Comment Period Extended for the Modernization of Swine Slaughter Inspection Proposed Rule

In response to requests from industry and consumer groups, FSIS is extending the comment period by 30 days for the Federal Register proposed rule, “Modernization of Swine Slaughter Inspection” (83 FR 4780, Feb. 1, 2018). The original deadline to submit comments was April 2, 2018; the new deadline to submit comments is May 2.

As FSIS explained in the proposed rule, FSIS has proposed to amend the Federal meat inspection regulations to establish a new inspection system for market hog slaughter establishments that provides public health protection at least equivalent to the existing inspection system. Market hog slaughter establishments that do not choose to operate under the new swine inspection system may continue to operate under their existing inspection system. The Agency also proposed several changes to the regulations that would affect all establishments that slaughter swine, regardless of the inspection system under which they operate or the age, size, or class of swine. These proposed changes would allow all swine slaughter establishments to develop sampling plans that are more tailored to their specific operations and thus be more effective in monitoring their specific process control. These proposed changes also would ensure that before the start of slaughter operations, food-contact surfaces are sanitary and free of enteric pathogens.

The proposed rule can be found at https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/c17775a2-fd1f-4c11-b9d2-5992741b0e94/2016-0017.pdf?MOD=AJPERES. Comments on the rule may be submitted online via the Federal eRulemaking Portal, available at http://www.regulations.gov; by mail sent to Docket Clerk, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Patriots Plaza III, Mailstop 3782, Room 8-163A, Washington, D.C. 20250-3700; or by hand or courier delivery to Patriots Plaza III, 355 E St. SW., Room 8-163A, Washington, D.C. 20250-3700. All items submitted by mail or electronic mail must include the Agency name and docket number FSIS-2016-0017.
FSIS Posts Next Set of Establishment Specific Datasets

FSIS is preparing to publish the next set of establishment specific datasets as announced in the Federal Register on July 14, 2016 (Docket No. FSIS-2014-0032). Prior to publishing these datasets, FSIS is making sample datasets available. The sample dataset and corresponding data dictionary on raw chicken carcasses sampling results can be found at: https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/data-collection-and-reports/data/datasets-laboratory-sampling. Please visit http://www.regulations.gov/ and follow the online instructions at that site for submitting comments to Docket FSIS-2014-0032 by March 23, 2018. FSIS intends to publish the final dataset on April 6, 2018. Additional details can be found at: https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/0803f8a0-a3cc-4945-87b6-f992acdcf9b/Establishment-Specific-Data-Plan-Final.pdf?MOD=AJPERES.

Industry Testing of PHIS Export Module Continues

FSIS announced its plan to provide industry access to the Public Health Information System (PHIS) Export Component (Export) for testing purposes prior to the June 28, 2018 implementation date. FSIS intends to provide automated export documentation in phase one of implementation to Afghanistan, Andorra, Bahamas, Bolivia, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cook Islands, Ethiopia, French Guiana, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mozambique, San Marino, Tanzania and Uganda. Industry testing is limited to those establishments that export to at least one of these and only these 16 countries.

The Agency made available a test environment to industry to begin developing and testing individual XML schema designs for those establishments that had an interest in batching export applications and export to the above 16 countries. That environment was available from Sept. 20, 2017 to Jan. 5, 2018.

We are now moving to the next phase of testing, starting with a live demo webinar on Feb. 28, 2018 from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET. This demo will walk participants through how testing will be done and cover the features in the new PHIS Export module.

The test environment will be reopened and made available to industry to begin testing March 5 through April 30, 2018. Participants will be able to submit export applications through the PHIS user interface as well as web services/batch applications, and start or continue developing individual XML schema designs.

Please register for the webinar by sending an e-mail of the names of your testers, their contact information and the countries to which you export to PHISTechnicalQA@fsis.usda.gov no later than Feb. 20, 2018.
FSIS Announces askFSIS Questions and Answers Posted with Directives and Notices

FSIS is announcing the posting of links to askFSIS questions and answers (Qs and As) that will be posted online with FSIS directives and notices. AskFSIS is a web-based technology and policy question and answer forum on topics such as exporting, labeling, inspection, programs, procedures and fish of the order Siluriformes. The available Qs and As associated with directives or notices will be available through a pre-loaded simple search focused on a specific topic. The user will click on the link “askFSIS about (topic)” and be directed to an askFSIS search of posted questions and answers related to that topic. FSIS is starting by posting links to Qs and As for FSIS Directive 7020.1, Verifying Donation of Misbranded and Economically Adulterated Meat and Poultry Products to Non-Profit Organizations.

FSIS intends to expand links to askFSIS Qs and As related to other directives notices, compliance guides and other FSIS issuances in the future and may announce additional links in future Constituent Updates. Upcoming postings include the searches provided below.

FSIS Directive 5000.1, Verifying an Establishment’s Food Safety System
askFSIS about food safety noncompliance records
askFSIS about Sanitation SOPs
askFSIS about HACCP records or askFSIS about HACCP recordkeeping
askFSIS about HACCP monitoring
askFSIS about HACCP supporting documentation not related to O157 E. coli
askFSIS about HACCP verification
askFSIS about HACCP or Sanitation SOP corrective actions

FSIS Directive 10,010.1, Sampling Verification Activities for Shiga Toxin-Producing E. coli (STEC) in Raw Beef Products
askFSIS about STECs

FSIS Directive 7111.1, Verification Procedures for Lethality and Stabilization
askFSIS about Lethality and Stabilization

If the user still has questions after reviewing the simple search, the search criteria can be updated or an individual question can be submitted to an askFSIS subject matter expert for a response. To submit a question to askFSIS, please visit: http://askfsis.custhelp.com/ or call 1-800-233-3935.
FSIS Announces Webinar for Trading Partners, Foreign Establishments and Importers

FSIS will host a conference with a simultaneous webinar for our trading partners, foreign establishments and importers on Feb. 20, 2018 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. ET in Washington, D.C. The conference will provide an overview of the Label Submission and Approval System (LSAS) and generic labeling regulations, including additional information related to generic label approval. FSIS will also discuss the amenability issues, nutrition labeling, animal raising claims and common problems seen at port-of-entry.

The conference will be held at Patriot’s Plaza III at 355 E St., SW in Washington, D.C. in the first level auditorium. Advance notification of participation is required. If you wish to attend, please send a confirmation e-mail with your full name, title, entity that you represent and country to: internationalcoordination@fsis.usda.gov. Upon receipt of your registration, FSIS will provide additional logistical information for those unable to attend in person. FSIS intends to provide access via webinar for those that cannot join the conference.

Additionally, for those that cannot participate in person or via webinar, FSIS wishes to inform everyone about the availability of labeling guidance on our webpage. It can be accessed by visiting: https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulatory-compliance/labeling.

Policy Updates

FSIS notices and directives on public health and regulatory issues are available at: https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulations. The following policy updates were recently issued:

**Notice 09-18 - Requirements for the Disposition of Non-Ambulatory Disabled Veal Calves**

**Notice 10-18 - Mandatory Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights Training for all FSIS Employees**