



Food Safety and Inspection Service
United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250-3700

News and Information

FSIS Constituent Update: December 17, 1999

FSIS Final Rule on Irradiation of Meat to Publish Next Week; Agency Will Hold Constituent Briefing on December 21

The final rule, "Irradiation of Meat Food Products," is expected to publish in the *Federal Register* December 23. Constituents were faxed a [December 14 USDA news release](#) on the approval of the irradiation of meat to help improve food safety. **A briefing for constituent groups on the final rule will be held on December 21 at 2:00 p.m. in Room 3109-South Building.**

For additional information on the constituent briefing, contact: Barbara O'Brien, Constituent Affairs Specialist, at (202) 720-8594. For technical information on the final rule, contact: Dr. Daniel Engeljohn, Director, Regulations Development and Analysis Division, at (202) 720-5627.

Published Federal Register notices are available on the FSIS Web site: www.fsis.usda.gov, access "Federal Register."

FSIS Makes Responses to Questions from the First Technical Conference on HACCP Implementation Available

Attached are the [responses](#) to various questions raised at the First Technical Conference on HACCP Implementation held on August 17-18, 1999, in Omaha, Nebraska. In a number of instances, a specific response will depend upon the circumstances in a particular case. For more information, contact: Phil Derfler, Deputy Administrator, Office of Policy, Program Development and Evaluation, at (202) 720-2710.

FSIS Makes Draft Report--*The Future of FSIS Veterinarians: Public Health Professionals for the 21st Century* Available

FSIS is making available the [Draft Report--*The Future of FSIS Veterinarians: Public Health Professionals for the 21st Century*](#). [Also available in [PDF - Ed.](#)] This draft report represents the work-in-progress of a Task Force composed of a diverse group of individual including veterinarians from inside and outside of FSIS, a variety of FSIS management personnel, and individuals affiliated with academia, non-government organizations and foreign governments. The group convened in early 1999. A public meeting to discuss the draft report will be held in February 2000, in Washington, DC. A *Federal Register* notice with details about the meeting will provided at a later date. Copies of the draft report are available by faxing requests to: Barbara O'Brien, CPA Constituent Affair Specialist, at (202) 720-5704. Copies will also be available on the FSIS Web site: www.fsis.usda.gov, access "Publications--Technical Publications."

For more information, contact: Linda Russell, FSIS Planning Staff, at (202) 501-7138.

E. coli Sampling Program Yields Fourth Positive for FY 2000

The FSIS sampling program for *E. coli* O157:H7 reported a confirmed positive in a ground beef sample taken on November 29, 1999, from a retail store in Missouri. All product was retained at the store. This is the fourth positive in FY 2000 out of over 700 samples and the 56th overall out of over 34,000 samples take since FSIS began the sampling program in 1994. For more information on the sampling program, contact the FSIS Office of Public Health and Science at (202) 501-7521.

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Federal Register Activity

The following notices were published in the *Federal Register* this week:

- [December 16, 1999--FSIS Reopening of comment period--Docket No. 98-027R--"Meat Produced By Advanced Meat/Bone Separation Machinery and Recovery Systems"](#)

Comments must be received on or before January 18, 2000. Constituent groups were faxed a December 16 USDA news release announcing the reopening of the comment period. For more information, contact: Dr. Daniel Engeljohn, Director, FSIS Regulations Development and Analysis Division, at (202) 720-5627.

- [December 14, 1999--FSIS Notice of public meetings and request for comments--Docket No. 99-061N--"Codex Alimentarius: Eight Session of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems \(CCFICS\)"](#)

Constituent groups were faxed a [December 14 USDA news release](#) with times and locations of the meetings. For more information, contact: Patrick Clerkin, Associate U.S. Manager for Codex, at (202) 205-7760.

FSIS Notices

FSIS issued the following two notices on December 15, 1999:

- FSIS Notice 45-99--"Residue Testing Program"
- FSIS Notice 46-99--"Documentation of HACCP 02 Procedure"

Copies of the notices are available by faxing requests to: Barbara O'Brien, CPA Constituent Affair Specialist, at (202) 720-5704.

Clarification--Packing Dates on Poultry Labeling

Recently, an issue regarding the appropriate application of the Federal poultry products inspection regulations on "date of packing" (9 CFR 381.126) arose. The circumstances involved a processor who packages poultry food products in consumer-ready film-wrapped packages that are in refrigerated storage awaiting shipment to customers when orders are received. At the time an order is received, a price label and sell-by date is applied to the consumer packages that are then placed in master shippers to which box end labeling, including a "pack date," is applied. The pack date that has been applied, however, has been the date the consumer packages are placed in the shipper, not the original pack date on which the poultry was slaughtered and placed in the consumer packaging.

The application of the date the consumer packages are placed in the shipper does not constitute the "pack date" that is required by Federal regulations. The regulations indicate that the pack date can be applied to the shipper or immediate containers of poultry food products using either a code or the actual calendar date of packing. The date of packing is the original date the poultry is slaughtered and placed in the consumer packaging; the use of any other calendar date will mislead consumers.

After discussions with the company and the National Chicken Council, it was resolved that, perhaps, misinterpretation of the pack date provisions has occurred within industry. Understanding that the immediate containers *or* the shipping containers of poultry food products must be marked with the original pack date, there are actually three options available to poultry processors to comply with the packing date provisions, one of which *must* be used. These options are:

- a code is applied that represents the original pack date of the poultry food product in the consumer package, or
- the original pack date of the poultry food product is applied to the consumer package or the shipping container

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accompanied by an explanatory statement, e.g., "packing date" (per 9 CFR 381.129 (c) (2)), or

- the original pack date of the poultry food product is applied to the consumer package or the shipping container along with a date representing when the consumer packages are placed in shippers. In this case, each date must be accompanied by an explanatory statement in accordance with 9 CFR 381.129 (c) (2), e.g., "packing date," and "date put in shipping container."

For more information, contact: Dr. Robert Post, Director, Labeling and Additives Policy Division, at (202) 205-0279.

***Editor's Note:** Attachments are sent with faxed versions of this report only. Links will be provided to electronic copy, when available.

For Further Information Contact:

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