



A Farewell Message from Al Almanza

After 39 years with FSIS, I am retiring from public service. Regardless of my title or position—be it food inspector in a small slaughter plant in Dalhart, Texas where I began my FSIS career in 1978 or in my current position as Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety and FSIS Administrator—I have been driven by the Agency’s mission to protect public health by preventing foodborne illness. It is a mission that I feel strongly is among the government’s most critical, and I am honored to have been a part of it for almost four decades.

As I look back over my ten years leading the Agency, I am proud of the accomplishments we have made together as FSIS has continually looked for ways to improve food safety and become more efficient. Highlights for me have been using a science-based approach to modernize the poultry slaughter inspection system, implementing the Public Health Information System (PHIS), reducing listeriosis and *E. coli* O157:H7 illnesses from FSIS-regulated products and adding six other dangerous strains of *E. coli* to the zero-tolerance list, and implementing performance standards for *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella*. FSIS has also strengthened its collaboration with partner agencies, such as the Food and Drug Administration, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, leveraging our expertise and actions to better protect public health.

I want to emphasize that we have made this progress together. I often talk of FSIS being one team, with one purpose, but the food safety team extends beyond that to include all of our stakeholders. Industry frequently goes above and beyond the regulatory requirements to improve the safety of the food supply; too often those efforts are not recognized. And the consumer groups push us to make sure we are doing all we can to protect public health; those efforts have helped make sure we are moving in the right direction.

It has been a pleasure partnering with all of you to protect the public’s health. I leave confident in the knowledge that, between FSIS’ dedicated employees and the dedication of our stakeholders and partner agencies, the safety of the supply of meat, poultry and egg products is in good hands. Thank you all!

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Release of Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration Wrap Up, Action Plan and Webinar Materials

The Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC) has released materials from a webinar held on May 31, 2017 about [IFSAC's 2017–2021 Strategic Plan](#). Along with these materials, IFSAC is issuing two other documents outlining past and future activities.

IFSAC was created in 2011 by three federal agencies—the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)—to improve coordination of federal food safety analytic efforts and address cross-cutting priorities for food safety data collection, analysis, and use. Its projects and studies aim to identify foods that are important sources of human illness. IFSAC focuses analytic efforts on four priority pathogens: *Salmonella*, *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) O157:H7, *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm), and *Campylobacter*. By bringing together data from CDC, FDA, and FSIS, and by developing sound analytical methods, IFSAC scientists can improve estimates of the sources of foodborne illness.

The webinar materials, including the presentation slides, transcript with agenda, and a link to a recording of the webinar are available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/lifsac/events.html>.

The “FY2012-FY2016 Wrap-Up” is an overview of IFSAC’s accomplishments from the first Strategic Plan for Foodborne Illness Source Attribution (FY2012-2016) and can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/lifsac/overview/strategic-plan.html>.

The “FY2017-FY2021 Action Plan” addresses the implementation of IFSAC’s new Strategic Plan (FY2017-2021). The Action Plan focuses on IFSAC’s ongoing and future projects, their alignment with the goals, strategies, and objectives of the Plan, how projects relate to each other, and tentative initiation timelines. For more information visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/lifsac/overview/strategic-plan.html>.

For more information on IFSAC, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/lifsac/index.html>.

FSIS Posts Updated Quarterly Sampling Results

Updated sampling results for FSIS regulated products are now available on the FSIS website. Quarterly FSIS calculates prevalence, volume weighted percent positive or percent positive calculations for microbial pathogens in FSIS regulated products that are currently sampled through existing sampling projects using the prior 12 months of sampling data. Sampling results are available for raw beef, raw pork, raw chicken, raw turkey, processed eggs, and ready-to-eat products. For more information, visit: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/data-collection-and-reports/microbiology/sampling-project-results/results>.

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Export Requirements Updates

The Library of Export Requirements has been updated for the following countries:

Hong Kong
Singapore
Turkey
Vietnam

For a complete list of countries, visit <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/international-affairs/exporting-products>.

Identifying Regulatory Reform Initiatives at USDA

On July 17, 2017, USDA published a request for information, "[Identifying Regulatory Reform Initiatives](#)," in pursuant with Executive Order 13777—Enforcing the Regulatory Reform Agenda. USDA is requesting ideas from the public on how to provide better customer service and remove unintended barriers to participation in our programs in ways that least interfere with our customers and allow us to accomplish our mission. USDA is asking for public ideas on regulations, guidance documents, or any other policy documents that are in need of reform, for example, ideas to modify, streamline, expand, or repeal those items.

Comments and information are requested on or before July 17, 2018. USDA will review comments in four batches over a one-year period. The cut-off period for comments for the first, second, third and fourth batches are Sept. 15, 2017, Nov. 14, 2017, Feb. 12, 2018 and July 17, 2018, respectively.

Comments can be submitted the following two ways:

- Electronic Submission of Comments: you may submit comments electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>.
- Submission of Comments by Mail, Hand delivery, or Courier: paper, disk, or CD-ROM submissions should be submitted to regulations@obpa.usda.gov, Office of Budget and Program Analysis, USDA, Jamie L. Whitten Building, Room 101-A, 1400 Independence Ave. SW., Washington, D.C. 20250.

For proper delivery, in your comment specify "Identifying Regulatory Reform Initiatives." For more information, please visit <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/07/17/2017-14920/identifying-regulatory-reform-initiatives>.

Food Safety Discovery Zone at California State Fair

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety Discovery Zone (FSDZ) continues its national food safety educational tour with an exhibition at the California State Fair in Sacramento, Calif., until July 30, 2017. The FSDZ is a 40-foot long exhibit that provides visitors of all ages with interactive and fun experiences that teach them how to prevent foodborne illness when preparing food at home.

This one of a kind, interactive food safety exhibit is visiting the California State Fair for the first time. The FSDZ teaches visitors how to prevent foodborne illness by emphasizing four fun and easy lessons:

- Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often.
- Separate: Don't cross-contaminate. Keep raw meat and poultry separate from ready-to-eat foods.
- Cook: Always use a food thermometer to ensure foods are cooked to a safe internal temperature.
- Chill: Refrigerate or freeze meat, poultry and egg products promptly.

Food safety experts will be on hand to answer questions Friday-Sunday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. until July 30, 2017. The FSDZ will be parked near the Farm, between buildings B and C. A map can be found at: <http://calexpo.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/GroundsMap.pdf>.

FSIS Schedules Industry Webinar for Roll-out of Egg Products Plant Food Safety Assessments

In the [March 3, 2017 Constituent Update](#), FSIS announced its plans to begin a phased roll-out of the Public Health Risk Evaluation (PHRE) and Food Safety Assessment (FSA) methodologies in egg products plants, similar to meat and poultry, and sought comments on the concept and phased roll-out. FSIS received four comments from a single egg products association and has thoroughly considered the comments provided. The *Constituent Update* stated that FSIS would not conduct any PHREs or FSAs until the comment period closed and a public webinar was held.

FSIS is now announcing the public webinar to describe the phased roll-out and how the PHRE methodology and FSA methodology will be applied at egg products plants to address comments received, and to answer any questions. The webinar will be held on Aug. 9, 2017 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. ET. People who wish to attend in person can do so at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Whitten Building, 1400 Jefferson Drive SW, Washington, D.C. 20024.

To register for this event, please send an email to: Buckley.Mckay@fsis.usda.gov. Please provide your name, name of company, mailing address, contact number and email address, and indicate if you plan on attending in person or by teleconference. Call-in information for the webinar will be sent closer to the date to registered participants attending by teleconference.

UPDATE:

FSIS Testing for *E.coli*



FSIS posts biweekly updates of the Agency's raw ground beef *E. coli* sampling program, which includes testing results of raw ground beef component samples for *E. coli* O157:H7 and Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STECs) from FSIS routine and follow-up sampling programs. Data are also presented for non-O157 STECs by each non-O157 STEC serogroup.

Between June 4, 2012 and July 23, 2017, FSIS laboratory services analyzed a total of 19,497 beef trim samples (15,827 domestic and 3,670 imported) 4,153 routine follow-up samples (4,039 domestic and 114 imported), and 364 non-routine follow-up/traceback samples. One hundred and ninety-seven samples were found to be positive. 118 were domestic trim samples, ten were imported trim samples, 65 were domestic follow-up samples, and four were non-routine follow-up/traceback samples. To date, three samples have been positive for both O157:H7 and at least one non-O157 STEC strain, and ten samples have been positive for two different non-O157 O-groups. To review testing results, visit the *E. coli* data tables at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/ffsis/topics/data-collection-and-reports/microbiology/ec>.