



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food Safety  
and Inspection  
Service

# Protecting America's Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products

*A Report to the Secretary on the Food Security  
Accomplishments of the Food Safety and Inspection  
Service, 2003*



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April 2004

# Food Security

## An Agency's Long History of Experience in Protecting Food

Since 1884, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and its forerunner agencies have worked aggressively to prevent and contain any threats to the U.S. food supply. These challenges have included zoonotic diseases, microbial contamination, and physical threats.

While the events of September 11, 2001, brought the issue of the vulnerability of our food supply to the forefront, FSIS' food security efforts did not start on September 12, 2001. FSIS' 100-plus years' worth of experience in dealing with food emergencies have allowed the agency to develop the expertise to protect the U.S. meat, poultry, and egg products supply wherever and whenever emergencies or new threats arise.

The United States has a strong and effective *food safety* infrastructure to protect the public against food contamination. FSIS has over 7,600 inspectors in 6,000 slaughter and food processing establishments on a daily basis. However, strengthening the *food security* infrastructure to protect against intentional contamination encompasses a broader range of considerations. Once again FSIS is supplementing its strong food safety system with many measures to enhance its ability to prevent the deliberate contamination of food. These activities have included addressing the use of biological, chemical, physical, and radiological means to contaminate meat, poultry, and egg products. FSIS also carefully considers such factors as physical security, surveillance and monitoring, personnel security, and emergency response in ensuring the security of the products it regulates—whether within the inspected facilities or in the distribution chain.

## Food Security: Crucial for Protecting Public Health

Deliberate contamination of the food supply could cause significant public health consequences and widespread public fear, as well as a devastating economic impact and loss of public confidence in the safety of our food supply. Threats to the food supply are already a reality. One recent incident occurred in January 2003, when seven suspects were arrested in Britain for allegedly planning to lace the food supply at a British military base with the deadly toxin Ricin. One of the suspects worked for a food preparation company. In September 2002, a Chinese snack shop owner contaminated the food at a rival's store in China using rat poison, which killed more than 40 people, mostly children, and made nearly 300 people ill. In December 2002, a supermarket employee in Michigan contaminated 200 pounds of ground beef with an insecticide that made 111 people ill, including 40

children. In December 2003, the President issued HSPD-7, *Critical Infrastructure, Identification, Prioritization, and Protection*, which recognizes USDA as a sector-specific agency for the protection of agriculture and food (meat, poultry, and egg products).

Recognition of the need to protect the U.S. food supply begins at the highest levels of government. In May 1998, the administration ordered the strengthening of the Nation's defenses against emerging unconventional threats to the United States to include those involving terrorist acts, weapons of mass destruction, assaults on the Nation's critical infrastructures, and cyber-based attacks. In February 2003, President Bush identified additional critical infrastructures, including

food and agriculture, in his *National Strategy for the Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructures and Key Assets*. Additionally, President Bush signed Homeland Security Presidential Directive 9 (HSPD-9) in January 2004, which recognizes and addresses the need for interagency cooperation and communication to address agriculture and food defense issues. This important directive establishes joint Federal leadership as the goal to secure the Nation's agricultural production and food supply from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, and promotes interagency cooperation by establishing a national policy on agriculture and food security.

Increasing concerns about the security of our Nation's food supply led to the enactment of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-188). Section 332 of the act states that "FSIS may utilize existing authorities to give high priority to enhancing and expanding the capacity to conduct activities to:

- 1) enhance the ability of the Service to inspect and ensure the safety and wholesomeness of meat and poultry products;
- 2) improve the capacity of the Service to inspect international meat and meat products, poultry and poultry products, and egg products at points of origin and ports of entry;

- 3) strengthen the ability of the Service to collaborate with relevant agencies within the Department of Agriculture and with other entities within the Federal Government, States, and Indian Tribes; and
- 4) otherwise expand the capacity to protect against the threat of bioterrorism."

Thus, Congress and the President further defined and charged the agency with the responsibility to protect against "the threats of bioterrorism." Congress authorized FSIS to enhance this new framework and infrastructure with passage of this new law.

Since enactment of Public Law 107-188, FSIS has undertaken many initiatives to further protect meat, poultry, and egg products from potential terrorist attacks. The prior report on FSIS' food security initiatives, *Protecting America's Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products: A Report to the Secretary on the Food Security Initiatives of the Food Safety and Inspection Service*, released January 2003, detailed the efforts the agency undertook during the first year after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. This report provides details on activities the agency has completed or initiated since that last report.

## FSIS' Significant Accomplishments in Food Security

### Office of Food Security and Emergency Preparedness: Leading the Way

Immediately after September 11, 2001, FSIS established the Food Biosecurity Action Team (F-BAT). The charge of F-BAT was to coordinate all activities related to food security, counter-terrorism, and emergency preparedness within FSIS.

In August 2002, FSIS created the Office of Food Security and Emergency Preparedness (FSIS-OFSEP), which assumed the responsibilities of F-BAT to serve as the agency's centralized office on food security issues. FSIS-OFSEP is charged with developing the agency's infrastructure and capacity to prevent, prepare for, and respond to actual or suspected deliberate and unintentional, but major, events that threaten the U.S. food supply. FSIS-OFSEP is the lead coordinator and primary point of contact on **all** food security activities within FSIS. FSIS-OFSEP's homeland security activities have focused on:

- Emergency preparedness and response;
- Federal/State/industry relations;
- Continuity of Operations (COOP);
- Scientific expertise in biological, chemical, physical, and radiological terrorism; and
- Security clearance and safeguarding classified information.

To ensure that coordination of these activities involves all program areas of the agency, FSIS-OFSEP established a standing advisory group, the Food Security Advisory Team (FSAT). This team, comprised of representatives of the major program areas within FSIS, provides program-specific technical support.

FSIS-OFSEP ensures that the agency's food security activities are coordinated with the White House Homeland Security Council (HSC), Department of Homeland Security (DHS),

USDA's Homeland Security Office (USDA/HSO), and the FSIS Incident Management Team.

Additionally, FSIS-OFSEP closely collaborates and coordinates with our State partners to ensure an effective prevention and response program. A few of the State organization partners are: the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO); the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO); and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA).

With FSIS-OFSEP's leadership, agency program areas have been instrumental in myriad initiatives. These initiatives are discussed below in further detail.

### Additional Food Security Guidance Outreach

One initiative that FSIS-OFSEP has vigorously pursued is conducting additional food security guidance outreach. Just as all parts of the food supply chain work to ensure that meat, poultry, and egg products are safe and wholesome, each part of the food supply chain also plays a role in ensuring that products are secure from intentional contamination. In an emergency situation, the better prepared all participants in a supply chain are, the more effective an emergency response will be. In 2003, FSIS-OFSEP continued to work with consumers and the food industry to distribute information on the best ways to keep our food supply secure. FSIS' efforts include:

#### □ [Creating a Web Page for FSIS Homeland Security Information](#)

In the event of a food-security-related emergency, FSIS will provide fast, accurate, and useful information. The agency created a *Food Security and Emergency Preparedness* page on its Web site in order to make FSIS homeland security information

more widely available and easily accessible. The Web page (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/topics/biosecurity.htm>) includes guidance materials and background information designed for industry, consumers, and employees.

#### ❑ **Preparing and Distributing Security Guidelines for Transporters and Distributors of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products**

FSIS-OFSEP has made a strong effort to reach out to industry to encourage food security programs. In August 2003, the agency published the *FSIS Safety and Security Guidelines for the Transportation and Distribution of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products*. It is available on FSIS' Web site in English, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese and in print in English and Spanish. These voluntary guidelines are designed to help facilities and shippers that process or transport meat, poultry, and egg products strengthen their food safety and security plans. The guidelines provide recommendations to ensure the safety and security of food products through all phases of distribution. Guidelines were initially distributed to all Federal- and State-inspected plants, plant inspectors, USDA extension offices, and the State departments of agriculture. Additionally, copies were sent to all USDA Foreign Agricultural Service posts for distribution to foreign government officials. FSIS-OFSEP worked closely with USDA/HSO and DHS's Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in the development of these guidelines and is seeking input from industry and consumer groups.

#### ❑ **Developing and Issuing Food Safety and Food Security Guidance for Consumers**

In November 2003, FSIS-OFSEP issued the booklet *Food Safety and Food Security: What Consumers Need to Know* at the American Public Health Association's annual convention, one of the largest gatherings of public health officials in the world.

In addition, *USA Today* featured a news story on the importance of the information found in this booklet. These consumer guidelines, available in English and Spanish, offer comprehensive and practical information about safe food handling practices, foodborne illness, keeping foods safe during an emergency, and how to report suspected instances of food tampering.

#### ❑ **Developing and Publishing a Security Guidance Brochure for Transporters, Distributors, and Retailers**

FSIS-OFSEP developed and published a *Keep America's Food Safe* brochure in English and Spanish for distribution by FSIS Program Investigators and States. This brochure provides clear and commonsense measures that transporters, distributors, and retailers can implement to ensure the security of food throughout the transportation and distribution process.

#### ❑ **Continuing Outreach to External Stakeholders**

FSIS-OFSEP continues its communications outreach and coordination with external entities through industry food security coalitions and participation in trade, consumer group, State, local, and internationally sponsored food safety and public health conferences. Additionally, exhibiting at relevant conventions around the country has proven to be an efficient way of increasing food security awareness by reaching people who in turn pass information on to others who might benefit.

When information is shared between all stakeholders committed to providing safe meat, poultry, and egg products to consumers, everyone is better prepared to react when an emergency situation arises.

## Developed Procedures for Orange and Red Threat Levels

The next initiative was the development of procedures for additional actions to be taken when the threat level changes. In March 2003, as part of FSIS' initiative to prepare its workforce better to respond to a potential terrorist attack, FSIS issued Directives 5420.1 and 5420.2 to inform field and laboratory personnel about actions that are to be taken when DHS raises the Homeland Security Advisory System threat level to Orange or Red. The directives instruct in-plant and laboratory personnel in how they are to respond to new threat conditions, and they encourage cooperation with establishments to address concerns. For example, field employees use information provided by OFSEP to alert plant officials and verify that they are adhering to necessary food security procedures. Additional components of this directive series are being developed to address areas such as information technology security, import reinspection, in-distribution surveillance, communication, and human health surveillance monitoring.

In March 2003, when *Operation Iraqi Freedom* began, the Federal Government commenced *Operation Liberty Shield* to increase security and readiness in the United States. FSIS-OFSEP participated in this multi-department, national team effort to increase the protection of America's citizens and infrastructure while maintaining the free flow of goods and people across our borders. *Operation Liberty Shield* was carried out during the first month after the war in Iraq began, not because of any specific threat to the food supply, but as a precaution due to heightened security concerns from the war.

During *Operation Liberty Shield*, FSIS field and laboratory personnel carried out the additional actions specified in Directives 5420.1 and 5420.2 to replace some of the normal non-food-safety inspection

tasks temporarily with targeted inspection and sampling. A number of prevention measures implemented during that time focused on:

- Enhanced inspection activity;
- Enhanced surveillance of in-distribution and import facilities;
- Random laboratory sampling for threat agents in high-risk commodities; and
- Enhanced surveillance of human illness.

For example, in-plant Inspectors-in-Charge (IIC) initiated new security-based inspection measures as part of the Performance-Based Inspection System (PBIS)—FSIS' management system that integrates weekly schedules of inspection tasks, documents inspection findings (including deficiencies and corrective actions), and provides a database for the Automated Data Processing support system. Additionally, program investigators increased surveillance of products in distribution; import inspectors increased security oversight; the agency increased laboratory sampling so that 50 percent of all samples included analysis for a threat agent; and the Consumer Complaint Monitoring System, a national surveillance system that monitors and tracks food-related consumer complaints, increased its coverage.

## Assessing the Vulnerability of Domestic and Imported Products

FSIS-OFSEP has also completed a vulnerability assessment to determine the most vulnerable product commodities and processes, including potential threat agents that could be utilized for deliberate contamination of domestic and imported meat, poultry, and egg products. Based on the conclusions from the initial assessment, FSIS, as part of a committee under the White House's Interagency Food Working Group (IFWG), conducted detailed vulnerability assessments on four high-risk products using a Department of Defense (DOD) offensive targeting method (CARVER + Shock). As

part of the IFWG-sponsored vulnerability assessment process, FSIS worked in close collaboration with the Food and Drug Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS-FDA), DHS, the Department of Transportation, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the Central Intelligence Agency on these assessments. The results from these four assessments will provide the agency with critical information to develop strategies and policies, as well as shields or countermeasures, to reduce or eliminate the potential risks at vulnerable points along the farm-to-table continuum.

FSIS-OFSEP is working with USDA's Agricultural Research Service and the DHS Science and Technology Directorate to research and develop such countermeasures. Using our security guidelines and results from our vulnerability assessments, FSIS is actively working with DHS' Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Directorate on critical infrastructure protection efforts to further enhance the security posture within the food and agriculture sector.

In addition, FSIS-OFSEP worked with USDA's Food and Nutrition Service and HHS-FDA on a vulnerability assessment of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The assessment, which was completed in November 2003, identified vulnerabilities and countermeasures for protecting the health and welfare of children served by the NSLP. One countermeasure includes the development of a food alert and tracking system. It will be pilot-tested in three states—Virginia, California and Arizona—as a possible early warning system to help minimize exposure to harmful agents.

FSIS-OFSEP continues to identify vulnerabilities in the food supply chain and dedicate resources to develop ways to minimize food security risks. These efforts will help to ensure the safety and security of U.S. meat, poultry, and egg products.

## Enhancements in International Security

To ensure the safety of imported products, FSIS maintains a comprehensive system of import inspection and controls, which includes audits of a foreign country's inspection system and port-of-entry reinspection. FSIS reinspects imported meat and poultry products entering the United States to verify that a country's inspection system is working. The fourth initiative involved strengthening the agency's screening of imported meat, poultry and egg products. FSIS trained and deployed 20 new Import Surveillance Liaison Inspectors (ISLIs). Stationed around the Nation since March 2003, ISLIs augment the efforts of traditional FSIS inspectors assigned to 146 import houses by conducting additional surveillance activities at each import facility and at locations outside the facilities where imported product may enter or be stored. They also work to improve coordination with other agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services, which share the responsibility of ensuring the safety of imported food products. Efforts are currently underway to hire additional ISLIs.

FSIS has been selected for integration into the Federal government-wide International Trade Data System (ITDS) in fiscal year 2004. The ITDS is a multi-department, multi-agency initiative to establish a single, automated system for sharing data on the inspection and certification of products moving in foreign commerce. Establishment of this system will enable the creation of a single window through which commercial enterprises can interact with the various government agencies that regulate international trade. ITDS' goal is to share the infrastructure and functionality among the government agencies regulating trade in order to eliminate duplication and increase security while reducing costs. FSIS' selection follows its designation by the ITDS Board of Directors as a top-priority national security agency. In order to obtain this ranking,



FSIS provided detailed descriptions of the operational linkages its import and export inspection and certification operations maintain with DHS's Customs and Border Protection (CBP), USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), HHS-FDA, commercial shippers, import brokers, and foreign governments.

FSIS' close collaboration with APHIS continues to focus on preventing and excluding hazards from entering the food chain by:

- Establishing a veterinarian staff position to act as a liaison with APHIS to enhance communication between the two agencies' veterinary services and assist with the development of an integrated animal disease surveillance system based on risk;
- Working closely together at ports-of-entry on surveillance and detection; and
- Providing joint training opportunities for APHIS and FSIS veterinarians on surveillance and foreign animal disease.

FSIS also participates on a USDA-led food and agriculture working group developing bilateral agreements with the Canadian and Mexican Governments to address the security of the food supply. These agreements are intended to enhance protection of critical infrastructure by strengthening prevention, detection, preparedness, and response measures.

During the agency's annual audits of foreign countries exporting meat, poultry, and egg products to the United States, information is provided on the FSIS security guidelines for food processors and the transportation and distribution of meat, poultry, and egg products. FSIS' auditors also report to the appropriate inspection officials any potential threats that they observe during the audit.

## Enhanced Laboratory Security and Coordination Activities

FSIS has also made important progress on the scientific front. FSIS laboratories have expanded their capability to test for non-traditional microbial, chemical, and radiological threat agents. Construction on a Biosecurity, Level-3 laboratory was completed and the laboratory opened in April 2004. The Biosecurity, Level-3 laboratory will enable FSIS to conduct analyses on a larger range of potential bioterrorism agents.

The agency has played a lead role in the development of the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN). Working in collaboration with HHS-FDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Energy (DOE), and States, this network integrates the Nation's laboratory infrastructure and surge capacity at the local, State, and Federal levels. FERN was formed in 2002 by the White House HSC-IFWG.

Currently, over 60 laboratories (including public health and veterinary diagnostic laboratories) representing 27 states and 5 Federal agencies have agreed to participate in FERN. The network's primary focus is on method validation, research, training programs, proficiency programs, surveillance, response and surge capacity, and communication in preparation for and response to a potential attack on the food supply. By providing a greater capability to test for biological, chemical, and radiological agents in food, FERN will provide the Nation with a strong scientific infrastructure to protect the food supply better. The FERN has established a National Food Laboratory Steering Committee (NFLSC) to ensure oversight and guidance of the FERN system. The focus of NFLSC is to coordinate and integrate resources to support the key components of the FERN system, which includes laboratory infrastructure. FSIS and HHS-FDA are co-chairs of the NFLSC. The

NFLSC is also working to establish five Regional Coordination Centers that will serve as the primary points of contact for laboratories in the region. Two of the FERN Regional Coordination Centers are already in operation.

FSIS also plays a key role in the Electronic Laboratory Exchange Network (eLEXNET), a pilot Web-based data exchange system that was developed in response to the 1998 Food Safety Initiative. eLEXNET, currently comprised of 100 participating labs on the Federal, State, and local levels, feeds into FERN and is used as one of its data capturing mechanisms (FERN is also involved in the actual analysis of food samples). eLEXNET can also feed into a “food shield” as a data-capturing mechanism, and is building the capability to handle sensitive food analyses.

FSIS laboratories have completed a number of method validations on a variety of biological and chemical analyses. Several other validation studies are underway.

FSIS has signed an agreement with the Army facility at Aberdeen-Edgewood in Maryland under which Aberdeen will accept and analyze high-risk samples for the presence of a variety of biological agents when necessary. Similarly, FSIS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with HHS-FDA on January 22, 2004, whereby HHS-FDA will test meat, poultry, and egg products for very low levels of radiological contamination, as necessary.

Finally, to ensure that laboratories as well as other offices are secure, the agency hired a Physical Security Specialist in June 2003 to assess the security of FSIS sites and develop internal policies to enhance security of the agency’s personnel and property.

## Simulation Exercises

FSIS’ sixth initiative was conducting simulation exercises. Training, practice, and simulation exercises help to develop clear roles and responsibilities that allow for a more efficient and effective response when a true crisis emerges. USDA and its mission areas have conducted—and continue to conduct—simulation exercises to test their abilities and practice responding to a terrorist attack on food and agriculture.

For example, in late 2002, USDA conducted “Crimson Sky,” a table-top training exercise intended to familiarize USDA and FSIS officials with their responsibilities, as well as with the operating environment that would exist in the event of an intentional attack on food and agriculture. The exercise, the third in a series of USDA table-tops including “Crimson Sky” and “Crimson Guard” which simulated Foot-and-Mouth disease outbreaks, gave participants the opportunity to work and communicate with several other Federal departments that participated. FSIS has since participated in other simulations with the agency’s Federal, State, and local partners. In January 2003, FSIS-OFSEP conducted “Crimson Winter,” a simulation that involved numerous Federal agencies, including APHIS, HHS-FDA, CDC, DHS, and State and local agencies that would be involved in responding to an attack on the food supply. Non-government representatives were invited to observe. This exercise proved helpful by allowing the agency to recognize areas for improvement in its response plans, and to address those issues before a real crisis occurred. The agency has gained valuable experience through these drills and is applying this learning to its contingency plans.

In May 2003, FSIS-OFSEP participated in the national TOPOFF2 exercise, coordinated by the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State, to test the preparation and

coordination of the Nation's top officials. Twenty-five Federal agencies, plus dozens of State, local and Canadian government agencies, and the American Red Cross participated in this exercise. The drill simulated a radioactive "dirty bomb" explosion in Seattle and the covert release of a biological agent in Chicago.

In the first quarter of fiscal year 2004, the agency conducted an internal exercise that combined Continuity of Operations (COOP) plans and a food supply emergency to further test its structure and response capabilities. All of FSIS' district offices fully participated in this exercise as well by moving to alternate sites to ensure that daily operations and responsibilities were fulfilled.

FSIS helped develop, as well as participated in, additional exercises conducted by the Deputy Secretaries of USDA, DHHS, and DHS during 2003. These exercises were designed to further refine the collaborative roles/responsibilities of the Departments during a food-related terrorist attack.

Finally, in developing safety and health response actions in the event of a terrorist attack at an FSIS workplace, the agency developed likely scenarios and response plans in the event of an attack at plants, laboratories, and offices where FSIS employees work. Additionally, detection instruments and personal protective equipment have been procured for field employees for use in the event of an attack.

### **Ongoing Workforce Education and Training**

Next, as FSIS-OFSEP works to provide food security information to external groups, the agency is also working to ensure that its own employees are well trained and prepared to handle crisis situations. The agency continues to conduct anti-terrorism awareness training for all FSIS employees,

which focuses on preventing terrorist attacks. The training emphasizes a multi-dimensional team approach that includes Federal, State, local, and private sectors. To date, District Managers, Deputy District Managers, Circuit Supervisors, and other district employees have received this training, which will be completed by the end of 2004. Additionally, representatives from State governments, local responders, and other Federal agencies attended the training.

### **Developed and Distributed Security Guidelines for FSIS Employees**

To supplement the anti-terrorism training, the agency has developed the *Homeland Security, FSIS, and You* booklet for FSIS employees. The booklet, which will be released in 2004, is designed to educate agency personnel on the importance of their role in protecting the food supply, as well as offer practical information on how they can protect themselves in the event of a terrorist attack.

### **Enhanced Surveillance Activities**

The eighth initiative has been enhancing surveillance activities. FSIS has made significant enhancements to its Consumer Complaint Monitoring System (CCMS). The CCMS is a national surveillance system that monitors and tracks food-related consumer complaints. The CCMS electronic database is used to record, triage, and track complaints and is a powerful tool that serves as a sentinel system for potential terrorist attacks on the food supply. Complaints can also be entered at our field offices and accessed at headquarters, which allows for a more real-time response. The CCMS has been upgraded so that it can be monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in accordance with the threat level, and now provides more controlled access to the data. The CCMS serves as one of our real-time early warning systems of a potential attack on the food supply. The

agency is developing a computation and detection algorithm to mine data for trends and anomalies and will include an alert mechanism. FSIS also intends to enhance relations with the States by creating a bi-directional flow of this information.

FSIS Public Health and Epidemiology Liaisons have been trained to handle additional functions relative to food security. In addition to their responsibilities as public health liaisons to external public health partners, they are an invaluable resource for outbreak detection, investigation, and response efforts in the event of an attack on this Nation's food supply.

In April 2003, the agency signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Public Health Service (PHS) that allows for the detailing of expanded numbers of PHS Commissioned Corps Officers to FSIS. Not only will these officers help FSIS respond to foodborne disease outbreaks and prevent foodborne illness, but they will help the agency in its homeland security efforts as well. Since Commissioned Corps Officers are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, this allows FSIS greater flexibility to respond instantly during heightened security alerts or an actual threat to the food supply.

FSIS has enhanced its surveillance of meat, poultry, and egg products in commerce. Agency program investigators have increased their reviews of transporters, distributors, and retailers to ensure the security of food through the transportation and distribution process.

FSIS is participating in the Epidemic Information Exchange (Epi-X). Epi-X is CDC's Web-based communications system that provides rapid and secure disease-outbreak information to authorized public health officials 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Epi-X fosters a coordinated, local and national response to public health events, including

emerging diseases (e.g., West Nile virus), food-borne disease outbreaks, and terrorism.

## **Expanding Coordination With Government, Industry, and Public Partners**

The ninth initiative has been expanding collaborations with other government agencies, industry, and public partners. To ensure the best possible communication and cooperation, FSIS-OFSEP works closely with the White House HSC, DHS, and USDA/HSO to develop strategies to accomplish this goal. For example, FSIS, along with HHS-FDA and industry partners, is working with the DHS to create an Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAC) for the Food Sector. A Food ISAC, a public/private sector partnership, will aide in the protection of the food supply infrastructure by centralizing the sharing of vital information about threats, incidents, and vulnerabilities.

FSIS is also partnering with other agencies such as CDC, HHS-FDA, the Agricultural Research Service, CBP, APHIS, EPA, and the Canadian and Mexican Governments' food inspection agencies, as well as with State and local health agencies, to share information and to strengthen coordination of activities from farm to table.

The agency has established the Food Security Focus Group, a working partnership between FSIS and representatives of the food industry knowledgeable about food security issues. This group is intended to improve the overall food security posture of the United States. In October 2003, the agency held a 1-day unclassified workshop in Washington, D.C., to discuss USDA's ongoing work in farm-to-table food security vulnerability assessments. Furthermore, FSIS-OFSEP is seeking to obtain a better understanding of best food security practices used by industry, as these practices might be helpful countermeasures to potential vulnerabilities. The long-term objective of this

focus group is to have a standing working group of representatives from the food industry and FSIS to address ongoing food security prevention and response issues.

In February 2003, FSIS and HHS-FDA co-sponsored a joint NASDA and ASTHO meeting titled *“Homeland Security: Protecting Agriculture, the Food Supply, and Public Health—The Role of the States.”* Attendees included Secretaries of the State departments of agriculture and the State departments of health.

The agency continues to strengthen coordination and cooperation with law enforcement and intelligence agencies through its program investigators and security experts. For example, FSIS works with these groups to strengthen the training of its employees. The agency has initiated a comprehensive 2-year training and education effort designed to ensure that every FSIS employee fully understands his or her role in preventing or

responding to an attack on the food supply. The Law Enforcement Academic Research Network, which conducts the training, has stated that because it is being provided to such a broad base of our employees, this training effort is unparalleled in the Federal sector.

### **Continuing Greater Advances in Food Safety**

The terrorist attacks in 2001 brought forth a greater awareness of the vulnerabilities of this Nation’s food supply. FSIS has drawn from its century-plus of experience in protecting meat, poultry, and egg products and expanded upon many of the safeguards the agency already had in place. By partnering with as many stakeholders who share FSIS’ commitment to food safety and security as possible, the agency is making even greater advances in protecting this Nation’s food supply from intentional and unintentional threats.

## Acronyms/Abbreviations

AFDO	Association of Food and Drug Officials	FSAT	Food Security Action Team
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service	FSIS	Food Safety and Inspection Service
ASTHO	Association of State and Territorial Health Officials	HHS-FDA	Food and Drug Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services
CCMS	Consumer Complaint Monitoring System	IFWG	Interagency Food Working Group
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	IIC	Inspector-in-Charge
COOP	Continuity of Operations	ISAC	Information Sharing and Analysis Center
DHS	Department of Homeland Security	ISLI	Import Surveillance Liaison Inspector
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services	ITDS	International Trade Data System
DOD	Department of Defense	NFLSC	National Food Laboratory Steering Committee
eLEXNET	Electronic Laboratory Exchange Network	NSLP	National School Lunch Program
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	OFSEP	Office of Food Security and Emergency Preparedness
Epi-X	Epidemic Information Exchange	PBIS	Performance-Based Inspection System
F-BAT	Food Biosecurity Action Team	PHS	Public Health Service
FERN	Food Emergency Response Network	USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

## Contacts

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- ❑ Media Inquiries: (202) 720-9113
- ❑ Congressional Inquiries: (202) 720-3897
- ❑ Constituent Inquiries: (202) 720-9113
- ❑ Consumer Inquiries: Call USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854). In the Washington, DC, area, call (301) 504-6258. The TTY number is 1-800-256-7072.

## FSIS Homeland Security Internet Resources

- ❑ FSIS Web Site: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov>
  - *FSIS Security Guidelines for Food Processors*
  - *FSIS Safety and Security Guidelines for the Transportation and Distribution of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products*
  - *Food Safety and Food Security: What Consumers Need to Know*
  - *FSIS, Homeland Security, and You*
- ❑ Directives 5420.1—*Homeland Security Threat Condition Response - Food Security Monitoring Procedures*:  
<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/5420.1.htm>
- ❑ Directive 5420.2—*Homeland Security - Handling of FSIS Laboratory Samples under Declared Heightened Threat Conditions*:  
<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/5420.2.htm>
- ❑ USDA Web Site: <http://www.usda.gov>

