



Secretary Perdue Announces USDA Improvements for Customer Service and Efficiency

On Sept. 7, 2017, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced the realignment of a number of offices within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in order to improve customer service and maximize efficiency. The actions involve innovation, consolidation, and the rearrangement of certain offices into more logical organizational reporting structures. The changes build on the reorganization Perdue announced in May. As with the previous realignment, yesterday's announced restructuring comes with the intention of handling any staffing changes through attrition or reassignment.

"On my first day as secretary, I told our employees that I wanted USDA to be the most effective, most efficient, and best managed department in the federal government. These changes will move us further toward that goal," Perdue said. "We are already providing our customers with great service, and our career professionals are among the best in the federal government, but we can be even better. This realignment represents further progress on the improvements to USDA we made earlier this year, and will help us better meet the needs of farmers, ranchers, foresters, and producers, while providing increased accountability to American taxpayers."

To see the Secretary's announcement, visit: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2017/09/07/secretary-perdue-announces-usda-improvements-customer-service>.

Food Safety Education Month

September has been designated as National Food Safety Education Month. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), want you to know that it is possible for your food to be almost completely safe from pathogenic bacteria by following the four basic steps to food safety: clean, separate, cook and chill. According to the CDC, foodborne illness will cause 128,000 hospitalizations, and 3,000 deaths each year. While not all bacteria present in food products is harmful (in fact, bacterial species are essential in production of delicious and safe yogurt and cheese products), some have the potential to cause severe illness in certain individuals. Meat and poultry products are not sterile when they are purchased, nor are egg products or produce items. This means that proper storage, handling and cooking techniques are essential in preventing foodborne illnesses. If you would like to learn more about the symptoms, causes of food poisoning and the prevention strategies please visit: <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2017/08/28/are-you-sure-it-wasnt-food-poisoning>. You can also contact the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline.

In This Issue

- 1 Secretary Perdue Announces USDA Improvements for Customer Service and Efficiency
- 1 Food Safety Education Month
- 2 Identifying Regulatory Reform Initiatives at USDA
- 2 Policy Updates
- 3 FSIS Announces First Country Group for PHIS Export
- 3 Update: Testing for *E. coli*
- 4 Availability of FSIS Compliance Guideline for Minimizing the Risk of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* and *Salmonella* in Raw Beef (including Veal) Processing Operations
- 5 FSIS Announces Plan for Industry Testing of PHIS Export Component

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>.

Policy Updates

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

Docket No. FSIS-2017-0003 - *Inspection Coverage in Official Establishments That Slaughter Fish of the Order Siluriformes, Confirmation of Implementation Date*

Docket No. FSIS-2017-0021 - *International Standard-Setting Activities*

Docket No. FSIS-2017-0008 - *Public Health Information System (PHIS) Export Component Country*

Docket No. FSIS-2017-0028 - *Availability of FSIS Compliance Guideline for Minimizing the Risk of Shiga Toxin-Producing Escherichia Coli (STEC) and Salmonella in Raw Beef (Including Veal) Processing Operations*

FSIS Constituent Update is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Staff, Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education

Assistant Administrator
Carol Blake

Deputy Assistant Administrator
Aaron Lavallee

Acting Director
Michelle Catlin

Editor
Veronika Medina

Content and Technical Review Committee
Autumn Canaday
Selena Kremer
Maria Machuca

Availability of FSIS Compliance Guideline for Minimizing the Risk of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* and *Salmonella* in Raw Beef (including Veal) Processing Operations

On Sept. 6, 2017, FSIS published a *Federal Register* notice (82 FR 42059) announcing the availability of, and requesting comments on, the updated compliance guideline for small and very small establishments on reducing STEC and *Salmonella* in beef and veal operations. The new guideline will assist small and very small beef (including veal) processing establishments understand and comply with the regulatory requirements associated with controlling STEC and *Salmonella* in raw non-intact beef products and beef products intended for non-intact use. The guideline also includes information for establishments and retail stores on developing and maintaining records associated with the production of ground beef. Although FSIS is requesting comments on this guideline and may update it in response to comments, FSIS encourages establishments to utilize the information contained in this guideline as it reflects FSIS' current position.

The compliance guide is available at: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/c1217185-1841-4a29-9e7f-8da6dc26d92c/Compliance-Guideline-STECC-Beef-Processing.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>.

Comments must be received on or before Nov. 6, 2017, and may be submitted online via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>; by mail sent to Docket Clerk, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Mailstop 3782, Room 8-163A, Washington, D.C. 20250-3700 or by hand-or courier-delivery to Patriots Plaza 3, 355 E Street S.W., 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-2017-0028.

FSIS Announces Plan for Industry Testing of PHIS Export Component

FSIS is announcing its plan to provide industry access to the Public Health Information System (PHIS) Export Component (Export) for testing purposes.

FSIS is providing access to the Export functionality to ensure industry has sufficient testing and development time prior to the Export implementation. Beginning on June 29, 2018, FSIS intends to provide automated export documentation to Afghanistan, Andorra, Australia, Bahamas, Bolivia, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cook Islands, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mozambique, New Zealand, Paraguay, San Marino, Tanzania, Uganda, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

This upcoming first phase of testing will only test the batching function and will only apply to establishments that export to one or more of the first 19 countries, mentioned above, and only these 19 countries. A PHIS Export environment will be available for industry testing of computer-to-computer processing of XML batch files and upload of XML batch files while logged into PHIS as an Export Applicant or Export Broker. Industry can test computer-to-computer file submission during this first phase. Industry can test XML upload at the user interface during phase two of testing, which will happen at a later date.

As announced on July 6, 2017, FSIS has scheduled a conference call to share how and when FSIS will make the test site available for testing. This conference call will take place on Sept. 12, 2017, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. ET. The conference call phone number is toll free 1-877-369-5243 or 1-617-668-3633 and the access code is 0598769#. During the call, FSIS will share information about batch file submissions of export applications, instructional guides and test scripts. Questions will also be addressed during this time. Additionally, per the letter that industry received last week, please send the requested tester contact information to PHISTechnicalQA@fsis.usda.gov, no later than Sept. 14, 2017.