



United States Department of Agriculture

One Team, One Purpose



Food Safety and Inspection Service

Protecting Public Health and Preventing Foodborne Illness





United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety
and Inspection
Service

Washington, D.C.
20250

December 1, 2013

Dear Reader,

The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the public health regulatory agency responsible for ensuring the safety of meat, poultry, and processed eggs. Every employee in the agency is a piece in the food safety puzzle, with employees working together to prevent foodborne illness and to protect the public health. This book provides a picture of how all those pieces come together.

FSIS is involved in many areas of food processing and food distribution; the inspection of domestic product, imports, and exports; conducting risk assessments; and educating the public about the importance of food safety. Together, we are all **one team with one purpose**, working toward a common and extremely important goal.

Although the food landscape in this country is ever changing, FSIS is always there to ensure that our meat, poultry, and processed egg supply is wholesome and safe. I am proud of the work that our employees do and excited to see this work documented in our mission book—**Protecting Public Health and Preventing Foodborne Illness**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alfred V. Almanza".

Alfred V. Almanza

Food Safety and Inspection Service: Mission in Action

Our Mission

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the public health agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and is responsible for ensuring that meat, poultry, and processed egg products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled.

Our Authority

Through a series of Acts, Congress empowers FSIS to inspect all meat, poultry, and processed egg products in interstate commerce.

- Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA), 1906
- Agricultural Marketing Act (AMA), 1946 (select sections)
- Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA), 1957
- Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA), 1970

In addition to these food safety laws, FSIS also implements the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1958, which requires that livestock are handled and slaughtered humanely.



Ensuring that meat, poultry, and processed eggs are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled.

Who We Are

Much has changed since the Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1906. Today, tens of billions of pounds of meat and poultry and billions of pounds of liquid egg products are produced, transported, and sold every year. A system of this magnitude requires constant vigilance to prevent the possibility of foodborne contamination

More than 9,600 employees strong, FSIS personnel work together to accomplish our mission of protecting public health. Making sure that meat, poultry, and processed egg products are safe and wholesome is not an easy task. It requires many motivated, skilled, and highly trained professionals working as **one team with one purpose**.

As part of one team, FSIS participates in Cultural Transformation, a commitment to work in collaboration with USDA on civil rights and equal employment opportunities (EEO), embrace a respectful and diverse workforce, and strive for a highly effective, collaborative work environment. FSIS fosters an inclusive workforce by recruiting and hiring skilled applicants that reflect America's diversity. FSIS eliminates barriers to equal employment and allows employees to advance based on merit. Managers and supervisors lead by example to ensure that the environment is free from discrimination, hostility, intimidation, reprisal, and harassment.



We leverage the skills of our employees to deliver quality products and services.



How We Work

Foodborne illness can be prevented. FSIS strives to lower the incidence of pathogens that cause foodborne illness and limit the occurrence of outbreaks in our regulated products. Millions of Americans and consumers around the world depend on the work of FSIS to keep them safe. As a public health agency, FSIS uses science to achieve the statutory mission laid out for us by Congress. Science drives our policy, which drives our inspection that ensures that we are prepared to address existing and new food safety threats.

FSIS prevents foodborne illness by:

- performing food safety inspection activities at more than 6,000 establishments nationwide, and ensuring that inspection aligns with existing and emerging risks;
- maximizing domestic and international compliance with food safety policies;
- enhancing public education and outreach to increase safe food-handling practices; and
- strengthening collaboration among internal and external stakeholders and other public and private-sector partners to prevent foodborne illness.

We expand capacity to address new and evolving risks by:

- using science effectively to understand foodborne illness and emerging trends; and
- implementing effective policies.

FSIS also advances other important goals, including:

- ensuring that animals are handled humanely at slaughter; and
- ensuring that regulated products are properly packaged and labeled so consumers have access to important information about the product.

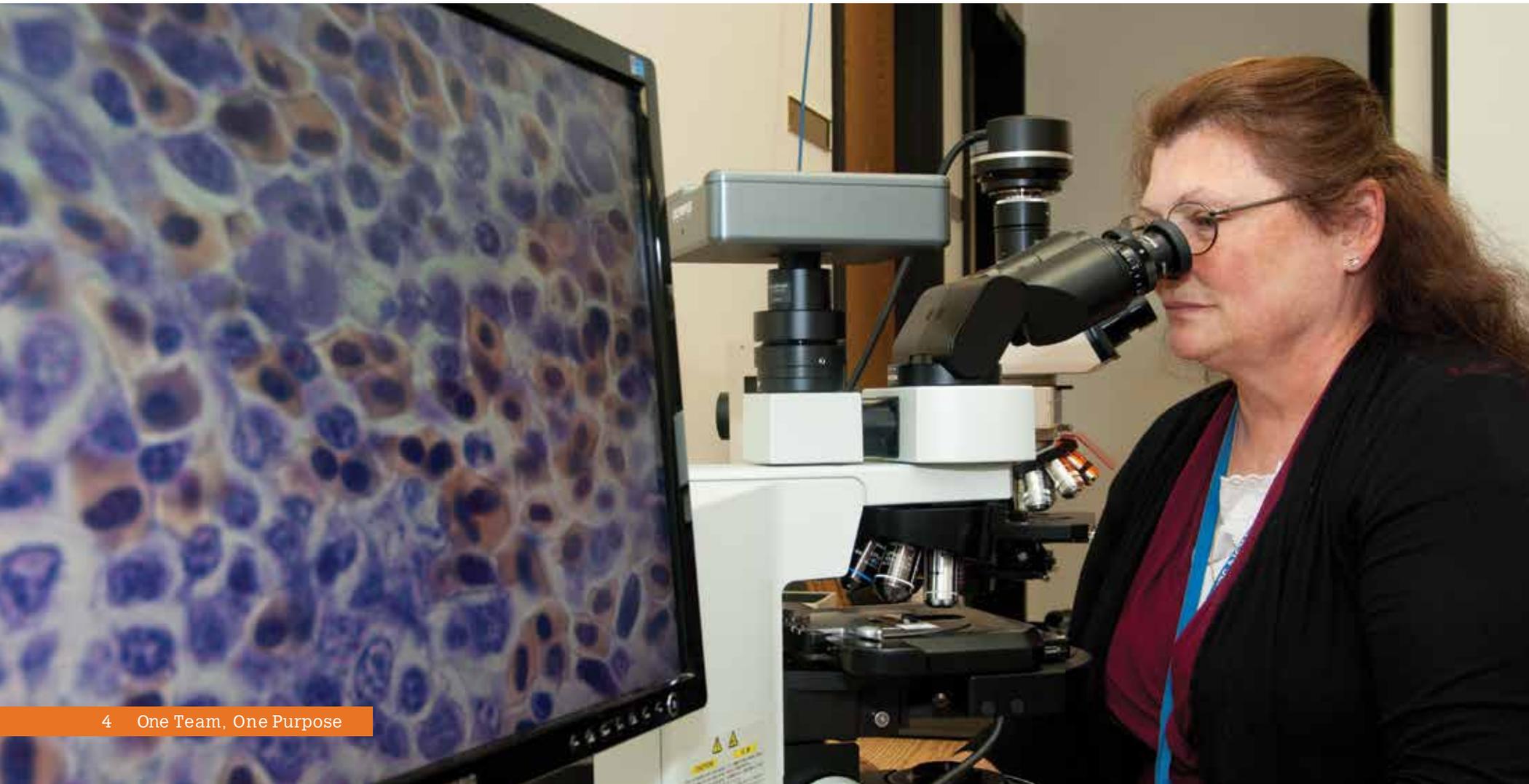
Finally, FSIS ensures that the infrastructure is in place to meet current and future challenges by:

- empowering employees with the training, resources, and tools to enable success in protecting public health; and
- developing, maintaining, and using innovative methodologies, processes, and tools to protect public health efficiently and effectively.

The Threat of Foodborne Illness

Foodborne illness is a serious public health issue. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that foodborne bacteria sicken about **48 million** Americans (1 in 6) every year. In addition, foodborne illnesses hospitalize approximately **128,000** people and cause about **3,000** deaths annually. The USDA Economic Research Service estimates that foodborne illness costs consumers about **\$6.9 billion** annually.

FSIS coordinates with food safety partners at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which regulates other food products sold in commerce such as leafy greens, bakery goods, and beverages, and at the CDC, which investigates and identifies causes of foodborne illnesses.



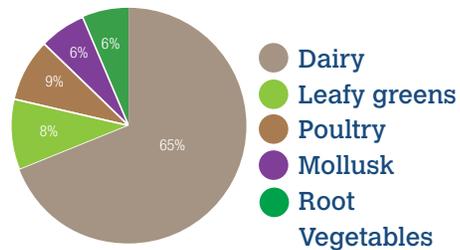
Foodborne illness is a serious public health issue.



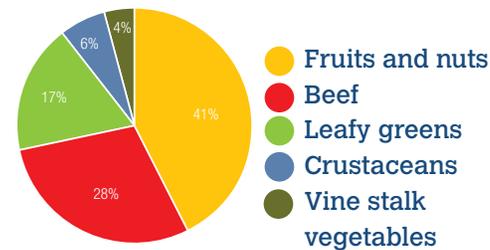
Number of Illnesses Caused by Four Foodborne Pathogens for All Products in Commerce

Most Common Foods Attributable**

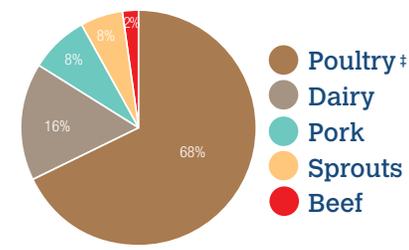
Campylobacter



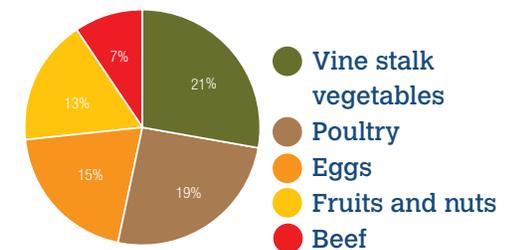
Escherichia coli



Listeria monocytogenes



Salmonella



Annual Illnesses*	845,024
Annual Hospitalizations*	8,463
Annual Deaths*	78

Annual Illnesses*	175,905
Annual Hospitalizations*	2,409
Annual Deaths*	20

Annual Illnesses*	1,591
Annual Hospitalizations*	1,455
Annual Deaths*	255

Annual Illnesses*	1,027,561
Annual Hospitalizations*	19,336
Annual Deaths*	378

Source: *Scallan E, Hoekstra RM, Angulo FJ, Tauxe RV, Widdowson M-A, Roy SL, et al. Foodborne illness acquired in the United States—major pathogens. Emerg Infect Dis [serial on the Internet]. 2011 Jan [July 2, 2013]. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3201/eid1701.P11101>

**Painter JA, Hoekstra RM, Ayers T, Tauxe RV, Braden CR, Angulo FJ, et al. Attribution of foodborne illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths to food commodities by using outbreak data, United States, 1998–2008. Emerg Infect Dis [Internet]. 2013 Mar [July 11, 2013].

‡Listeria illnesses are associated with three outbreaks from 1998 through 2002 from turkey delicatessen meat, which was contaminated in the processing plant after cooking.

Tackling the Threat of Foodborne Illness

FSIS continues to improve its response to tackling **four foodborne pathogens**—*Salmonella*, *Escherichia coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, and *Campylobacter*—that most frequently affect our regulated products.

FSIS collects samples at establishments to verify that the products being produced are safe and wholesome.



**In this work, we
are one team with
one purpose.**

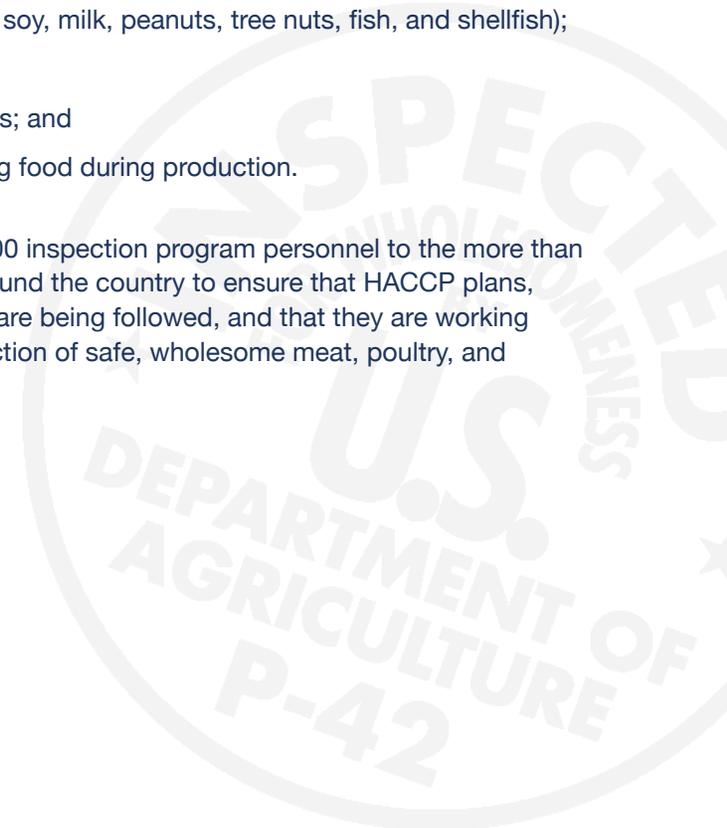


However, the agency's mission begins much earlier in the process. FSIS ensures safety through a series of policies and regulations that define how establishments can operate to produce a safe and wholesome product. Through these efforts, FSIS has mandated that establishments have a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan. This process requires establishments to think about all of the hazards along the slaughter and production process to control and reduce risks and to ensure a safe product for consumers. FSIS verifies that these plans are in place and working effectively.

And pathogens are only one piece to the food safety puzzle. FSIS also works to reduce the harm associated with:

- allergens (such as egg, soy, milk, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish);
- mislabeled product;
- illegal chemical residues; and
- foreign material entering food during production.

FSIS deploys almost 8,000 inspection program personnel to the more than 6,000 establishments around the country to ensure that HACCP plans, policies, and regulations are being followed, and that they are working as intended in the production of safe, wholesome meat, poultry, and processed egg products.



Careers with the Food Safety and Inspection Service

FSIS employs a host of skilled professionals from inspectors to scientists to mathematicians, who form a dynamic workforce. This team combines the knowledge and expertise of its members to help the agency meet our mission of providing consumers a safe supply of meat, poultry, and processed egg products.



Data analysts use information collected by the agency to provide analytical and statistical support to the food safety mission.



Veterinarians help oversee the effectiveness of farm-to-table food safety systems, applying expertise in epidemiology, pathology, risk management, and humane slaughter. FSIS is the largest employer of veterinarians in the United States.



Scientists protect the public by using microbiology, pathology, and chemical analyses of meat, poultry, and processed egg products.



Risk managers develop solutions to emerging issues in food safety and inspection.



Equal employment specialists help managers administer the agency's Equal Employment Opportunity program.



Policy writers ensure agency regulations are clear, enforceable, and consistent with program objectives, statutory requirements, and departmental policies.



Human resources specialists assist with hiring and training employees, administering benefits, analyzing positions, and resolving grievances.



Information management and computer specialists analyze information needs of the organization while working with managers to improve data systems and applications used to collect information supporting the agency's mission.



Public affairs and legislative specialists handle communication with the media, Congress, the public, and other stakeholders.



Food safety health educators design and administer education programs for the public to combat foodborne illnesses.



Purchasing and contract specialists meet the agency's needs for acquiring goods and services.



Evaluators and investigators respond to consumer and industry complaints and concerns to help ensure that the agency's programs are generating the results they were designed to produce.



Financial managers and analysts help administer the multi-million-dollar annual budget of the agency.

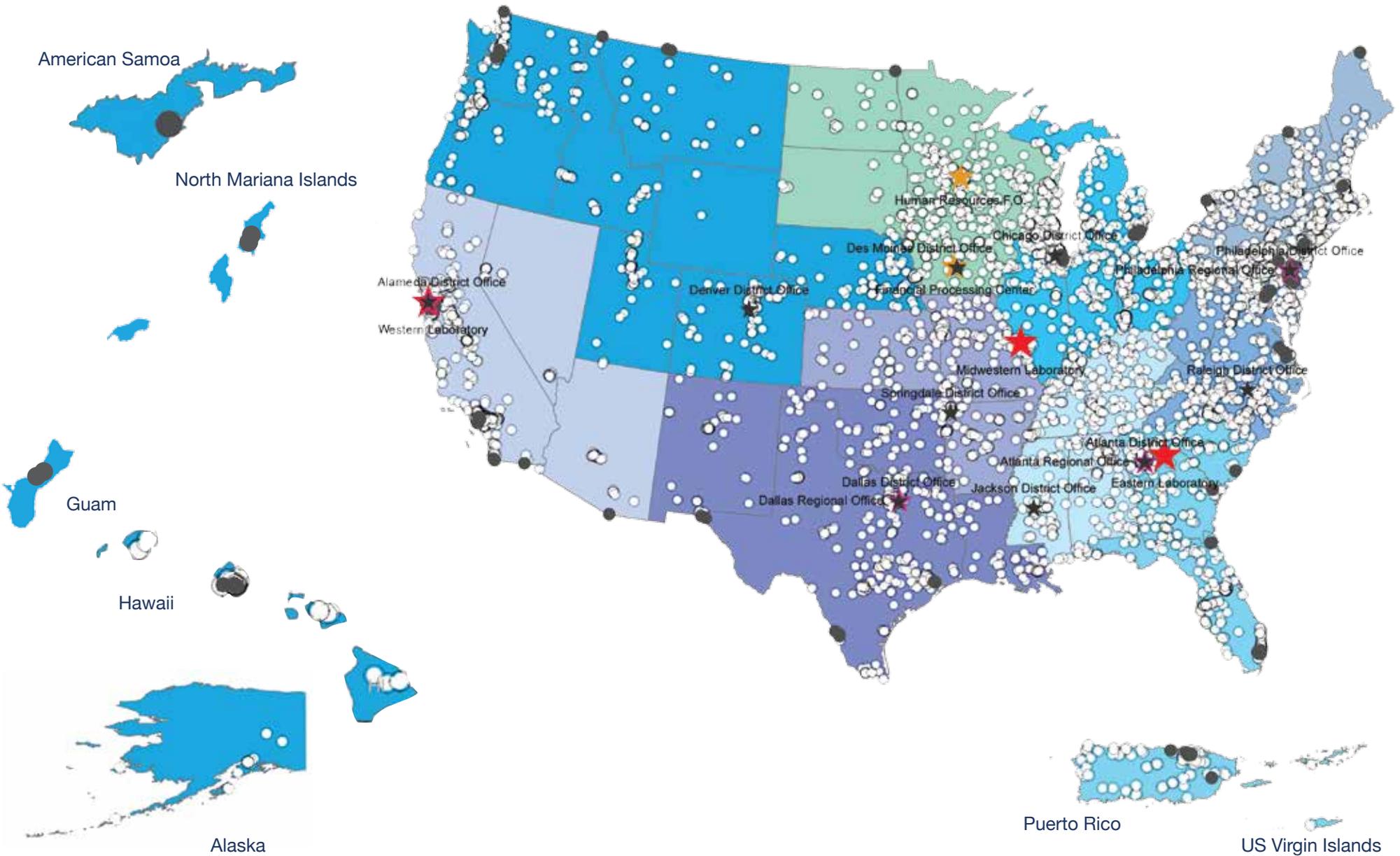


U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps is one of seven uniformed services that employ officers in many Federal agencies to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of the Nation.



Technical and clerical personnel in each of our offices across the country process information and ensure office operations run smoothly.

Where We Work



The work performed by FSIS employees touches every community in the United States and its territories. The map shows the location of regulated facilities (white circles) and import warehouses (grey circles). Field personnel inspect domestic products at regulated facilities and imported product at key locations before distribution throughout the country or territories. FSIS personnel work tirelessly to ensure that the meat, poultry, and processed egg products in commerce are safe and wholesome.

The agency:

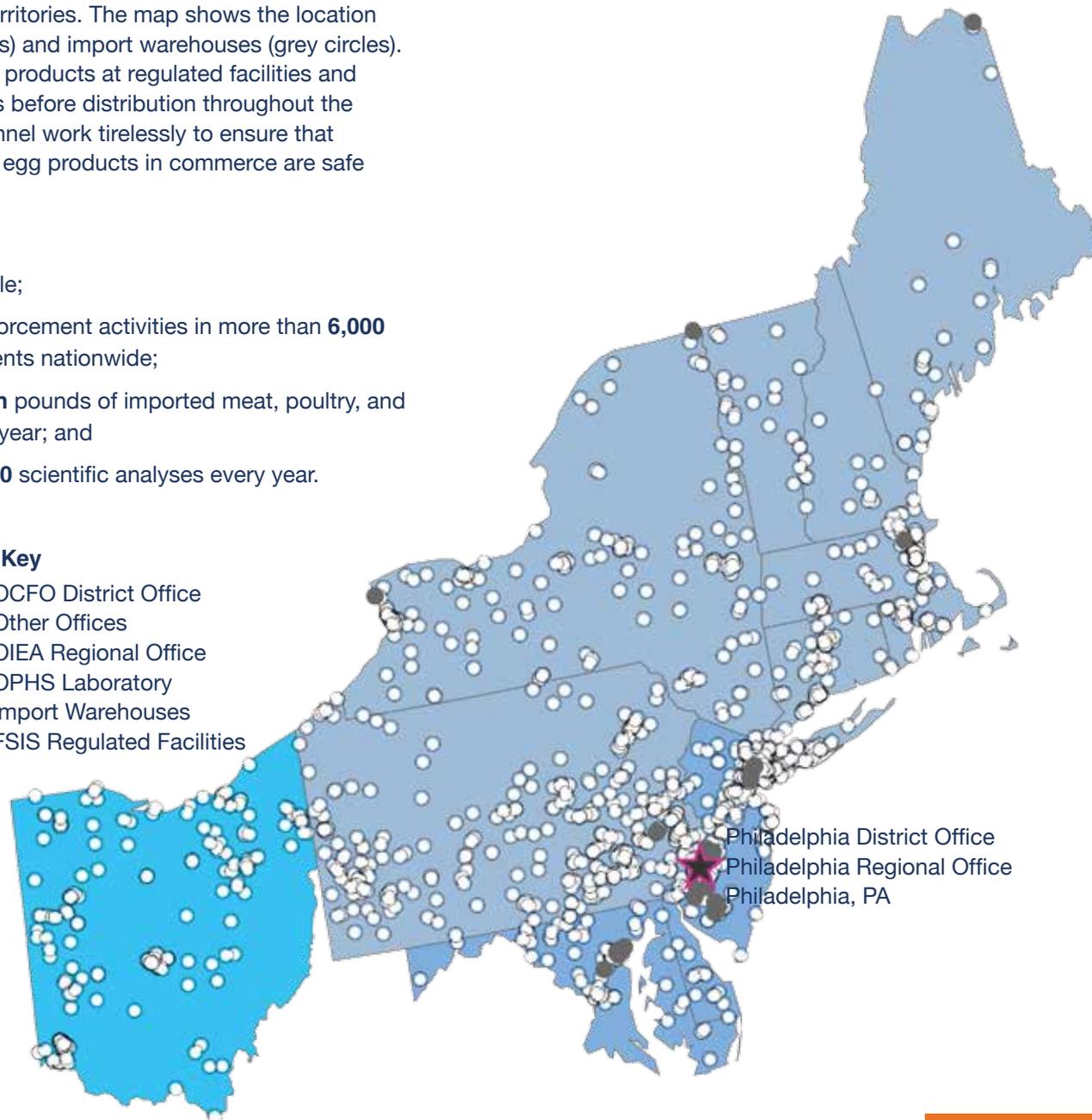
- employs more than **9,600** people;
- coordinates inspection and enforcement activities in more than **6,000** federally inspected establishments nationwide;
- inspects the more than **3 billion** pounds of imported meat, poultry, and processed egg products every year; and
- performs approximately **190,000** scientific analyses every year.

Districts

	Alameda, CA
	Atlanta, GA
	Chicago, IL
	Dallas, TX
	Denver, CO
	Des Moines, IA
	Jackson, MS
	Philadelphia, PA
	Raleigh, NC
	Springdale, AR

Map Key

- ★ OCFO District Office
- ★ Other Offices
- ★ OIEA Regional Office
- ★ OPHS Laboratory
- Import Warehouses
- FSIS Regulated Facilities



Partnerships

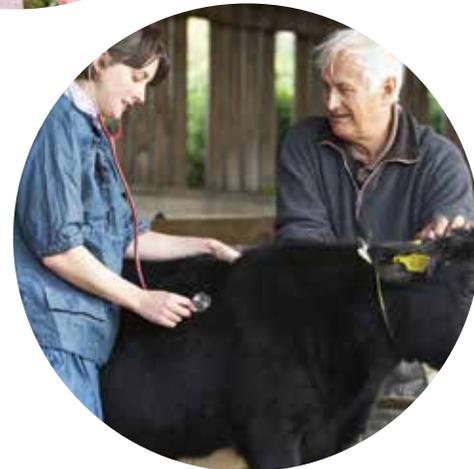
F SIS routinely collaborates with other Federal agencies, States, tribal authorities, stakeholders, and the public to ensure the safety of meat, poultry, and processed egg products along the farm-to-table continuum.

- This collaboration is exemplified by FSIS, CDC, and FDA as well as State, local, and tribal authorities working in concert to investigate outbreaks, identify the source of illness, and promptly remove unsafe food from store shelves.
- FSIS coordinates with these Federal, State, and tribal partners to develop and disseminate food safety messages to serve public health and advance the food safety dialogue.

- FSIS collaborates with FDA, CDC, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Commerce, Department of State, and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative on interagency food safety and food defense. Through this work, the agency has been able to prioritize prevention, strengthen surveillance and enforcement systems, and improve response and recovery.
- To ensure that FSIS policies and regulations are robust and effective, the agency seeks input from stakeholders on draft documents at public meetings and through the public comment process to make certain that all voices are considered.



The public health community is more powerful when it speaks with a single voice and shares resources in service of a common mission. Our partnerships make us stronger.



Office of Field Operations

Field Operations is the **frontline in inspecting** meat, poultry, and processed egg products. Employees **coordinate** inspection and enforcement activities in more than 6,000 federally inspected establishments nationwide, as well as at import establishments, ensuring that the products that FSIS regulates are **safe, wholesome, and properly labeled**.

This office also is responsible for ensuring that the regulated product that is imported into the United States meets our standards, and that the regulated product that is exported to other nations meets the standards that they have set forth.



Through the work of Field Operations, FSIS has a footprint in every community and touches dinner tables from coast to coast.



Inspection personnel, the largest employee group in Field Operations, form the core of the agency. FSIS currently employs about 8,000 individuals nationwide who perform inspection activities at plants and import establishments. In addition, they perform in-depth evaluations and assessments as needed. Many inspectors are veterinarians. Their job begins the moment an animal arrives at a regulated facility and continues throughout slaughter and processing. For processed egg products, inspectors are present during the entire egg breaking and pasteurization process. Field Operations personnel also gather data to inform our understanding of the risks in the food safety system and implement the science that the agency develops, to **keep the public safe**. If FSIS inspection personnel can find that the product is safe and wholesome, they apply the mark of inspection.

Field Staff

FSIS has 10 district offices throughout the United States. These offices provide support for the inspectors in the plants and import establishments, including the highly trained individuals that conduct in-depth food safety assessments to ensure that preventive controls by establishments are adequately designed and executed.

Import Inspection Management Staff

All imported products are inspected. The team at our import establishments inspect product to ensure it comes from an approved source and is made available for pathogen and residue sampling as well as a physical examination. If the product fails inspection, it is refused entry and must be removed from the country or destroyed.

Recall Management and Technical Analysis Staff

This group leads and coordinates all FSIS recall activities and provides technical support for the agency's public health mission.

Resource Management and Financial Planning Staff

To make sure the right personnel and resources are in the field, this staff provides leadership in the allocation and distribution of human and financial resources.

Strategic Planning and Operations Management Staff

This group develops, coordinates, and implements a comprehensive Operational Plan to ensure that the field work aligns with the agency's strategic plan and that management controls are effective in accomplishing the mission of FSIS.

Office of Public Health Science

Public Health Science applies its scientific knowledge and expertise to provide in-depth analyses and advice on all matters of science and public health. In addition, Public Health Science collaborates with Federal, State, local public health, tribal authorities, and agricultural and animal health officials to **investigate foodborne outbreaks** and **prevent**

foodborne disease. Public Health Science provides the public health and scientific basis for the development of food safety policies, emergency response, outreach efforts, data collection initiatives, and research priorities.





Public Health Science manages a variety of scientific programs to identify, manage, and, when possible, prevent exposure to foodborne pathogens and chemical residues in meat, poultry, and processed egg products, such as nationwide sampling programs, risk assessments, foreign equivalency reviews, and outbreak investigations.

Public Health Science operates in three scientific and one management area and maintains three field laboratories and the Food Emergency Response Network

Science Staff

FSIS employs scientists who are experts in microbiology, chemistry, and toxicology to evaluate existing and emerging hazards in meat, poultry, and processed egg products. They assist in investigating national and international outbreaks, monitor current and **emerging foodborne threats**, and advise leadership on matters of science to improve policies and programs.

Risk Assessment and Analytics Staff

The agency also benefits from an interdisciplinary scientific team of analysts who develop and use various mathematical models to evaluate effectiveness of intervention strategies to improve public health.

Applied Epidemiology Staff

In collaboration with Federal, State, local, and territorial public health partners, this group of epidemiologists and public health professionals conducts surveillance by monitoring foodborne incidents, initiating foodborne illness investigations, and responding to consumer complaints.

Regulatory Field Services Laboratories

Public Health Science maintains three laboratory sites— Alameda, CA, St. Louis, MO, and Athens, GA—that analyze regulated products along with environmental samples from regulated establishments for both microbial hazards (e.g., *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, and *Listeria monocytogenes*) and chemical hazards (e.g., veterinary drug residues, pesticides, and environmental contaminants).

Resource Management and Program Staff

This group provides the office with administrative, budgetary, travel, staffing, performance management, and strategic support.

Office of Policy and Program Development

Policy and Program Development develops regulations as well as instructions for inspectors to implement these regulations to prevent foodborne illness and protect public health. They **leverage science**, use statutes, and interpret data to develop policies and instructions to the

field that further promote the safety of meat, poultry, and processed egg products. This process leads to constant improvements as our inspection evolves through time.



Policy and Program Development continues to modernize the agency's approach to counter emerging risks to meat, poultry, and processed egg products.



A critical part of the FSIS mission, Policy and Program Development is comprised of eight groups who take a comprehensive look at food safety issues to lay out the fundamental principles that guide the agency's decisions.

Import Export Coordination and Policy Development Staff

Through coordination with other FSIS staff and U.S. agencies, this staff maintains the FSIS Export Library and develops policies regarding the export and import of regulated products.

International Equivalence Staff

In close coordination with International Relations and Strategic Planning Staff, this group makes recommendations concerning U.S. food safety standards in regulated products imported into the United States.

International Relations and Strategic Planning Staff

This group coordinates and develops U.S. food safety strategy with other USDA agencies, Federal agencies, and industry and non-governmental organizations to harmonize food safety efforts related to FSIS policies.

Issuances Staff

This staff provides leadership for the analysis and development of agency regulations, notices, and directives and manages the petition process.

Labeling and Program Delivery Staff

This staff evaluates labels submitted to the agency for prior approval and develops policies and inspection methods focused on the labeling of meat, poultry, processed egg products, and their ingredients to protect consumers from misbranded and economically adulterated regulated products.

Policy Analysis Staff

By developing and conducting economic analyses of agency regulations and assessing the effectiveness of existing policies, this group identifies regulatory alternatives as well as economic and social outcomes to maintain effective agency policy.

Policy Development Staff

This group identifies policy needs in the field and subsequently develops policy solutions to address the intent and application of verification and enforcement policy in in-plant activity.

Risk, Innovations and Management Staff

This group ensures that policy initiatives have a strong scientific basis by using risk analysis principles and that resource allocations are aligned with the agency's food safety mission.

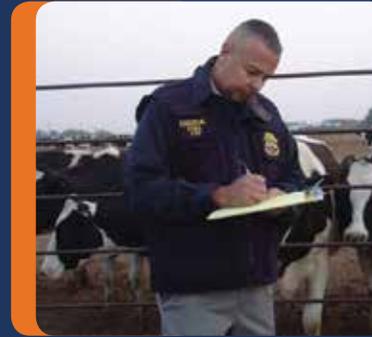
Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit

FSIS has many policies and regulations designed to make sure food is safe, but they are only effective when they are followed and implemented correctly. Investigation, Enforcement and Audit ensures the safety of regulated products through **surveillance**, **investigations**, and **enforcement activities**, as well as responds

to foodborne illness outbreaks and natural disaster or intentional contamination events. In addition, this group enforces international and State equivalency and manages criminal, administrative, and civil sanctions as specified by Federal laws and regulations.



Investigation, Enforcement and Audit is the eyes and ears of the agency, enforcing the policies to keep food safe for the consumer.



Investigation, Enforcement and Audit strives to prevent outbreaks and foodborne illness by working collaboratively to ensure the safety of regulated products. This staff is organized into four groups.

Compliance and Investigations Division

Investigating to ensure food safety, food defense, and other consumer protection requirements is paramount to the success of the agency's mission. The staff is responsible for controlling unsafe products. The group also develops cases to ensure that appropriate criminal, administrative, and civil sanctions are carried out according to agency laws, regulations, and directives.

Enforcement and Litigation Division

By executing FSIS-wide criminal, civil, and administrative enforcement programs, this group enforces the statutes and imposes sanctions according to agency laws and policies. It also conducts litigation to uphold FSIS-wide personnel, employment, and labor-management decisions and actions.

Management Control and Audit Division

This group conducts independent audits of foreign, Federal, and State inspection programs to ensure programs are managed in compliance with Federal laws and regulations. The staff helps FSIS to reduce wasteful practices, fraud, or mismanagement.

Resource Management Staff

This staff manages administrative, budgetary, travel, staffing, performance management, and strategic support.

Office of Data Integration and Food Protection

Working closely with other offices in FSIS and other departments within the Federal government, Data Integration and Food Protection implements procedures to **prepare for, respond to, and recover from** any contamination, food emergency, or natural disaster that affects meat, poultry, and processed egg products. The office analyzes datasets to identify trends and develop solutions—all in service of food safety and food defense.





Office of Data Integration and Food Protection

Data Integration and Food Protection ensures that FSIS has proper emergency management policies, food defense directives, and consistent and high-quality data analyses. This office is made up of three groups who work together to accomplish their mission.

Food Defense Assessment Staff

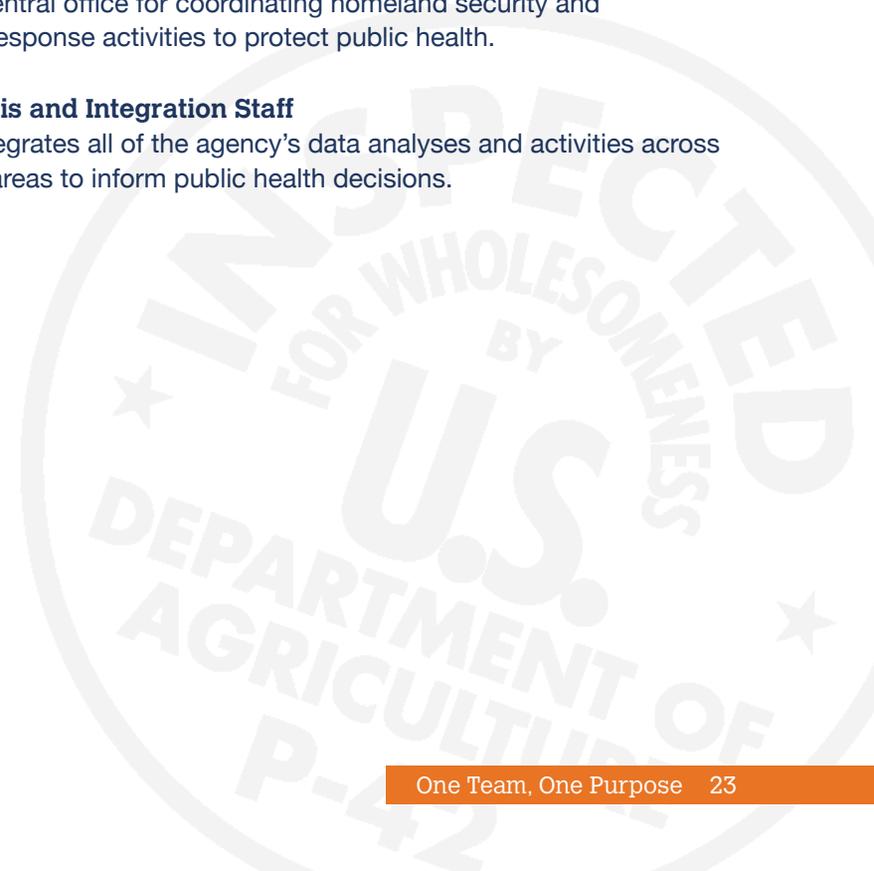
This staff provides the scientific and technical basis to support preparedness, response, and recovery initiatives for all threats affecting the food supply.

Emergency Coordination Staff

This is the central office for coordinating homeland security and emergency response activities to protect public health.

Data Analysis and Integration Staff

This staff integrates all of the agency's data analyses and activities across all program areas to inform public health decisions.



Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education

Public Affairs and Consumer Education ensures that all external and internal stakeholders are receiving timely, accurate, and relevant information about the work that FSIS is doing to protect public health, as well as educates consumers on how to safely handle and prepare foods.





Congressional and Public Affairs Staff

This group is responsible for conveying all of the agency's food safety initiatives, events, and recalls to Congress, the media, industry, consumer advocacy groups, consumers, and to the internal workforce through multiple channels, including traditional and social media.

Food Safety Education Staff

In an effort to distribute the latest science, this staff designs food-safety education products and services for all age groups, especially at-risk groups. Their food safety experts operate the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline and Ask Karen, which provides real-time safe food-handling information to consumers by telephone, chat, and Website.

Executive Correspondence and Issues Management Staff

Everyday, FSIS receives a multitude of requests from stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and the public. This staff provides written and informational support services to agency and departmental executives.

Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act Staff

This group is responsible for administering the Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act compliance requests that are submitted to FSIS, ensuring that our work as a Federal Government is transparent to the public and our stakeholders.

Web and Digital Communications Staff

Most people interact with FSIS through our outward facing Website. This group designs and implements strategies to convey the agency's public health information through the FSIS Website, the internal employee site, and other mobile and social media channels.

Outreach, Employee Education and Training is committed to excellence through communications and partnerships with employees, colleagues, and small plant operators.

Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training

Because the agency believes in continual learning, it sets a premium on training and growth of its employees. Outreach, Employee Education and Training designs and directs **outreach, education, and training** programs for the staff. This office also has a special charge to help small and very small plants interpret our rules and regulations to enhance their food safety systems.

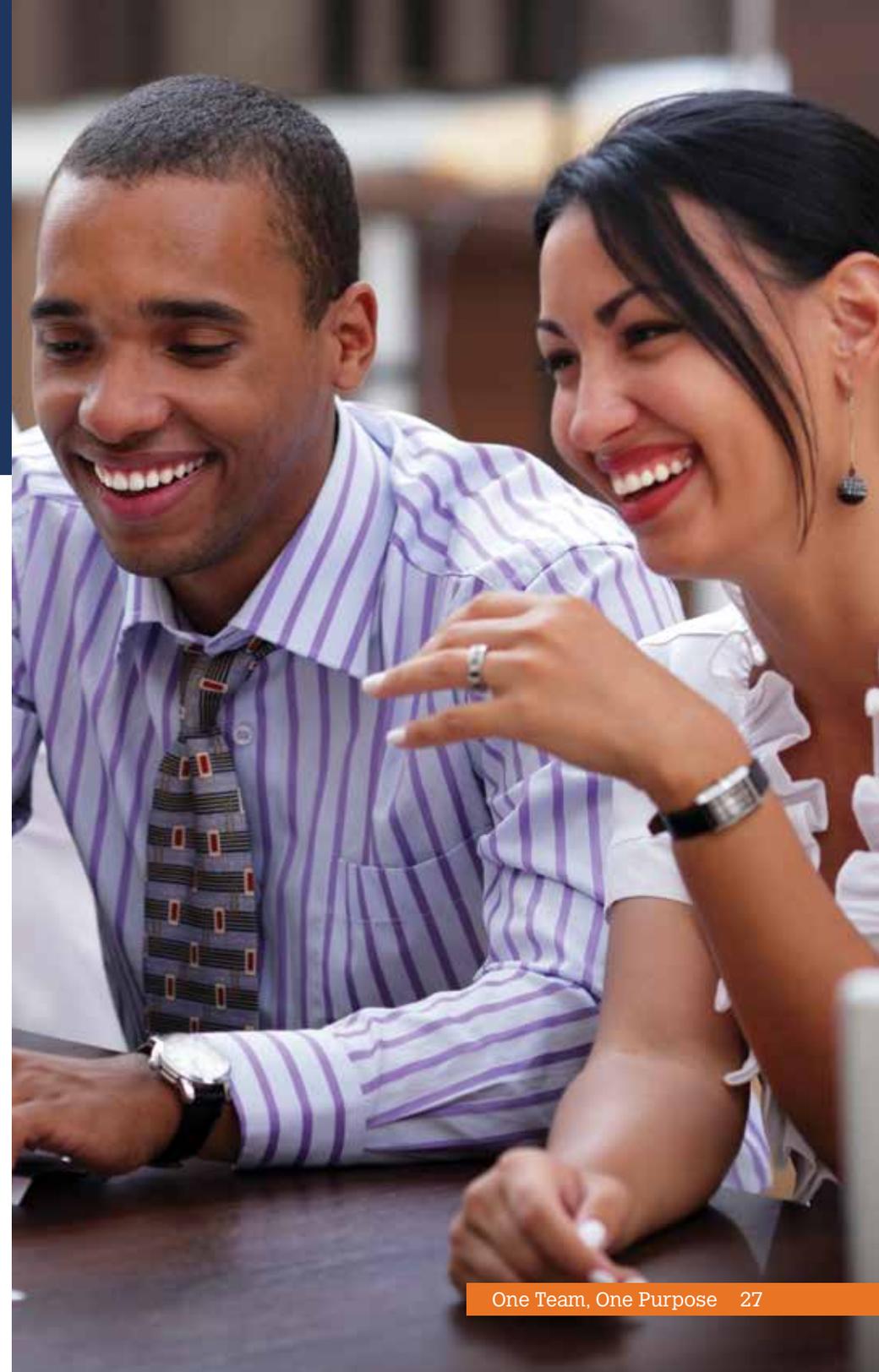


Together, these key programs are designed to fulfill FSIS employees' needs in the areas of:

- Benefits and Pay
- Recruitment and Staff Acquisition
- Performance Management
- Employee Relations
- Labor Relations
- Procurement
- Facilities, Fleet and Property Services
- Travel and Commuting
- Work and Home Life Balance
- Employee Health and Safety
- Physical Security
- Greening Initiative

Office of Management

Employees are the agency's number one asset. The Office of Management provides a range of administrative and support services to FSIS through the Office of Human Resources, the Employee Safety, Health and Wellness Staff, and the Office of Administrative Services. The Office of Management seeks to provide the resources, systems, and processes for FSIS to carry out its food safety mission. The Office of Management leads the agency's Greening Initiative, ensuring that the agency is meeting all of the goals in the Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan, while raising awareness and providing a means for all FSIS employees to engage in sustainable activities.





Office of the Administrator

The Civil Rights Staff within the Office of the Administrator provides advice, guidance, and assistance on the implementation, management, and compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity programs. Such programs include Affirmative Employment, Complaints Management, Special Emphasis Program, Equal Employment Opportunity Training, and Workforce Diversity. The staff's goal is to ensure fair and equal treatment to internal and external customers. A diverse, skilled workforce brings different vantage points and opinions, resulting in new or novel approaches to food safety concerns.

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer is responsible for maximizing food safety with each dollar of taxpayer resources through continuous improvement in strategic planning, cost analysis, internal controls, financial services, budget formulation and execution, and performance evaluation.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer is responsible for FSIS information technology management, infrastructure, telecommunications, security, applications, data, investments, and innovation—both in headquarters and in the field—to achieve a more agile, adaptable, and high-performing organization. This office ensures that innovative methodologies, processes, and tools are available to the FSIS workforce to support our mission to keep our regulated products safe and wholesome.

The U.S. Codex Office, although housed specifically under FSIS, represents the U.S. Government at the Codex Alimentarius Commission, an intergovernmental body that sets voluntary international food standards. The U.S. Codex Office manages the activities of an inter-agency partnership that engages both government and non-government stakeholders in the development and adoption of science-based food standards and advocates U.S. interests in protecting the health of consumers by ensuring fair practices in the food trade before the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

The Internal Control Staff investigates personnel misconduct and conducts a range of selected administrative investigations to protect against waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement. This staff also conducts independent and objective audits, investigations, and critical analyses of FSIS programs to help FSIS achieve its public health objectives and ensure that programs are managed with integrity and in compliance with Federal laws.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

To File an Employment Complaint

If you wish to file an employment complaint, you must contact your agency's EEO Counselor (PDF) within 45 days of the date of the alleged discriminatory act, event, or in the case of a personnel action. Additional information can be found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_file.html.

To File a Program Complaint

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (PDF), found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Persons with Disabilities

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities and you wish to file either an EEO or program complaint please contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish).

Persons with disabilities who wish to file a program complaint, please see information above on how to contact us by mail directly or by email. If you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

January 2014

