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Department of
Agriculture

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Food Safety and Inspection Service Protecting Public Health and Preventing Foodborne Illness



Food Safety and Inspection Service:

FSIS response to NACMPI 2016 Meeting
Consideration of Mandatory Labeling Features for Certain
Processed Not Ready to Eat Meat and Poultry Products

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Agenda

- 2016 NACMPI Presentation Summary
- 3 Recommendations from the Committee
- Focus Group Studies on Safe Handling Instructions
- Future Focus Group Studies on Use of Manufacturers' Cooking Instructions

Food Safety and Inspection Service:

Background on RTE vs NRTE Labeling Features

- Ready to Eat (RTE) vs. NRTE (not ready to eat) differences in required labeling features

- Issues of concern
 - Appearance of NRTE products
 - Labeling features on principal display panel that the product needs to be cooked
 - Focus group studies
 - Recalls for undercooked poultry products

NACMPI Recommendations

1) Does the committee believe a mandatory statement should be required to differentiate RTE and NRTE products on labeling?

NACMPI recommendation:

- FSIS should have focus groups to build on previous RTI study to develop mandatory language and location for this information

2) Should FSIS require validated cooking instructions on NRTE that look RTE?

- Method of cooking
- Endpoint temperature
- Measure by a thermometer
- Anything else needed

NACMPI recommendation:

- A disclaimer NOT to use a microwave, if applicable
- Appropriate method to take product temperature
- Clearly specify which steps are needed for food safety

3) Other steps that FSIS should consider?

NACMPI recommendation:

- FSIS should develop a risk assessment
- Work with other agencies (FDA)
- Consider creating a standard for the products
- Implement new labeling requirements
- Continue to educate consumers on food safety issues

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SHI Research

- 2017-2020 FSIS conducted research on a possible voluntary revision to the Safe Handling Instructions (SHI) label
- Also included research on NRTE products
- Eye tracking was used to collect data on participants' attention to the SHI and manufacturers' cooking instructions (MCI)
- Determination of whether cooking for safety was required (for NRTE) vs not required (for RTE) foods
- Data will be forthcoming

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Recent Research on NRTE products

- From April to September 2019, FSIS conducted a meal preparation experiment to evaluate consumers' frozen food handling behaviors in a test kitchen.
- The results of this research showed how easily consumers may confuse not-ready-to-eat frozen foods with ready-to-eat products.
- Nearly a quarter of the participants preparing frozen foods were not sure if the products were raw or fully cooked despite it being labeled on the package.
- In addition, a vast majority of participants failed to wash their hands properly while handling frozen food items.

Food Safety and Inspection Service:

Forthcoming Research on Awareness of and Use of Manufacturers' Cooking Instructions

- Upcoming focus groups may study consumer understanding and use of manufacturers' cooking instructions (MCI)
- Purpose is to better understand how consumers use MCI on RTE and NRTE meat and poultry
- FSIS can use this information to assess whether revisions are needed to mandated labeling features to ensure that consumers safely handle and prepare meat and poultry products

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Next Steps

- FSIS has planned a virtual meeting on October 6, 2020 on Food Safety: Consumer Outreach and Education Today and for the Future
- FSIS plans to use information from these various research studies and the consumer outreach meeting to inform potential rulemaking for labeling of NRTE vs RTE meat and poultry products
- FSIS will also use such information for guiding the development of improved consumer education information and continue coordinating such efforts with other agencies

Food Safety and Inspection Service:

The word "QUESTIONS" is rendered in large, white, 3D block letters. The letters are set against a background of vibrant, multi-colored brushstrokes in shades of purple, blue, green, yellow, and orange. The brushstrokes are layered and have a dynamic, energetic feel, giving the word a sense of movement and depth.

Questions