



Food Safety Information

FSIS Consumer Research: Developing Informed Outreach

Background

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is charged with ensuring that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. FSIS provides educational materials about safe food preparation to ensure that consumers know how to avoid foodborne illness. The FSIS Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2011-2016 and Healthy People 2020 are used as benchmarks to evaluate the food safety education work of FSIS's Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education (OPACE).

Consumer Research Surveys

Consumer research is the backbone of FSIS's consumer outreach strategy. Using research, FSIS assesses whether its food safety messaging is meeting the needs of the consumer. FSIS then adapts its consumer outreach efforts based on what it learns. FSIS uses four surveys to evaluate and inform its education efforts:

- 1) Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Food Safety Survey (FSS)**
FDA's FSS is the survey that FSIS uses as a benchmark to measure the outcomes of its efforts to meet Goal 3 of FSIS Strategic Plan and Healthy People 2020 Food Safety Objective 5. This survey is periodically conducted by the FDA Center for Food Safety and Nutrition (CFSAN) and is designed to track consumer knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to a variety of food safety topics.
- 2) Kansas State University's Observational Study**
The Kansas State University (KSU) Impact of Food Safety Messages on Consumer Food Handling Behaviors is a onetime study that was designed to evaluate the impact of the four key messages of the Food Safe Families campaign: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill. The study was designed to assess whether consumers follow these food handling practices, and whether consumers failure to do so leads to cross contamination during food preparation.
- 3) International Food Information Council (IFIC) Food & Health Survey**
OPACE uses the IFIC 2014 Food and Health Survey as another tool to identify trends in consumer behavior related to food safety. The survey is designed to gain insight from Americans on important food safety, nutrition, and health-related topics. The questions in this survey that were commissioned by USDA FSIS are similar to those that are in FDA's FSS. The survey fills in some of the gaps between iterations of the FDA FSS.
- 4) Ad Council Food Safe Families Survey**
The Ad Council's Food Safe Families survey is a benchmark tracking survey designed to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the Food Safe Families contract with the Ad Council. This process evaluation survey measures overall awareness of the food safety messages, recognition of the advertisements and campaign website, and attitudes and adoption of safe food handling behaviors.



How FSIS uses Consumer Research

- From the 2006 to 2010 collection of FDA's FSS, the average percentage of consumers who follow any of the four key food safety practices increased from 75% to 76%. FSIS used this data to establish the fact that food safety education practices were successfully influencing consumer behavior. New data from the FDA survey is obtained every 3 to 5 years and allows for monitoring of long term changes.
- The results from the IFIC Food and Health Survey show a statistically significant decrease in percentage of respondents who reported participating in Clean, Separate, and Chill behaviors in 2014 compared to 2013. Cook behaviors in 2014 are statistically similar to those in 2013. The information gathered from this survey serves as an interim measure of the success of FSIS's food safety education efforts and is influencing FSIS' development of messaging to reach Goal 3 of the FSIS Strategic Plan Fiscal Year (FY) 2011-2016.
- The Ad Council has used the KSU observational study to guide its development of new Public Service Announcements (PSAs). The KSU study showed that cross contamination and the lack of thermometer usage are serious problems in the home, and the new PSAs emphasis the Separate and Cook steps of the Food Safe Families campaign.
- The Ad Council Food Safe Families survey measures change in awareness, attitudes, and behaviors related to food safety in the home as the result of the Food Safe Families campaign. The survey shows a statistically significant increase in consumer food thermometer usage but a statistically significant decrease in behaviors related to clean, separate, and chill. This information was used to influence the development of new Food Safe Families messaging.

Conclusion

FSIS increases consumer exposure to food safety messaging and best practices through simple, easy-to-understand communications using the web, social media, print, and the Food Safety Discovery Zone (FSDZ). FSIS offers information on food handling and preparation best practices, foodborne illnesses, and food safety risks in-person through the Ambassador Program and FSDZ events and virtually through the FSIS website, foodsafety.gov website, and social media. These physical and virtual opportunities allow FSIS to increase exposure to food safety messages and best practices. The consumer research studies influence the development of these food safety messages to address consumer needs.

Food Safety Questions?

Call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline

If you have a question about meat, poultry or egg products call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline toll free at **1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)**. The hotline is open year round Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (English or Spanish). Recorded food safety messages are available 24 hours a day. For more information go to: www.foodsafety.gov. Emails can be sent to MPHotline.fsis@usda.gov.

AskKaren.gov (PregunteleaKaren.gov)

FSIS's automated response system can provide food safety information 24/7 and a live chat during Hotline Hours. Mobile phone users can access Ask Karen at m.askkaren.gov.