaboration, efficient use of Federal resources, and innovation among these agencies. In this consortium, agencies collectively work to enhance communication and coordination among the member agencies and promote the practice of priority scientific research useful for the conduct of food safety risk assessment, advancement of modeling methods, and sharing of data and information. The Consortium supports continued advancement of the emergent field of quantitative microbiological risk assessment and evolving field of chemical risk assessment; both are required to guide major Federal policies and support risk management decision making.

## **INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FOOD PROTECTION ANNUAL MEETING**

The International Association for Food Protection (IAFP) serves as a forum for national and international experts to share information on current and emerging food safety issues. IAFP hosts an annual meeting, which provides attendees with information on the latest science, risk management practices, and innovative solutions to new and recurring problems, and the opportunity to network with thousands of food safety professionals from around the globe. The meeting, which is attended by over 3,600 top industry, academic, consumer group, and governmental food safety professionals, has become the leading food safety conference worldwide. FSIS experts present on the Agency's contributions in the field of food safety.



## APPENDIX I: MEASURES

### Goal 1: Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health

#### Outcome: 1.1 Prevent Adulteration and Misbranding

##### OBJECTIVE 1.1.2: ACHIEVE PATHOGEN REDUCTION

*SP Measure 1.1.2.1: Reduction in the proportion of poultry samples with Salmonella serotypes commonly associated with human illness (Desired Trend: Up)*

This measure will track the percent reduction in raw poultry samples with *Salmonella* serotypes commonly associated with human illness (Infantis, Enteritidis, and Typhimurium), collected from products subject to a performance standard (i.e., from chicken parts, chicken and turkey carcasses, and comminuted chicken and turkey). This measure is a key performance indicator for the Agency and is included in the Department's FY 2022–2026 Strategic Plan.

##### OBJECTIVE 1.1.3: ASSURE LABELING IS TRUTHFUL AND NOT MISLEADING

*SP Measure 1.1.3.1: Implement new policies to clarify labeling claims and other labeling information for consumers (Desired Trend: Up)*

This measure will track the number of new policies that improve labeling claims and other information for consumers (i.e., final rules related to nutrition labeling and Product of USA, updated animal raising claims guidance, and publishing general principles for standards of identity).

## Goal 2: Transform Inspection Strategies, Policies, and Scientific Approaches To Improve Public Health

### Outcome 2.1: Improve Food Safety Through the Adoption of Innovative Approaches and Technologies

#### **OBJECTIVE 2.1.1: ADVANCE AND ADOPT INNOVATIVE REGULATORY POLICIES AND INSPECTION VERIFICATION PROCEDURES**

*SP Measure 2.1.1.1: Increase in estimated health benefits from reduced illnesses based on FSIS policies (Desired Trend: Up)*

This measure will look at health benefits (e.g., reduced cost of illness) of FSIS final policies (rules and performance standards) that are anticipated to result in an illness reduction. Data used to calculate this measure are available in the cost-benefit analysis published in the *Federal Register* or posted online with the applicable policy.

## Goal 3: Achieve Operational Excellence

### Outcome 3.1: Sustain and Advance an Adaptable, High-Performing, and Engaged Workforce

#### **OBJECTIVE 3.1.1: EXPAND RECRUITMENT AND INCREASE RETENTION FOR MISSION-CRITICAL POSITIONS**

*SP Measure 3.1.1.1: Percentage of mission-critical frontline inspection positions that are filled (Desired Trend: Up)*

This measure calculates the vacancy rate for mission-critical frontline inspection occupations using positions filled and vacant. This measure includes the number of candidates in the pipeline (pre-employment) from tentative offer stage to entry on duty date. The Agency assumes that the recruitment pipeline and retention incentives will positively impact this measure (reducing the vacancy rate).

#### **OBJECTIVE 3.1.2: ENHANCE EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

*SP Measure 3.1.2.1: Percentage knowledge gain in key occupations (Desired Trend: Flat)*

This measure will assess knowledge gained by comparing pre-training test scores with post-training test scores. It will be calculated as an average of the test scores for each of the four core courses (Food Inspector- Livestock, Food Inspector- Poultry, Inspection Methods, and Public Health Veterinarian (PHV)), and supervisory validation of the degree of knowledge gain from the training.

#### **OBJECTIVE 3.1.3: ENSURES EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, CIVIL RIGHTS, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

*SP Measure 3.1.3.1: Percentage of ADR acceptance rate for informal EEO complaints (Desired Trend: Up)*

This measure calculates the percentage of EEO cases where the aggrieved party or the complainant chooses to use ADR to resolve the complaint, known as the ADR participation rate. For this measure, FSIS counts informal cases where ADR is selected. FSIS developed this measure to assess its effectiveness in promoting ADR as a means to resolve complaints.

## Outcome 3.2: Optimize Service Delivery

### OBJECTIVE 3.2.1: ENHANCE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF KEY BUSINESS PROCESSES

*SP Measure 3.2.1.1: Number of calendar days in process time (average days) from tentative job offer to the date a selectee enters on duty (Desired Trend: Down)*

This measure calculates the average number of calendar days between extending a tentative job offer and the new hire's entry on duty date. The process includes completing pre-employment steps such as fingerprints, medical exam, and background investigation for all completed hiring actions. The calculation is the sum of the number of calendar days divided by the number of completed hiring actions, which provides the average number of days measured in calendar days.

### OBJECTIVE 3.2.2: IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE

*SP Measure 3.2.2.1: Percent FSIS employee satisfaction with the training services FSIS offers throughout the Agency (Desired Trend: Up)*

FSIS maintains a continuous improvement approach in all efforts and will, therefore, adjust its training and development initiatives on a regular basis, resulting in an expectation that the customer satisfaction metric will achieve an increasing trend over time. This measure will be calculated by assessing results from satisfaction surveys related to self-help resources and course evaluations following training.

### OBJECTIVE 3.2.3: TRANSFORM BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

*SP Measure 3.2.3.1: Number of additional countries for which exports are processed through the PHIS Export Module (Desired Trend: Up)*

The PHIS export module currently allows for electronic submission of the application for export certificate by industry. Once the inspection process is complete, the approved (signed) export certificate is available within PHIS to both industry and foreign officials with approved access to PHIS. This measure will be calculated by counting the number of additional countries for which export certificates are processed through the PHIS Export Module.

*SP Measure 3.2.3.2: Number of countries for which imports and the number of countries for which exports are processed through e-certification (eCert) (Desired Trend: Up)*

Export e-certification capability is the secure government-to-government exchange of electronic data. The measure will be calculated by adding the total number of countries for which import data are transferred via e-certification plus the total number of countries for which export data are transferred via e-certification.





## APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY

### Terms and Definitions

#### Alternative Dispute Resolution

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is a procedure designed to bring together the disputing parties in a complaint to provide them an opportunity to resolve the dispute themselves with the assistance of a neutral third party.

#### Antimicrobial Resistance

Antimicrobial resistance occurs when microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites change in ways that render the medications used to cure the infections they cause ineffective. In other words, it is the ability of microbes to resist the effects of drugs—that is, the germs are not killed, and their growth is not stopped.

#### *Campylobacter*

*Campylobacter* is a bacterium that causes intestinal infections that are generally mild but can be fatal among very young children, elderly, and immunosuppressed individuals.

#### Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Principles highlighted in [Executive Order 14035](#) that will aid the Agency in its efforts to become a model employer and guide informed decision making in all employment programs and career opportunities. FSIS will promote a culture that empowers diverse talent from throughout the United States to fulfill the Agency's public health mission. This goal will be achieved by ensuring that the FSIS work environment is diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all employees and customers. FSIS will encourage all employees to do their part in creating a welcoming, safe, engaging, and supportive climate.

## ***E. coli* O157:H7 (*Escherichia coli* O157:H7)**

*Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) are a large and diverse group of bacteria. Although most strains of *E. coli* are harmless, others can cause illness. *E. coli* O157:H7 is a kind of *E. coli* that can cause disease by making a toxin called Shiga toxin. Often when there are news reports about outbreaks of *E. coli* infections, they are talking about *E. coli* O157:H7.

## **Establishment**

An establishment is any slaughtering, cutting, boning, meat canning, curing, smoking, salting, packing, processing, rendering, or similar facility at which inspection is maintained under regulations of the FMIA, PPIA, EPIA, and the HMSA.

## **Food Safety Assessment<sup>11</sup>**

An FSA assesses and analyzes 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.

## **Foodborne Illness**

A foodborne illness is an illness caused by pathogens that enter the human body through foods.

## **Foodborne Illness Outbreak**

A foodborne illness outbreak is an occurrence of two or more people experiencing the same illness after eating the same food.

## **Foodborne Pathogen**

A foodborne pathogen is a disease-causing microorganism found in food—usually bacteria, fungi, parasites, protozoans, and viruses.

## **Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point**

HACCP is a scientific system for process control that has long been used in food production to prevent problems by applying controls at points in a food production process where hazards could be controlled, reduced, or eliminated.

## **Humane Handling**

The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act requires that slaughter shall be carried out only by humane methods. The Code of Federal Regulations (9 CFR 313) requires animals be cared for in a manner identified as humane during the holding, movement, and handling of livestock in slaughter facilities leading up to slaughter.

## ***Listeria monocytogenes***

Listeriosis is a serious infection usually caused by eating food contaminated with the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*). An estimated 1,600 people get listeriosis each year, and about 260 die. The infection is

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<sup>11</sup>[FSIS Directive 5100.1 - Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officer \(EIAO\) Food Safety Assessment \(FSA\) Methodology \(usda.gov\)](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/FSIS/food-safety/food-safety-assessment)

most likely to sicken pregnant women and their newborns, adults aged 65 or older, and people with weakened immune systems.

## Public Health Risk Evaluation<sup>12</sup>

The PHRE is a decision-making process that FSIS staff use to determine whether an FSIS district office needs to schedule an FSA for an establishment. The PHRE is a distinct, separate activity from the FSA. FSIS has a process whereby the district office is provided a prioritized list of establishments for scheduling PHREs. The list is based on public health risk triggers, including whether an establishment has produced adulterated product, or whether an establishment has produced product associated with an illness outbreak.

## Ready-to-Eat

Ready-to-eat (RTE) applies to any product intended for human consumption without further preparation steps.

## *Salmonella*

*Salmonella*, the name of a group of bacteria, is one of the most common causes of food poisoning in the United States. The *Salmonella* family includes more than 2,300 serotypes of bacteria, which are one-celled organisms too small to be seen without a microscope. If present in food, *Salmonella* does not usually affect the taste, smell, or appearance of the food. The bacteria live in the intestinal tracts of infected animals and humans. Usually, symptoms last 4 to 7 days, and most people get better without treatment. However, *Salmonella* can cause more serious illness or death in older adults, infants, and persons with chronic diseases. *Salmonella* is killed by cooking and pasteurization.

## Traceback

Traceback is a method used to determine the source and scope of the product/processes associated with the illness outbreak and to document the distribution and production chain of the product that has been implicated in a foodborne illness or outbreak.

## Traceforward

Once the source of an implicated food item is established, investigators may do a “traceforward,” which is a method used to document the distribution of all implicated lots of food from the source.

## Whole Genome Sequencing

Whole genome sequencing (WGS) is an advanced technique that determines the DNA sequence of microorganisms and helps to differentiate them with greater detail than other contemporary technologies. FSIS and other public health and regulatory partners in the United States now use WGS as part of basic foodborne pathogen surveillance and strain identification during foodborne illness outbreaks. FSIS suspended routine pulsed-field gel electrophoresis and transitioned to using only WGS for STEC effective January 15, 2019, and for *Salmonella* isolates effective March 15, 2019.

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<sup>12</sup>[FSIS Directive 5100.4, Revision 2 - Public Health Risk Evaluation Methodology \(usda.gov\)](#).

## Laws

### Egg Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 1031 et seq.)

The Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA), passed by Congress in 1970, provides for the mandatory continuous inspection of the processing of liquid, frozen, and dried egg products.

### Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1906 (21 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)

Enacted June 30, 1906, as chapter 3913, 34 Stat. 674, and substantially amended by the Wholesome Meat Act 1967 (P.L. 90-201), the Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1906 (FMIA) requires USDA to inspect all cattle, sheep, swine, and goats when slaughtered and processed into products for human consumption.

### Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (7 U.S.C. 1901-1906)

The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA) Act requires that the slaughtering of livestock and the handling of livestock in connection with slaughter be carried out only by humane methods. FSIS enforces the HMSA and conducts inspections to ensure that livestock is humanely handled and slaughtered.

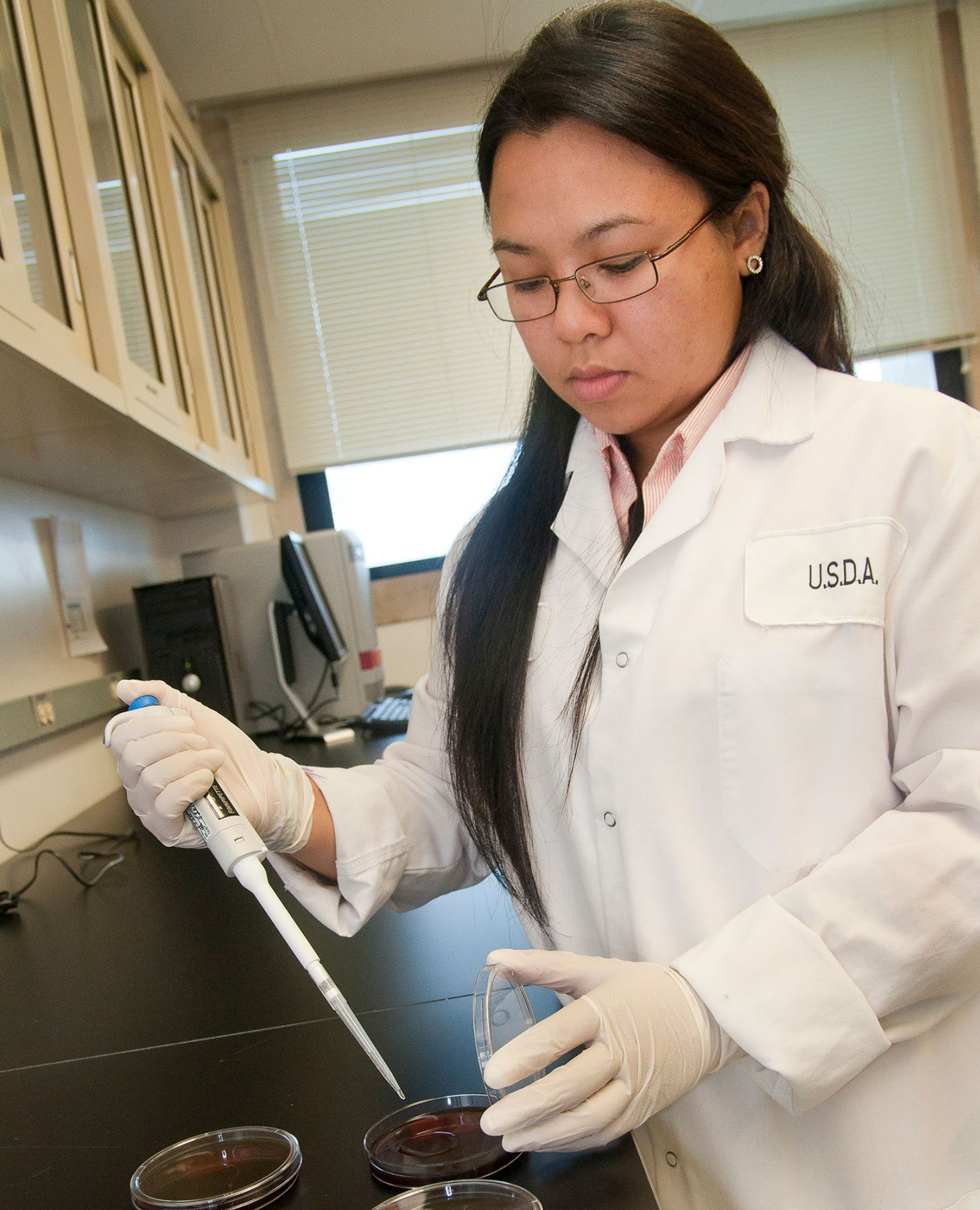
### Poultry Products Inspection Act of 1957 (21 U.S.C. 451 et seq.)

The Poultry Products Inspection Act of 1957 (PPIA) (P.L. 85-172 dated August 28, 1957), amended by the Wholesome Poultry Products Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-492, August 18, 1968), requires USDA to inspect all “domesticated birds” (such as chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and guineas) when slaughtered and processed into products for human consumption.

## Reference Links

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<b>PAGE 12</b>	[Footnote] Public Health Risk Evaluation Methodology - Revision 2: <a href="https://www.fsis.usda.gov/policy/fsis-directives/5100.4">https://www.fsis.usda.gov/policy/fsis-directives/5100.4</a>  [Footnote] Food Safety Assessment Methodology - Revision 5: <a href="https://www.fsis.usda.gov/policy/fsis-directives/5100.1">https://www.fsis.usda.gov/policy/fsis-directives/5100.1</a>
<b>PAGE 19</b>	Strategic Assessment of Sampling Resources: <a href="https://www.fsis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_file/2020-11/sasr-report.pdf">https://www.fsis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_file/2020-11/sasr-report.pdf</a>
<b>PAGE 37</b>	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce: <a href="https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/06/30/2021-14127/diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce">https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/06/30/2021-14127/diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce</a>
<b>PAGE 38</b>	[Footnote] FSIS Directive 5100.1 - Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officer (EIAO) Food Safety Assessment (FSA) Methodology: <a href="https://www.fsis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_file/2020-08/5100.1.pdf">https://www.fsis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_file/2020-08/5100.1.pdf</a>
<b>PAGE 39</b>	[Footnote] FSIS Directive 5100.4, Revision 2 - Public Health Risk Evaluation Methodology: <a href="https://www.fsis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_file/2021-08/5100.4.pdf">https://www.fsis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_file/2021-08/5100.4.pdf</a>







# 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.

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