

2025 USDA EXPLANATORY NOTES - FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE

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PREFACE

This publication summarizes the fiscal year (FY) 2025 Budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Throughout this publication any reference to the “Budget” is in regard to the 2025 Budget, unless otherwise noted. All references to years refer to fiscal year, except where specifically noted. The budgetary tables throughout this document show actual amounts for 2022 and 2023, annualized Continuing Resolution levels for 2024, and the President’s Budget request for 2025. Amounts for 2024 estimated levels include: non-enacted amounts such as Full-Time Equivalent levels, fleet levels, information technology investment levels, recovery levels, transfers in and out, balances available end of year, and obligation levels.

Throughout this publication, the “2018 Farm Bill” is used to refer to the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. Most programs funded by the 2018 Farm Bill are funded through 2023. Amounts shown in 2024 and 2025 for most Farm Bill programs reflect those confirmed in the baseline.

Pursuant to the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, sequestration is included in the numbers for mandatory programs in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

In tables throughout this document, amounts equal to zero (0) are displayed as dashes (-). Amounts less than 0.5 and greater than zero are rounded and shown as a zero (0). This display treatment is used to prevent the masking of non-zero amounts that do not round up to one (1).

AGENCY-WIDE**PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The Secretary of Agriculture established the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) on June 17, 1981, pursuant to legislative authority contained in 5 U.S.C. 301 that permits the Secretary to issue regulations governing the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The mission of FSIS is to protect the public’s health by ensuring the safety of meat, poultry, and processed egg products. FSIS is composed of two major inspection programs: (1) Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) and (2) Egg Products Inspection.

The MPI Program is authorized by the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) as amended and the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA). The purpose of the program is to ensure that meat and poultry products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled through inspection and regulation of these products so that they are suitable for commercial distribution for human consumption. FSIS also enforces the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA) through the program, which requires that all livestock at federally inspected establishments be handled and slaughtered in a humane way.

FSIS conducts inspection activities at federally inspected meat and poultry establishments; and for State programs, the agency ensures that State MPI programs have standards that are at least equivalent to Federal standards. FSIS also ensures that meat and poultry products imported to the United States are produced under standards equivalent to U.S. inspection standards.

The Egg Products Inspection Program is authorized by the Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA). The program’s purpose is to ensure that liquid, frozen and dried egg products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled through continuous mandatory inspection of egg processing plants that manufacture these products. FSIS also ensures processed egg products imported to the United States are produced under standards equivalent to U.S. inspection.

FSIS’ science-based inspection system, known as the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system, places emphasis on the identification, prevention, and control of foodborne hazards. HACCP requirements include meeting sanitation, facility, operational standards, and other prerequisite programs to control pathogen contamination and to produce safe and unadulterated food.

During 2023, the agency maintained headquarters offices in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area; 10 district offices; the Policy Development Division in Omaha, Nebraska; laboratories in Athens, Georgia, St. Louis, Missouri, and Albany, California; the Financial Services Center in Des Moines, Iowa; the Human Resources Field Office in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and a nationwide network of inspection personnel in 6,900 federally regulated establishments in 50 States, N. Mariana Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, Samoa and the Virgin Islands. Much of the agency’s work is conducted in cooperation with Federal, State, and municipal agencies, as well as private industry.

As of September 30, 2023, the agency employment totaled 8,575 permanent full-time employees, including 467 in the Washington, DC area and 8,108 in the field. FSIS employed 8,478 Full Time Equivalents (FTE's) as of September 30, 2023. This included other-than-permanent employees in addition to permanent full-time ones.

FSIS funding is broken out into the following categories:

1. Federal Food Safety and Inspection: Expenses associated with operations at all federally inspected meat, poultry and egg product establishments.
2. State Food Safety and Inspection: Expenses associated with state inspected establishments and state-run programs.
3. International Food Safety and Inspection: Expenses associated with import and export operations and certifications.
4. Public Health Data Communications Infrastructure System (PHDCIS): Expenses associated with providing public health communications and information systems infrastructure and connectivity.

OIG and GAO Reports

No closed, implemented OIG or GAO reports in 2023.

AVAILABLE FUNDS AND FTEs

Table FSIS-1. Available Funds and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)

Item	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
Salaries and Expenses:								
Discretionary Appropriations	\$1,121,189	8,357	\$1,158,266	8,364	\$1,158,266	8,069	\$1,244,231	8,485
Supplemental Appropriations	-	-	29,700	-	29,700	-	-	-
Total Discretionary Appropriations.....	1,121,189	8,357	1,158,266	8,364	1,158,266	8,069	1,244,231	8,485
Total Supplemental Appropriations.....	-	-	29,700	-	29,700	-	-	-
Total Adjusted Appropriation.....	1,121,189	8,357	1,187,966	8,364	1,187,966	8,069	1,244,231	8,485
Balance Available, SOY	107,901	-	70,602	-	909	-	400	-
Rescinded Balances	-	-	-55,710	-	-	-	-	-
Recoveries, Other.....	2,013	-	1,691	-	-	-	-	-
Total Available	1,231,103	8,357	1,204,549	8,364	1,188,875	8,069	1,244,631	8,485
Lapsing Balances	-247	-	-115	-	-	-	-	-
Balance Available, EOY.....	-70,602	-	-909	-	-400	-	-400	-
Total Obligations	1,160,254	8,357	1,203,525	8,364	1,188,475	8,069	1,244,231	8,485
Balance Available, SOY	107,901	-	70,602	-	909	-	-	-
Recoveries, Other.....	2,013	-	1,691	-	-	-	-	-
Total Available, Other Funding.....	109,914	-	72,293	-	909	-	-	-
Lapsing Balances	-247	-	-115	-	-	-	-	-
Bal. Available, EOY	-70,602	-	-909	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations, Other funding.....	39,065	-	71,269	-	909	-	-	-
Total Obligations, FSIS	1,199,319	8,357	1,274,794	8,364	1,189,384	8,069	1,244,231	8,485
Other USDA:								
ARS, Nutrient Data Laboratory	50	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
APHIS.....	261	-	203	-	-	-	-	-
AMS.....	40	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
FAS.....	6	-	45	-	-	-	-	-
FPAC BC.....	86	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OGC.....	118	-	345	-	-	-	-	-
OSEC.....	707	-	609	-	-	-	-	-
OCFO.....	-	-	764	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Other USDA.....	1,268	-	1,971	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Agriculture Available.....	1,342,285	8,357	1,278,813	8,364	1,189,784	8,069	1,244,631	8,485
Other Federal Funds:								
FDA, Salmonella, Campylobacter, E. Coli Enterococcus Health and Human Services.....	330	-	428	-	-	-	-	-
DHS	246	-	551	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Other Federal.....	576	-	1,065	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Federal Funds:								
Meat, Poultry and Eggs Product Inspection.....	228,305	23	209,830	26	238,204	26	238,204	26
Accredited Labs	225	-	148	-	160	-	160	-
Trust Funds	17,027	91	17,886	88	17,060	88	17,060	88
Total, Non-Federal.....	245,557	114	227,864	114	255,424	114	255,424	114
Total Available, FSIS	1,588,418	8,471	1,507,742	8,478	1,445,208	8,183	1,500,055	8,599

PERMANENT POSITIONS BY GRADE AND FTEs

Table FSIS-2. Permanent Positions by Grade and FTEs

Item	2022			2023			2024			2025		
	D.C.	Field	Actual Total	D.C.	Field	Actual Total	D.C.	Field	Estimated Total	D.C.	Field	Estimated Total
SES.....	24	1	25	26	-	26	26	-	26	26	-	26
SL.....	4	-	4	3	-	3	3	-	3	3	-	3
GS-15.....	55	25	80	47	28	75	47	28	75	47	28	75
GS-14.....	185	93	278	144	143	287	144	143	287	144	143	287
GS-13.....	184	376	560	134	441	575	134	441	575	134	441	575
GS-12.....	70	981	1,051	65	888	953	65	888	953	65	888	953
GS-11.....	22	95	117	16	103	119	16	103	119	16	103	119
GS-10.....	-	199	199	1	247	248	1	247	248	1	247	248
GS-9.....	20	3,801	3,821	19	4,045	4,064	19	3,750	3,988	19	4,045	4,064
GS-8.....	2	467	469	2	454	456	2	454	456	2	454	456
GS-7.....	10	1,543	1,553	9	1,421	1,430	9	1,421	1,430	9	1,421	1,430
GS-6.....	4	12	16	-	15	15	-	15	15	-	15	15
GS-5.....	-	410	410	-	322	322	-	322	467	-	322	322
GS-4.....	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
Ungraded.....	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Permanent.....	581	8,009	8,585	467	8,108	8,575	467	7,813	8,280	467	8,108	8,575
Total Perm. FT EOY.....	581	8,004	8,585	467	8,108	8,575	467	7,813	8,280	467	8,108	8,575
FTE*.....	589	7,882	8,471	475	8,003	8,478	470	7,713	8,183	475	8,124	8,599

*Total FTEs are all inclusive of workforce categories including temporary positions.

VEHICLE FLEET

Motor Vehicle Fleet

FSIS uses vehicles to deliver mission critical services. Project sites are frequently in locations only accessible through construction zones and off-road areas. Furthermore, specially equipped vehicles are required to transport the scientific equipment.

FSIS requires operation and maintenance logs for all of its vehicles. Periodic reviews ensure optimal use of each vehicle in the fleet.

Replacement Criteria

FSIS retires or replaces vehicles based upon age, utilization, operating costs, and maintenance costs. FSIS always replaces vehicles with a more efficient and cost-effective model.

Table FSIS-3. Size, Composition, and Annual Costs of Motor Vehicle Fleet

Item	Sedans and Station Wagons	Vans	SUVs	Light Trucks 4X2	Light Trucks 4X4	Medium Duty Vehicles	Buses	Heavy Duty Vehicles	Total Vehicles	Annual Operating Costs
2018 End of Year Operating Inventory	2,180	79	62	-	-	2	-	-	2,323	\$12,426,226
2022 End of Year Operating Inventory	2,228	25	140	18	5	-	-	-	2,416	13,665,466
2023 Actual Acquisitions.....	334	7	52	1	4	-	-	-	398	-
2023 Actual Disposals	466	7	12	-	1	-	-	-	486	-
2023 End of Year Operating Inventory	2,096	25	180	19	8	-	-	-	2,328	15,588,222
2024 Planned Acquisitions	5	-	20	-	1	-	-	-	26	-
2024 Planned Disposals	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
2024 End of Year Operating Inventory	2,101	25	200	19	8	-	-	-	2,353	16,835,280
2025 Planned Acquisitions	-	8	550	1	1	-	-	-	560	-
2025 Planned Disposals	472	3	50	-	-	-	-	-	525	-
2025 End of Year Operating Inventory	1,629	30	700	20	9	-	-	-	2,388	18,182,102

SHARED FUNDING PROJECTS

Table FSIS-4. Shared Funding Projects (thousands of dollars)

Item	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Estimated	2025 Estimated
Working Capital Fund:				
Administrative Services:				
Material Management Service	\$4,506	\$4,106	\$4,638	\$3,965
Mail and Reproduction Services.....	855	990	1,135	1,121
Integrated Procurement Systems.....	279	298	278	-
Procurement Operations Services.....	9	13	14	277
ASKUSDA Contact Center.....	-	1,653	1,960	1,965
Human Resources Enterprise Management Systems.....	118	138	118	122
Subtotal	5,767	7,198	8,143	7,450
Communications:				
Creative Media & Broadcast Center	137	194	257	226
Finance and Management:				
National Finance Center	2,517	2,625	2,702	2,465
Financial Shared Services.....	5,274	6,245	7,338	6,993
Internal Control Support Services.....	60	50	60	58
Personnel and Document Security	-	408	470	474
Subtotal	7,851	9,328	10,570	9,990
Information Technology:				
Client Experience Center	35,734	37,475	35,864	34,998
Department Administration Information Technology Office	87	-	4	4
Digital Infrastructure Services Center	6,734	9,078	6,888	6,506
Enterprise CyberSecurity Services	-	2,842	4,818	5,341
Enterprise Data and Analytics Services.....	-	424	437	415
Enterprise Network Services.....	6,108	5,803	8,564	8,549
Subtotal	48,663	55,622	56,575	55,813
Correspondence Management Services	-	-	-	-
Office of the Executive Secretariat.....	501	157	165	148
Total, Working Capital Fund	62,919	72,499	75,710	73,627
Department-Wide Shared Cost Programs:				
Advisory Committee Liaison Services	4	5	6	6
Agency Partnership Outreach	569	615	620	620
Diversity, Equality, Inclusion and Accessibility.....	-	167	222	222
Medical Services.....	115	123	169	169
Office of Customer Experience	786	268	267	267
National Capital Region Interpreting Services	31	49	68	68
Personnel and Document Security Program	187	-	-	-
Physical Security.....	384	379	390	390
Security Detail	406	421	446	446
Security Operations Program.....	559	583	632	632
TARGET Center	115	139	148	148
TARGET Center Group.....	-	303	275	275
USDA Enterprise Data Analytics Services.....	396	-	-	-
Employee Experience	-	287	310	310
Total, Department-Wide Reimbursable Programs.....	3,552	3,339	3,553	3,553
E-Gov:				
Budget Formulation and Execution Line of Business	8,066	6,861	7,652	7,958
Hiring Assessment tool.....	20,785	-	-	-
E-Rulemaking	24,343	19,830	14,028	18,694
Financial Management Line of Business	1,072	1,145	1,290	1,290
Geospatial Line of Business.....	12,500	12,500	12,500	12,500
Grants.gov.....	-	53	-	-
Human Resources Line of Business	26,236	24,657	24,259	24,259
Integrated Acquisition Environment.....	4,551	5,777	5,656	5,512
Total, E-Gov	97,553	70,823	65,385	70,213
Agency Total.....	164,024	146,661	144,648	147,393

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ACCOUNT 1: SALARIES AND EXPENSES

APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE

The appropriations language follows (new language underscored; deleted matter enclosed in brackets):

- 1 For necessary expenses to carry out services authorized by the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Products
- 2 Inspection Act, and the Egg Products Inspection Act, including not to exceed \$10,000 for representation allowances
- 3 and for expenses pursuant to section 8 of the Act approved August 3, 1956 (7 U.S.C. 1766),
- 4 [~~\$1,290,419,000~~]\$1,244,231,000; and in addition, \$1,000,000 may be credited to this account from fees collected for
- 5 the cost of laboratory accreditation as authorized by section 1327 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade
- 6 Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 138f): *Provided*, That funds provided for the Public Health Data Communication
- 7 Infrastructure system shall remain available until expended: *Provided further*, That no fewer than 148 full-time
- 8 equivalent positions shall be employed during fiscal year [2024]2025 for purposes dedicated solely to inspections
- 9 and enforcement related to the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (7 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.): *Provided further*, That
- 10 the Food Safety and Inspection Service shall continue implementation of section 11016 of Public Law 110-246 as
- 11 further clarified by the amendments made in section 12106 of Public Law 113-79: *Provided further*, That this
- 12 appropriation shall be available pursuant to law (7 U.S.C. 2250) for the alteration and repair of buildings and
- 13 improvements, but the cost of altering any one building during the fiscal year shall not exceed 10 percent of the
- 14 current replacement value of the building.

LEAD-OFF TABULAR STATEMENT

Table FSIS-5. Lead-Off Tabular Statement (In dollars)

Item	Amount
Estimate, 2024	\$1,158,266,000
Change in Appropriation	+85,965,000
Budget Estimate, 2025	<u>1,244,231,000</u>

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PROJECT STATEMENTS

Table FSIS-6. Project Statement on Basis of Appropriations (thousands of dollars, FTEs)

Item	2022		2023		2024		2025		FTE Inc. Chg	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Inc. or Dec.	or Dec. Key
Discretionary Appropriations:										
Federal Food Safety & Inspection.....	\$989,767	8,218	\$1,036,888	8,225	\$1,036,888	7,930	\$1,115,908	8,345	+\$79,020	+415 (1)
State Food Safety & Inspection.....	66,875	18	67,131	18	67,131	18	71,051	20	+3,920	+2 (2)
International Food Safety & Inspection.....	17,442	121	18,975	121	18,975	121	22,000	120	+3,025	-1 (3)
Public Health Data Communication Infrastructure System (PHDCIS).....	34,580	-	35,272	-	35,272	-	35,272	-	-	-
Goodfellows Mid-Western Lab Relocation (General Provision).....	12,525	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subtotal.....	1,121,189	8,357	1,158,266	8,364	1,158,266	8,069	1,244,231	8,485	+85,965	+416
Supplemental Appropriations:										
Goodfellows Mid-Western Lab Relocation (Division N) Supp.....	-	-	29,700	-	29,700	-	-	-	-29,700	-
Subtotal.....	-	-	29,700	-	29,700	-	-	-	-29,700	-
Total Adjusted Appropriations.....	1,121,189	8,357	1,187,966	8,364	1,187,966	8,069	1,244,231	8,485	+56,265	+416
Add back:										
Transfers In and Out, Rescissions.....	-12,249	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Appropriation.....	1,108,940	8,357	1,187,966	8,364	1,187,966	8,069	1,244,231	8,485	+56,265	+416
Transfers In:										
Mid-Western Laboratory Relocation.....	12,525	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
COVID Emergency Leave.....	224	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Transfers In.....	12,749	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers Out:										
Federal Food Safety & Inspection.....	-500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Transfers Out.....	-500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Recoveries, Other.....	2,013	-	1,691	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rescinded Balances.....	-	-	-55,710	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bal. Available, SOY.....	107,901	-	70,602	-	909	-	400	-	-509	-
Total Available.....	1,231,103	8,357	1,204,549	8,364	1,188,875	8,069	1,244,631	8,485	+55,756	+416
Lapsing Balances.....	-247	-	-115	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bal. Available, EOY.....	-70,602	-	-909	-	-400	-	-400	-	-	-
Total Obligations.....	1,160,254	8,357	1,203,525	8,364	1,188,475	8,069	1,244,231	8,485	+55,756	+416

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Table FSIS-7. Project Statement on Basis of Obligations (thousands of dollars, FTEs)

Item	2022		2023		2024		2025		Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs		
Discretionary Obligations:										
Federal Food Safety & Inspection	\$989,667	8,218	\$1,036,848	8,225	\$1,036,888	7,930	\$1,115,908	8,345	+\$79,020	+415
State Food Safety & Inspection	66,826	18	67,084	18	67,131	18	71,051	20	+3,920	+2
International Food Safety & Inspection	17,344	121	18,947	121	18,975	121	22,000	120	+3,025	-1
Public Health Data Communications Infrastructure System (PHDCIS)	34,560	-	38,891	-	36,181	-	35,272	-	-909	-
Goodfellows Mid-Western Lab Relocation (General Provision)	28,571	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subtotal Disc Obligations	1,136,968	8,357	1,161,770	8,364	1,159,175	8,069	1,244,231	8,485	+85,056	+416
Mandatory Obligations:										
American Rescue Plan	21,600	-	11,404	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subtotal Mand Obligations	21,600	-	11,404	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplemental Obligations:										
COVID-19 Supplemental	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PHV Incentives Carryover	1,914	-	651	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Goodfellows Mid-Western Lab Relocation (Division N)	-	-	29,700	-	29,300	-	-	-	-29,300	-
Subtotal Supp Obligations	1,917	-	30,351	-	29,300	-	-	-	-29,300	-
Offsetting Collections:										
COVID Emergency Leave	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subtotal Offsetting Collections	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations	1,160,485	8,357	1,203,525	8,364	1,188,475	8,069	1,244,231	8,485	+55,756	+416
Add back:										
Lapsing Balances	247	-	115	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balances Available, EOY:										
Mid-Western Lab Relocation	-	-	-	-	400	-	400	-	-	-
PHDCIS	3,406	-	521	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PHV Incentives Carryover	81	-	388	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
American Rescue Plan	67,115	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Bal. Available, EOY	70,602	-	909	-	400	-	400	-	-	-
Total Available	1,231,334	8,357	1,204,549	8,364	1,188,875	8,069	1,244,631	8,485	+55,756	+416
Less:										
Rescission	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Transfers In	-12,749	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Transfers Out	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Recoveries, Other	-2,013	-	-1,691	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rescinded Balances	-	-	55,710	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bal. Available, SOY	-107,901	-	-70,602	-	-909	-	-400	-	+509	-
Total Appropriation	1,109,171	8,357	1,187,966	8,364	1,187,966	8,069	1,244,231	8,485	+56,265	+416

JUSTIFICATION OF CHANGES

An increase of \$85,965,000 resulting in 0 FTE for the Food Safety and Inspection Service available for 2024 (\$1,158,266,000 including 8,069 FTE).

This \$85,965,000 increase is above the 2024 Estimate. It includes \$74,288,000 total for pay costs consisting of \$27,545,000 for 2025 pay cost increases and \$46,743,000 for 2024 pay cost increases. However, it does not include funding for increased IT costs requested in the 2024 President’s budget. The increased IT costs represent a must fund bill that the agency cannot avoid paying. Without this funding FSIS will have to cut back on other program capabilities which equates to not backfilling approximately 350 FTEs. The state inspection program has also experienced higher costs for the states due to inflation and program growth including adding additional states. Without additional funding FSIS will be forced to reduce the reimbursement rate to the states for their inspection costs. FSIS spends approximately 80 percent of its program dollars on personnel salary and benefits. This is predominantly for inspection personnel in establishments, and other frontline employees such as investigators and laboratory technicians. FSIS spends 15 percent of its budget on mission critical travel for inspectors and investigators, State Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) programs, system infrastructure, and other fixed costs. The remaining five percent funds our operations, including workforce supplies (such as aprons, goggles, hardhats, knives, and other protective equipment), laboratory supplies, shipment of meat/poultry samples for testing, employee recruitment, purchases of replacement/new equipment, and program oversight.

If FSIS did not receive the requested increase including the 2024 pay costs it would have to reduce inspection personnel to absorb the costs. FSIS would have to not backfill/eliminate approximately 800 inspection positions in order to absorb the requested \$86 million increase in 2025. One of USDA’s top priorities is to expand meat processing capacity and strengthen resilience of the supply chain. The impacts would include:

- Potentially, slaughter and processing operations will slow down, be less efficient, and subject to fewer inspection personnel, resulting in potential stoppage
- Workflow slowdown resulting in industry incurring additional costs for disruption of the farm to establishment pipeline (feeding and storing animals longer than anticipated) as well as inefficiencies associated with processing oversized animals
- Reduced FSIS pathogen, veterinary drug, and chemical verification testing programs, resulting in the increased potential of unsafe food on American tables
- Reduced criminal and civil investigation capabilities, reducing our ability to enforce safe food standards and increased risk of unsafe products entering the food supply
- Inability to provide sufficient humane handling oversight resulting in high-profile incidents
- Delay of export certifications which could result in short and long-term loss of international markets
- Reduced import inspections, resulting in limitation of meat and poultry coming into this country further constraining the available food supply. Could also increase importer costs due to import processing delays, which may be construed as an international trade barrier

1) An increase of \$79,020,000 and 0 FTEs in salaries and expenses for the Federal Food Safety and Inspection program (\$1,036,888,000 and 7,930 FTEs available in 2024).

- a) Federal: An increase of \$70,733,000 for pay and employee costs in Food Safety and Inspection Service program. This increase consists of \$26,231,000 in 2025 pay and employee costs, for annualization of the 2024 pay cost increase and the 2025 pay cost increase of 2 percent. In addition, the increase includes \$44,502,000 for 2024 pay and employee costs requested in the 2024 President’s Budget. If this funding is not provided, Food Safety Inspection Services would need to cut 693 FTEs. Nearly 80 percent of FSIS’s budget goes for salary and benefits (89 percent being frontline employees).
- b) Federal: An increase of \$5,287,000 for the Mid-Western Laboratory. This increase will support the lease costs of the Mid-Western Laboratory. The General Services Administration has decommissioned the existing Goodfellows facility due to environmental issues. The old age of the building, environmental issues along with deteriorating infrastructure meant the lease payments had been significantly below competitive market rates. The new facility will better support FSIS’ continual efforts to modernize analytical techniques by utilizing a laboratory built specifically for this purpose. However, these improvements will lead to increased lease costs that are more in line with competitive market rates.

- c) Federal: An increase of \$3,000,000 for Recruitment and Retention Incentives for Public Health Veterinarians (PHV). FSIS continues to experience challenges in recruiting and retaining PHVs. These field positions are mission-critical, focused on protecting public health by ensuring that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products are safe. PHVs make disposition decisions on animals and carcasses suspected of being unsafe for human consumption, provide technical support to the inspection workforce, perform supervisory functions at the establishment and interact with establishment management. These are very demanding positions in a very challenging environment. Vacancies in these positions have potentially large impacts on the food safety system and industry operations. It also creates additional pressure on the remaining personnel, especially other PHVs.

In 2022 approximately 20 percent of the PHV positions were vacant. The PHV vacancy rate has continued to increase over the last several years. In the past five years, approximately 40 percent of the separations were due to resignations; therefore, it is critical for FSIS to fix this risk to food safety and industry production. FSIS needs funding to improve incentive programs that will provide Malak Scholarships to veterinary students to attract talented veterinarians to join FSIS. It will also help retain mission critical employees by providing student loan repayments and retention payments. These incentives should decrease vacancies, reduce in-plant PHV turnover, and improve employee morale. The incentives are part of the must-fund compensation package that FSIS must offer to maintain these critical employees.

- 2) An increase of \$3,920,000 for the State Food Safety and Inspection Program (\$67,131,000 and 18 FTEs available in 2024).
- a) State: An increase of \$3,390,000 for State Program Expansion and Increased Reimbursement Costs. The Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) and the Poultry Product Inspection Act (PPIA) provides for FSIS to cooperate with state agencies in developing and administering the State Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) and Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) programs. The programs are primarily for small and very small establishments and the state programs aid in the sustainment and expansion of these establishments. The statutes provide for FSIS to contribute up to 50 percent of the cost of the State MPI programs and no less than 60 percent for the CIS programs. Like FSIS, State Inspection Program costs are increasing due to inflation and rising salaries and benefits for state inspectors.

In addition to the pay raises and other inflationary increases, two states have established new programs in 2023 and there may be an additional state added by 2025. Furthermore, the CIS Program continues expanding, with two new states expected to join and existing states adding establishments to the program. The state MPI and CIS program growth are part of USDA's priority to expand meat processing capacity and strengthen resilience of the supply chain.

This increase is needed to prevent further reductions to the state MPI reimbursement rates. In 2023 state MPI reimbursement rates were below 50% with some states reimbursement rates as low as 42 percent. If the state MPI reimbursement rate continues to decline, states may drop out of the program. If that happens, FSIS will be required by law to provide federal inspectors for those establishments. Because of the size and geographic distribution of the plants, the actual FSIS cost to perform these inspections would be 20 percent more than the costs the states incur. If all the states drop their inspection programs, FSIS cost could increase by a total of \$75-80 million which in turn would degrade the Agency's ability to perform its food safety mission.

- b) State: An increase of \$530,000 for pay and employee costs in Food Safety and Inspection Service program. This increase consists of \$199,000 in 2025 pay and employee costs, for annualization of the 2024 pay cost increase and the 2025 pay cost increase of 2 percent. In addition, the increase includes \$331,000 for 2024 pay and employee costs requested in the 2024 President's Budget.
- 3) An increase of \$3,025,000 in salaries and expenses for the International Food Safety Inspection program (\$18,975,000 and 121 FTEs available in 2024). This increase consists of \$1,115,000 in 2025 pay and employee costs, for annualization of the 2024 pay cost increase and the 2025 pay cost increase of 2 percent. In addition, the increase includes \$1,910,000 for 2024 pay and employee costs requested in the 2024 President's Budget.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Program: User Fee Overtime Status

Proposal: In 2025, FSIS will re-propose permanent changes to provide inspection personnel flexible work arrangements.

With this change, FSIS can provide flexible scheduling for inspectors rather than requiring them to work all hours and days of plant operations. The program will allow inspectors to request flexible work arrangements, including work schedules for both regular and overtime hours contingent on the availability of options to cover required inspection duties. This change will be cost neutral for industry because industry will still only be charged for the extra services they are requesting.

To bring about this change, the following U.S. Code citations need to be amended to read as the following:

21 USC 468

The cost of inspection rendered under the requirements of this chapter shall be borne by the United States, except for the costs of inspection services provided outside of an establishment's approved inspection shift(s), and that provided on federal holidays, which shall be borne by the establishment, pursuant to section 2219a of title 7.

21 USC 695

The cost of inspection rendered under the requirements of laws relating to Federal inspection of meat and meat food products shall be borne by the United States, except for the cost of inspection services provided outside of an establishment's approved inspection shift(s), and that provided on federal holidays, which shall be borne by the establishment, pursuant to section 2219a of title 7.

21 USC 1053(a)

The cost of inspection rendered under the requirements of this chapter, and other costs of administration of this chapter, shall be borne by the United States, except the cost of inspection services provided outside of an establishment's approved inspection shift(s), and that provided on federal holidays, at such rates as the Secretary may determine shall be borne by such official plants. Sums received by the Secretary from official plants under this section shall be available without fiscal year limitation to carry out the purposes of this chapter.

7 USC 2219a

(a) In general

The Secretary of Agriculture may-

(1) at rates determined by the Secretary, subject to applicable law relating to minimum wages and maximum hours, pay employees of the Department of Agriculture providing inspection services in an establishment subject to the Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) or the Poultry Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 451 et seq.) for inspection services provided outside of an establishment's approved inspection shift(s), and that provided on federal holidays; and

(2) collect from the establishment reimbursement for any such services provided.

(b) Availability

Sums received by the Secretary under this section shall remain available until expended without further appropriation and without fiscal year limitation, to carry out subsection (a).

There will be no offsets in 2025. No change in budget authority is anticipated.

Rationale: Current policy prevents FSIS from employing part-time employees or providing flexible schedules to employees while still collecting fees for overtime or holiday services provided as requested by the plant.

Goal: This proposal would provide FSIS flexibility in scheduling inspectors for Overtime/Holiday shifts.

GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF OBLIGATIONS AND FTEs**Table FSIS-8. Geographic Breakdown of Obligations and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)**

State/Territory/Country	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
Alabama.....	\$32,281	282	\$33,682	295	\$33,569	283	\$36,071	298
Alaska.....	909	8	946	8	943	8	1,013	8
Arizona.....	3,874	34	4,233	35	4,219	34	4,534	35
Arkansas.....	35,878	315	37,157	328	37,033	314	39,794	330
California.....	70,928	540	74,774	573	74,826	551	80,078	581
Colorado.....	29,746	234	30,750	226	30,647	217	32,932	228
Connecticut.....	1,772	15	1,691	14	1,685	13	1,811	14
Delaware.....	10,967	100	11,121	101	11,084	97	11,910	102
Florida.....	12,661	134	13,717	139	13,671	133	14,690	140
Georgia.....	83,719	612	85,223	636	85,240	612	91,269	643
Hawaii.....	3,066	26	3,478	27	3,466	25	3,724	26
Idaho.....	4,806	48	5,542	49	5,523	47	5,935	50
Illinois.....	33,590	226	36,147	229	36,026	219	38,712	231
Indiana.....	15,063	133	15,630	130	15,578	125	16,739	132
Iowa.....	44,860	389	46,101	382	45,947	367	49,372	386
Kansas.....	20,185	211	21,212	203	21,141	194	22,717	205
Kentucky.....	14,895	146	15,867	146	15,814	140	16,993	147
Louisiana.....	10,685	85	11,116	84	11,079	80	11,905	84
Maine.....	1,738	12	1,882	12	1,876	12	2,016	12
Maryland.....	45,118	152	49,625	125	49,459	149	53,146	162
Massachusetts.....	2,898	26	2,994	27	2,984	25	3,206	26
Michigan.....	10,424	101	10,743	103	10,707	98	11,505	103
Minnesota.....	36,255	324	38,596	333	38,467	319	41,335	337
Mississippi.....	31,486	243	32,668	255	32,559	244	34,986	257
Missouri.....	34,668	296	36,675	294	36,552	282	39,277	308
Montana.....	3,806	25	4,160	26	4,146	25	4,455	26
Nebraska.....	31,072	289	31,706	284	31,600	272	33,956	287
Nevada.....	1,017	12	1,160	12	1,156	12	1,242	12
New Hampshire.....	1,039	11	986	9	983	9	1,056	9
New Jersey.....	12,384	116	12,775	116	12,732	112	13,681	118
New Mexico.....	1,759	16	1,826	16	1,820	15	1,956	16
New York.....	15,527	165	16,360	161	16,305	154	17,520	162
North Carolina.....	46,596	355	48,682	385	48,519	370	52,136	389
North Dakota.....	2,033	13	2,141	12	2,134	12	2,293	12
Ohio.....	19,374	123	19,952	126	19,885	121	21,367	128
Oklahoma.....	9,584	72	10,097	74	10,063	71	10,813	75
Oregon.....	5,433	52	5,721	53	5,702	50	6,127	53
Pennsylvania.....	35,769	302	37,747	308	37,621	295	40,426	311
Rhode Island.....	1,075	12	1,105	10	1,101	10	1,183	10
South Carolina.....	13,642	114	14,405	117	14,357	112	15,427	118
South Dakota.....	6,343	59	6,843	60	6,820	58	7,328	61
Tennessee.....	17,582	173	17,883	167	17,823	160	19,152	168
Texas.....	73,275	583	77,755	619	77,797	594	83,271	626
Utah.....	6,594	46	6,851	47	6,828	45	7,337	48
Vermont.....	2,719	13	2,896	13	2,886	13	3,101	13
Virginia.....	17,225	160	17,181	152	17,123	145	18,399	153
Washington.....	10,622	106	11,285	105	11,247	101	12,085	106
West Virginia.....	3,894	33	4,051	33	4,037	32	4,338	33
Wisconsin.....	21,716	165	22,741	162	22,665	155	24,355	163
Wyoming.....	1,205	9	1,326	10	1,322	10	1,421	10
District of Columbia.....	149,344	589	156,536	475	156,011	470	167,642	475
American Samoa.....	6	-	6	-	6	-	6	-
China.....	152	1	454	2	605	2	680	2
Guam.....	410	4	429	4	439	4	439	4
Mexico.....	250	1	335	1	378	1	399	1
N. Mariana Islands.....	129	1	137	1	141	1	141	1
Puerto Rico.....	4,221	44	4,537	49	4,695	49	4,695	49
Virgin Islands.....	127	1	131	1	133	1	133	1
Obligations.....	1,108,396	8,357	1,161,770	8,364	1,159,175	8,069	1,244,231	8,485
Lapsing Balances.....	247	-	115	-	-	-	-	-
Bal. Available, EOY.....	70,602	-	909	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Available.....	1,179,245	8,357	1,162,794	8,364	1,159,175	8,069	1,244,231	8,485

GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPLEMENTAL OBLIGATIONS AND FTEs

Table FSIS-9. Geographic Breakdown of Supplemental Obligations and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)

State/Territory/Country	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Actual	FTEs	Actual	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs	Estimated	FTEs
Alabama.....	\$197	-	\$78	-	-	-	-	-
Alaska.....	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Arizona.....	28	-	20	-	-	-	-	-
Arkansas.....	175	-	112	-	-	-	-	-
California.....	3,204	-	1,545	-	-	-	-	-
Colorado.....	253	-	147	-	-	-	-	-
Connecticut.....	158	-	68	-	-	-	-	-
Delaware.....	22	-	16	-	-	-	-	-
Florida.....	603	-	331	-	-	-	-	-
Georgia.....	572	-	335	-	-	-	-	-
Hawaii.....	120	-	65	-	-	-	-	-
Idaho.....	338	-	147	-	-	-	-	-
Illinois.....	1,190	-	660	-	-	-	-	-
Indiana.....	327	-	167	-	-	-	-	-
Iowa.....	724	-	423	-	-	-	-	-
Kansas.....	172	-	72	-	-	-	-	-
Kentucky.....	187	-	116	-	-	-	-	-
Louisiana.....	199	-	114	-	-	-	-	-
Maine.....	24	-	14	-	-	-	-	-
Maryland.....	299	-	183	-	-	-	-	-
Massachusetts.....	405	-	228	-	-	-	-	-
Michigan.....	373	-	195	-	-	-	-	-
Minnesota.....	275	-	157	-	-	-	-	-
Mississippi.....	134	-	98	-	-	-	-	-
Missouri.....	29,019	-	29,515	-	-	-	-	-
Montana.....	62	-	23	-	-	-	-	-
Nebraska.....	480	-	212	-	-	-	-	-
Nevada.....	130	-	96	-	-	-	-	-
New Hampshire.....	25	-	16	-	-	-	-	-
New Jersey.....	1,331	-	724	-	-	-	-	-
New Mexico.....	74	-	28	-	-	-	-	-
New York.....	1,794	-	925	-	-	-	-	-
North Carolina.....	317	-	173	-	-	-	-	-
North Dakota.....	46	-	19	-	-	-	-	-
Ohio.....	735	-	355	-	-	-	-	-
Oklahoma.....	243	-	134	-	-	-	-	-
Oregon.....	219	-	132	-	-	-	-	-
Pennsylvania.....	1,274	-	694	-	-	-	-	-
Rhode Island.....	27	-	17	-	-	-	-	-
South Carolina.....	167	-	88	-	-	-	-	-
South Dakota.....	55	-	29	-	-	-	-	-
Tennessee.....	308	-	129	-	-	-	-	-
Texas.....	2,102	-	1,133	-	-	-	-	-
Utah.....	236	-	103	-	-	-	-	-
Vermont.....	75	-	34	-	-	-	-	-
Virginia.....	117	-	75	-	-	-	-	-
Washington.....	642	-	344	-	-	-	-	-
West Virginia.....	24	-	27	-	-	-	-	-
Wisconsin.....	420	-	255	-	-	-	-	-
Wyoming.....	83	-	29	-	-	-	-	-
District of Columbia.....	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Guam.....	29	-	11	-	-	-	-	-
Puerto Rico.....	155	-	88	-	-	-	-	-
Distribution Unknown.....	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Obligations.....	50,171	-	40,701	-	-	-	-	-
Lapsing Balances.....	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bal. Available, EOY.....	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Available.....	50,171	-	40,701	-	-	-	-	-

CLASSIFICATION BY OBJECTS

Table FSIS-10 Classification by Objects (thousands of dollars)

Item No.	Item	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Estimated	2025 Estimated
	Personnel Compensation:				
	Washington D.C.	\$81,427	\$85,832	\$85,569	\$92,463
	Personnel Compensation, Field.....	526,113	554,574	552,877	597,341
11	Total personnel compensation.....	607,540	640,406	638,446	689,804
12	Personal benefits	273,373	286,162	285,313	311,240
13.0	Benefits for former personnel	773	293	292	292
	Total, personnel comp. and benefits.....	881,686	926,861	924,051	1,001,336
	Other Objects:				
21.0	Travel and transportation of persons.....	33,023	34,067	33,970	33,970
22.0	Transportation of things	4,038	3,771	3,760	3,760
23.1	Rental payments to GSA	7,650	5,271	5,255	10,545
23.2	Rental payments to others	-	-	-	-
23.3	Communications, utilities, and misc. charges	13,829	11,176	11,143	11,143
24.0	Printing and reproduction.....	296	423	422	422
25.1	Advisory and assistance services	3,011	2,503	2,492	2,492
25.2	Other services from non-Federal sources.....	29,896	24,132	24,063	24,063
25.3	Other goods and services from Federal sources.....	59,348	69,880	99,884	69,675
25.4	Operation and maintenance of facilities.....	952	1,081	1,077	1,077
25.5	Research and development contracts	-	-	-	-
25.7	Operation and maintenance of equipment.....	352	658	657	657
26.0	Supplies and materials.....	9,193	10,097	10,068	10,068
31.0	Equipment	4,260	9,723	9,693	9,693
41.0	Grants, subsidies, and contributions.....	60,425	61,952	61,765	65,155
42.0	Insurance Claims and Indemnities	422	154	154	154
43.0	Interest and Dividends.....	15	21	21	21
	Total, Other Objects	226,710	234,909	264,424	242,895
99.9	Total, new obligations	1,108,396	1,161,770	1,188,475	1,244,231
	DHS Building Security Payments (included in 25.3)	\$1,349	\$1,411	\$1,366	\$1,367
	Information Technology Investments:				
	Major Investment PHIS				
25.2	External Labor (Contractors)	7,759	7,041	5,565	7,009
	Total Major Investment PHIS	7,759	7,041	5,565	7,009
	Major Investment CBAS				
11	Internal Labor.....	-	3,281	3,281	3,281
25.2	External Labor (Contractors)	-	13,922	7,031	5,725
	Total Major Investment CBAS	0	17,203	10,312	9,006
	Total Major Investments	7,759	24,244	15,877	16,015
	Mission Area Non-Major Investment Totals	24,915	6,755	5,302	5,156
	Mission Area Standard Investment Totals	45,390	40,213	35,124	26,649
25.3	Mission Area WCF Transfers	57,191	57,012	59,680	68,560
	Total Non-Major Investment	127,496	103,980	100,106	100,365
	Total IT Investments.....	135,255	128,224	115,983	116,380
	Cybersecurity:				
	Identify	n/a	\$2,647	\$2,718	\$2,718
	Protect.....	n/a	9,323	9,293	9,286
	Total Cybersecurity.....	-	11,970	12,011	12,004
	Position Data:				
	Average Salary (dollars), ES Position.....	\$190,042	\$200,012	\$210,012	\$216,012
	Average Salary (dollars), GS Position	\$71,218	\$75,503	\$79,278	\$81,543
	Average Grade, GS Position	10.3	10.3	10.4	10.5

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STATUS OF PROGRAMS

As USDA’s public health regulatory agency, FSIS is responsible for ensuring that domestic and imported meat, poultry, and egg products are safe, wholesome, and properly labeled. Consistent with its role, FSIS’ mission is to protect public health by preventing illness from these products. This mission guides Agency actions to implement and enforce the Acts from which it gets its regulatory authority—the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA), the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA), the Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA), and the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA)—to incorporate data and science into decision making, and continually improve operations to ensure the Agency functions efficiently and effectively. FSIS also ensures the safety and integrity of FSIS-regulated food products imported from 37 eligible countries and U.S. products exported to more than 150 countries.

FSIS strategic planning lays the foundation for long-range and day-to-day operations while positioning the Agency to anticipate future needs and challenges. The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan expands upon FSIS’ progress during the past 5 years and emphasizes how the Agency will continue to implement advanced and innovative approaches to food safety using science and data. Thousands of FSIS inspection personnel across the Nation conduct daily inspection activities to verify industry compliance with applicable food safety regulatory requirements. FSIS employees’ work across all program areas is critical for achieving Agency goals to prevent foodborne illness and protect public health; transform inspection strategies, policies, and scientific approaches to improve public health; and achieve operational excellence.

Our Presence



8,700
FSIS EMPLOYEES

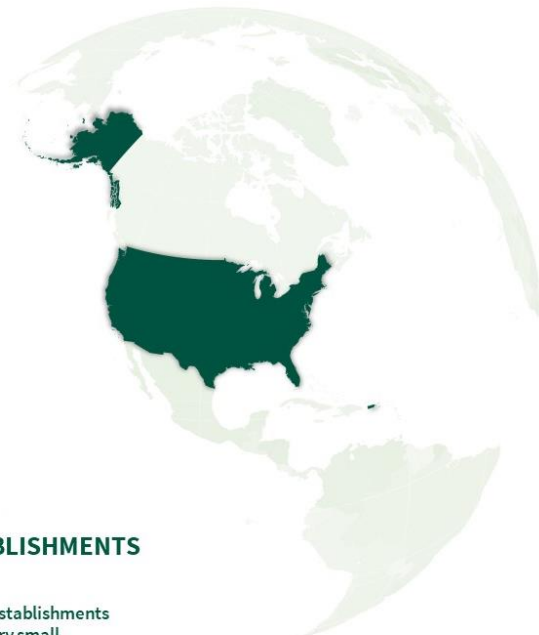


7,600
FRONT LINE WORKFORCE



6,900
FEDERALLY REGULATED ESTABLISHMENTS

*Over 95% of the slaughter and processing establishments regulated by FSIS are considered small or very small.



FSIS’ Status of Programs is organized into six sections. After highlighting top achievements, the Agency notes accomplishments that fall within its four funding categories—Federal programs, State programs, international programs, and digital infrastructure for public health communications and information systems—and closes with cross-cutting examples of progress.

1. Highlights

Among FSIS’ selected examples of recent progress, 2023 (October 1, 2022–September 30, 2023) highlights cover the Agency’s efforts to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA); its initiative to reduce *Salmonella* illnesses linked to poultry; agency-wide contributions to hiring, retention, and employee engagement; and ongoing support to small and very small establishments.

1.1 Equity at FSIS

Equity is a central component of FSIS’ mission to protect public health by preventing foodborne illness. Everyone needs access to safe food. To meet this vision, FSIS strives to ensure all its stakeholders have equal access to FSIS resources, and that underserved communities are being heard and having their needs met. During the past 2 years, FSIS has made significant strides in institutionalizing equity into the fabric of the Agency. The FSIS 2023-2024 Equity Action Plan describes how FSIS has initiated a variety of actions to advance equity for those in marginalized and underrepresented communities. The plan also outlines how the Agency will meet the goals set forth in Executive Orders (EOs) 13985 and 14091 across four main priorities:

- Provide robust technical assistance and reduce barriers to access for small and very small establishment owners and operators who are often members of underrepresented communities.
- Expand language access for consumers with limited English proficiency.
- Assist Tribal nations in their efforts to build self-sufficiency and grow meat and poultry processing businesses.
- Increase equity through Federal procurement by expanding opportunities for small, disadvantaged business owners and women-owned small businesses.

For each priority action, FSIS identifies difficulties certain groups may face in accessing FSIS services, articulates actions to advance equity, and discusses how the Agency plans to meaningfully engage with leaders and representatives from communities that have long been underserved. By steadily executing these actions, FSIS strives to advance progress towards a more fair and equitable organization that is trusted by those it serves. The Agency’s actions were incorporated into the USDA Equity Action Plan, and its progress was highlighted in the Department’s updates to the White House Domestic Policy Council.

Tribal Engagement

Through technical assistance and community engagement, FSIS is committed to supporting Tribal sovereignty, self-determination, traditions, and culture. Meat and poultry processing for distribution at the local, State, or National level is an avenue for Tribal communities to build self-sufficiency and revenue.

FSIS strives to support food entrepreneurial opportunities among Tribal nations by considering and supporting local traditions and culture through the services it provides these communities. For example, some traditional food animals among Tribal nations—i.e., reindeer, elk, deer, antelope, buffalo or bison, and migratory waterfowl or game birds—are considered “non-amenable” species under the FMIA and PPIA. While these species do not require FSIS inspection, they may undergo voluntary inspection at the request of operators if they intend to sell their products in markets that require it or if their customers hold certain expectations for inspection. FSIS must charge for its voluntary inspection when the animals are not amenable under the FMIA. For these animals, antemortem inspection (inspection before slaughter) can be conducted in the field to accommodate traditional methods and practices. FSIS also designed new consumer resources tailored to Tribal audiences. Through partnership with USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service, FSIS incorporated culturally appropriate food safety information in boxes delivered through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. Food boxes distributed among 276 Tribal groups included 5,000 FSIS magnets depicting safe internal cooking temperatures for traditional Tribal foods.

The Agency provides technical assistance to help Tribes obtain Federal grants of inspection, understand compliance, and facilitate connection with other USDA mission areas and agencies that offer grants and loans for meat processing. In 2023, FSIS assisted two Tribal establishments—one within the Muscogee Creek Nation, the other within the Cherokee Nation—to come under Federal inspection to slaughter and process cattle, sheep, goats, and swine. Both establishments also slaughter and process bison under State inspection systems. FSIS aided one of the establishments through coordination with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry to acquire the State grant of inspection that covers no-cost bison inspection. FSIS helps facilitate connections between interested establishments and relevant State officials if the State program offers a no-cost inspection for a non-amenable species like bison.

FSIS engages with Tribal communities through small and very small plant roundtables, listening sessions, and conferences. This outreach often results in Tribal input on customs and food production that informs program improvements. After informative listening sessions in 2022, FSIS led and participated in two additional sessions with Tribal leadership, communities, and businesses in 2023. In March, the FSIS Administrator delivered remarks at the 2023 Tribal Meat Processing Tours and Training Fly-in hosted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, by the Intertribal

Agricultural Council and the Osage, Muscogee Creek, Cherokee, and Quapaw nations. In August, the FSIS Administrator presented at the Intertribal Agricultural Council Great Plains Summit in Great Falls, Montana, for tribal governments and producers in the Montana and Wyoming regions on how to set up their own establishments and sell their commodities. FSIS also participated in the virtual USDA Tribal Equity Consultations in April and the Native Youth Summit at the University of Arkansas in July. Each of these events creates a space for direct communication, strengthens trust, and ensures FSIS policies and programs adequately consider Tribal interests, needs, traditions, and culture. They also serve as opportunities to listen, understand, and build relationships to explore future opportunities for collaboration and outreach. Outside of these events, FSIS developed webinars to share at the request of interested Tribal parties on topics tailored to the needs of and the interests expressed by Tribal groups.

From the data infrastructure perspective, FSIS launched a new enhancement to its publicly posted Meat, Poultry and Egg Product Inspection Directory to visualize the boundaries of Tribal land. The directory and interactive map denote the locations of all federally inspected establishments. This enhancement includes Tribal Statistical Areas as a location filter, which helps users identify establishments within or near Tribal nations to better support local economies and augment FSIS outreach and recruitment efforts in these historically underserved areas.

Small Business Procurement

In efforts to level the playing field for underserved small business owners, FSIS prioritizes awareness and communication with the small business community. These efforts resulted in increased competition and contract awards to small businesses. In 2023, the Agency awarded \$47.2 million in contracts to small businesses and directed a significant share of its \$63.9 million in total procurement spending to small disadvantaged businesses (SDBs), women-owned small businesses (WOSBs), historically underutilized business zones (HUBZones), and service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses. Included are contracts for information technology equipment and services, lab equipment, protective equipment for frontline inspectors, and supplies. FSIS has contributed to the Department's past successes by exceeding its five percent SDB goal for 7 consecutive years and exceeding the WOSB goal by more than three-fold during the last 4 years. This year, FSIS continued to far exceed small business goals across all Small Business Administration socioeconomic categories:

Table FSIS-11. FSIS Performance vs. 2023 Small Business Procurement Goals

Business Type	2023 USDA-wide Goals	2023 FSIS Results
Small Business	55%	73.93%
Small Disadvantaged Business	22.4%	50.13%
Women-Owned Small Business	5%	27.80%
HUBZone Small Business	3%	11.95%
Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business	3%	11%

DEIA in the Workplace

FSIS' mission to ensure food safety for the American public relies on its diverse and inclusive workforce that values and leverages individual differences. Each FSIS employee plays a vital role in the Agency's vision to build a work culture that drives trust, belonging, transparency, accountability, and employee empathy. FSIS carries out its commitment to DEIA through accountability, data collection, analysis, and effective policymaking.

FSIS expects all employees to adhere to Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights (EEO/CR) laws, regulations, and policies. The Agency resolved 66 percent of EEO complaints by year end, exceeding both the USDA and Federal rates. On an annual basis, all employees must complete mandatory EEO/CR training to refresh their understanding of what it means to be part of a workplace that embraces differences; is physically, mentally, and emotionally safe; and enables all employees to thrive. The theme of the 2023 training was understanding and interrupting unconscious bias, which explained the science behind bias, why people hold bias, the impact of bias on everyday interactions, and practical strategies for recognizing and interrupting it in the workplace. To promote empowerment, responsibility, and accountability for DEIA through the workforce, the Agency's 20 Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committees (EEOAC) published several articles in EEOAC newsletters distributed among their Agency peers. In August, the Agency's third annual virtual diversity and inclusion conference hosted more than 500 employees during the course of 3 days and received positive feedback. The Agency hosted other in-person and virtual EEO/CR trainings on topics such as conflict management and alternative dispute resolution, as well as five special emphasis events for American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month,

Black History Month, Women’s History Month, Pride Month, and Hispanic Heritage Month. FSIS was also invited to co-host the USDA-wide observance for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

The Agency’s commitment to DEIA is driven by leadership and governance structures that support long-term and sustainable DEIA efforts. FSIS continued to incorporate a DEIA-focused review into all social media postings to reflect its values. The Agency also continued updating its website according to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which requires all Federal departments and agencies to ensure their information and communications technology is accessible to people with disabilities. The public website achieved 97 percent 508-compliance by year end. Supervisors also received training on best practices for diversity hiring as well as an overview of the reasonable accommodations process and best practices for accommodating employees and stakeholders at multiple forums. Moreover, FSIS completed an agency-wide barrier analysis as part of the 2022 Management Directive 715 Report to establish and maintain effective programs of equal employment opportunity. The Agency identified several actions to begin implementing and will continue to track progress. Key objectives include expanding outreach and recruitment to optimize the quality and diversity of the applicant pool; marketing FSIS’ leadership development programs to Agency personnel and prospective hires; improving outreach to potential participants for leadership development programs; continuing to ensure equity during the hiring process; continuing to ensure consistent and fair administration of FSIS’ awards programs; continuing transparent communication and solicitation of employee feedback; and promoting employee engagement, empowerment, and retention. FSIS’ efforts pertaining to recruitment embrace DEIA principles and are detailed below in section 1.3.

1.2 Reducing Illnesses Linked to Salmonella in Poultry

After announcing an initiative to reevaluate FSIS’ approach to *Salmonella* in poultry in October 2021, the Agency focused on information-gathering and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders, researchers, and scientists. These efforts culminated in the development of a framework under consideration as a new strategy to reduce illnesses linked to *Salmonella* in poultry products. FSIS released a draft framework, a significant change from the Agency’s current approach, in October 2022, and received significant oral and written comments on it from a wide range of stakeholders.

The framework, which is under consideration, is organized in three components to target *Salmonella* at different points in the slaughter and processing operation: industry testing for *Salmonella* before birds enter an establishment, enhancing establishment process control monitoring and FSIS verification, and implementing enforceable final product standards that account for the risk from different serotypes and quantities of *Salmonella*.

In 2022, FSIS held a scientific roundtable (February) and public meeting (November) to hear comments from experts in academia, consumer advocacy groups, industry, and the public on the proposed framework. In February 2023, FSIS held a technical discussion with small and very small establishments. All comments received in these forums were considered in the formal regulatory proposal, which is expected to be published in 2024.

FSIS invited poultry slaughter and processing establishments to submit proposals for pilot projects to test different strategies for *Salmonella* control, granting pilot participation to 11 establishments by the end of 2023. FSIS will analyze the data collected during the pilots to determine whether any of the methods support changes to FSIS’ *Salmonella* control strategies.

To complement these efforts, FSIS completed a peer-reviewed risk profile to provide information on whether certain serotypes or subtypes of *Salmonella* should be considered as adulterants in specific poultry products within the meaning of the PPIA. The Agency also collaborated on peer-reviewed quantitative risk assessments for *Salmonella* in chicken and turkey to evaluate the potential benefit of risk management options for controlling *Salmonella* levels and more virulent serotypes. FSIS, in collaboration with private sector risk and data scientists, applied modern analytics to harness a vast amount of genomic data in predictive models to refine the identification of poultry-associated *Salmonella* serotypes of greatest public health significance. The risk profile and risk assessments provide scientific support for FSIS’ revised framework for controlling *Salmonella* in poultry and are expected to be published as part of the regulatory proposal in 2024.

In April 2023, FSIS announced a proposed determination to declare *Salmonella* an adulterant in breaded stuffed raw chicken products if they exceed a certain level of *Salmonella* contamination. Under the proposed determination, a breaded stuffed raw chicken product would be considered adulterated if it were found to contain *Salmonella* at one

colony forming unit per gram or higher in the chicken components. FSIS has been reviewing comments since the public comment period closed in August 2023 and is on track to issue a final determination during 2024.

1.3 Recruitment, Retention, and Employee Engagement

FSIS employees are highly trained, motivated, and skilled professionals who work as one team with one purpose: to protect public health. FSIS employees collectively bring a broad range of attributes, backgrounds, and capabilities to advance this mission, with professions such as inspection; investigation; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and various administrative roles. Approximately 90 percent of the Agency’s workforce is dedicated to frontline inspection, including those in priority recruitment areas—Food Inspectors (FIs), Consumer Safety Inspectors (CSIs), and Public Health Veterinarians (PHVs). The Agency offers competitive monetary recruitment and retention incentives to attract highly qualified professionals to its workforce and invests in training them to be proficient and up to date on the latest policies and procedures. FSIS continues to prioritize scheduling and staffing to ensure all establishments’ inspection needs are met, while proactively recruiting to reduce vacancy rates.

Recruitment

In 2023, FSIS continued to scale its efforts to attract top-tier candidates and compete with private industry as an employer of choice. The Agency continued to offer recruitment incentives to inspection personnel and expanded recruitment methods by prioritizing equity, coordinating local hiring events, implementing process improvements, growing programs to support veterans and professionals with disabilities, and using new platforms to broaden job applicant pools.

FSIS established a new Chief Talent Management Officer (CTMO) position in 2023, responsible for developing strategies that merge data science and design thinking to attract diverse and qualified candidates. The CTMO coordinates across Agency programs to spearhead FSIS’ talent acquisition strategy, serve as the executive sponsor for the Agency’s talent management community of practice, and expand FSIS’ relationship with more than 1,400 schools and organizations.

Monetary incentives remain a key element of the Agency’s recruitment strategy. In October 2022, FSIS began authorizing referral awards of \$1,000 for employees who successfully refer new hires for in-plant mission-critical occupations: FIs, CSIs, and PHVs. By the end of the fiscal year, 171 employees were eligible for and will receive awards for referring job candidates who were hired into frontline positions.

During the course of the fiscal year, FSIS developed 3 new recruitment and outreach exhibit display designs and 44 sets were distributed across the country to districts and program areas. The Agency also developed multiple social media assets and deployed the first-ever design of three vinyl and digital billboards across five locations in the Texas panhandle with hard-to-fill frontline positions. The billboards, in English and Spanish, include a designated link to track the number of visitors to the Agency’s careers page and track effectiveness. All new materials highlight the diversity of careers offered by FSIS and the employees who carry out these mission-critical duties.

To promote internships and available positions, FSIS initiated connections with affinity groups—Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 1890 Land-Grant Institutions, and the USDA 19 percent Tribal Scholars Program—as well as military organizations and academic institutions. The Agency partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct quarterly briefings for disabled veterans seeking employment. It also conducted outreach to veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses at several military installations to raise awareness of the apprenticeship program and other opportunities with FSIS. The Agency’s pre-apprenticeship program targets transitioning servicemembers and provides a pathway into the 12-month FSIS apprenticeship program for veterans. During 2023, FSIS conducted seven site visits and attended one virtual outreach event, which resulted in 153 applicants to the pre-apprenticeship program with 31 qualified candidates. By the end of 2023, eight apprentices completed the 12-month apprenticeship program, with an additional four scheduled to graduate within the next 6 months. During the 1-year apprenticeship, veterans are eligible for education benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs G.I. Bill program. To date, five apprentices have used the G.I. Bill benefits, and FSIS has assisted apprentices with receiving approximately \$180,000 in G.I. Bill benefits. FSIS also participated in career fairs hosted by Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, Related Sciences, and the Federal Asian Pacific American Council. The Agency expanded youth outreach at the 4-H and Tribal Youth conferences, reaching nearly 400 youth to discuss career opportunities.

During 2023, FSIS redesigned the career resources page on its website to enhance the user experience and provide practical and accessible resources to prospective applicants. This included a new page dedicated to highlighting career profiles for seven broad hiring groups: FIs, CSIs, PHVs, scientific positions, administrative positions, professional positions, and compliance investigator positions. In August, FSIS launched a webpage dedicated to hiring pathways that serves as a repository of information to guide veterans and persons with disabilities (PWD) through the hiring process. FSIS assisted more than 40 veterans and PWD with resume building and job searches that resulted in the placement of eight veterans and three PWD in positions with the Agency. FSIS also began posting recruiting events on the Agency's events webpage to streamline virtual promotion and leverage search engine optimization.

FSIS continues to leverage technology to proactively source, attract, and recruit candidates to join the Agency. This year, FSIS sourced nearly 1,100 applicants through talent management tools, of which 15 percent identified as Hispanic or Latino, 17 percent as Asian or Pacific Islander, 28 percent as Black or African American, and 57 percent identified as Woman or Female. To promote critical STEM positions, FSIS began tagging relevant postings to display in USAJob's Federal Tech Portal. The Agency also participated in the first Tech to Gov Forum and job fair, generating 482 eligible applicants for its open positions on the day they posted.

FSIS offers pathways to employment through internships, fellowships, veterinary scholarships, and externships as part of the Federal volunteer student program. By offering early career pathway opportunities to employment, FSIS seeks to attract talented individuals who can grow as professionals and build careers within the Agency. In 2023, FSIS converted eight Adel A. Malak veterinary scholars to career positions and onboarded 15 new scholars; hired eight Pathways interns and converted one to a permanent career-conditional position; onboarded four recent graduates and two Presidential Management Fellows; provided five students with the opportunity to gain meaningful work experiences with FSIS through the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities internship program; and hosted 19 student externships as part of the Federal volunteer service program.

Retention

To deliver its mission, FSIS invests in its motivated workforce comprised of a diverse array of backgrounds, cultures, experiences, and outlooks. Having diverse teams is one of FSIS' greatest strengths when facing new developments and challenges in food safety.

FSIS' frontline workforce is the cornerstone of public health protection that relies on continuous learning and development. In 2023, FSIS conducted 84 mission-related training sessions for nearly 4,400 employees, including introductory and refresher courses.

FSIS continued to offer retention benefits for PHVs, including recruitment and retention bonuses for new PHVs; student loan repayment; and the PHV continuing education program that helps offset the costs of State licensure requirements, board certifications, degree programs, and job-related learning. In 2023, FSIS increased the reimbursement amount to all veterinarians across the Agency from \$500 to \$1,000 per fiscal year and reimbursed 121 PHVs to support their continuing education units. FSIS also established a new accelerated promotion program for newly hired veterinarians that permits highly qualified veterinarians hired at the GS-11 level to advance to GS-12 in as little as 6 months.

Based on employee feedback, employee development was expanded in 2022 to provide all FSIS employees an opportunity to develop and enhance core competencies, further their education, better perform in their current role, and qualify for other positions within the Agency. In 2023, FSIS reimbursed 271 employees for qualifying college courses. FSIS' continuous development initiative is another way the Agency supports individual and professional growth. Through this program, FSIS employees are permitted to use at least 40 hours for development and training per fiscal year. FSIS proactively developed training and development opportunities related to various career competencies, cross-training in other duties, career coaching, mentorship, opportunities to shadow other positions in FSIS, and detail appointments. FSIS' competitive leadership development program welcomed 73 participants in person this year, and its mentoring program matched 27 mentors and protégés. FSIS' Help Resources site contains webinars, training videos, interactive tutorials, and job aids that support FSIS employees with performance and training needs.

After receiving feedback from FSIS employees, the Agency sought to prioritize workplace flexibilities. The 2022 Appropriations Bill and subsequent bills have allowed FSIS to charge regulated establishments the cost of inspection services provided outside of the establishment's approved hours of operations and for inspection services provided

on Federal holidays, independent of the pay status of the employee. That change allowed FSIS to provide opportunities for flexible work arrangements for inspection personnel to achieve work-life balance. Under previous statutory language, FSIS could only charge plants for overtime if the employee was in an overtime status when inspection was provided to the plant outside of the established hours of operation. This meant that employees could not have flexibilities with their schedule. A boon for work-life balance among FSIS field inspection employees, the statutory change remains cost neutral to industry and avoids any changes to inspection services.

FSIS recognizes the value of investing in top performers, and its achievement awards program allows the Agency to acknowledge the dedication of its employees throughout the year. In addition to performance awards, FSIS issued 324 recognition coins to employees who embody FSIS' accountability, collaboration, empowerment, and solutions-oriented values. The Agency also implemented a new non-monetary recognition program with items like mugs, t-shirts, and lunchboxes to reward notable contributions.

Employee Engagement

Throughout the year, FSIS received and processed feedback from monthly employee town hall calls, its employee feedback email inbox, surveys, and discussions with its union (the National Joint Council), which resulted in positive changes to engagement, benefits, flexible work arrangements, and professional development. By communicating frequently, providing ample feedback opportunities, and taking steps to implement meaningful changes, FSIS strives to embody a workplace where employees feel valued and seek to build lifelong, fulfilling careers.

FSIS implemented changes to its virtual, monthly employee town hall calls this year. Transitioning to a conversational format resulted in more stimulating dialogue between employees and leadership, solutions-oriented comments, increased attendance, and positive feedback. Attendance results indicate these changes have fostered an environment of collaboration and transparency. The average monthly attendance grew by 37 percent compared to attendance in 2022, the highest since initiating the town halls in 2020.

FSIS completed more than 20 internal surveys during 2023 that assisted management with internal customer service and program enhancement. Specific topics included employee development, the pre-apprenticeship program, the employee newsletter, communications with senior leaders, practices for new hires, the worker's compensation and benefits program, the EEO/CR programs, customer experience, educational seminars, talent management, and relocation services.

The new FSIS Labor Management Agreement became effective on June 7, 2023, after concluding successful term bargaining with the National Joint Council of Food Inspection Locals, American Federation of Government Employees, which represents all permanent full-time FIs and CSIs. The Agency conducted supervisory training on the new agreement to ensure understanding and compliance and is conducting ongoing communications and collaboration surrounding the new agreement to foster a positive working relationship with its union partners.

FSIS recognizes employee achievements in its weekly employee newsletter and LinkedIn account. In 2023, FSIS designed a new content strategy for LinkedIn to enhance employee engagement and complement recruitment efforts. Since the start of 2023, FSIS doubled its posting rate by incorporating messages that highlight agency culture, laud recent examples of employee contributions to Agency goals, and encourage followers to share advice and experiences in response to specific career prompts. The new approach resulted in a 32 percent growth in page followers, reached 89 percent more users on the platform, and generated a 77 percent growth in digital engagement compared to the previous year. The Agency's presence on the leading professional social network carries an added benefit by demonstrating real-life examples of the work and achievements prospective employees can expect by joining FSIS.

In September 2023, FSIS coordinated an agency-wide event for employees to reflect on the 30th anniversary of a landmark *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) outbreak linked to ground beef, the impact it had on the nation's understanding of food safety, and how FSIS continues to work towards its vision that everyone's food is safe. FSIS invited external speakers to share their first-hand experiences and reflections, resulting in a well-regarded event attended by 700 employees and recorded for future information purposes.

1.4 Supporting Small and Very Small Establishments

USDA is committed to expanding processing capacity and building a more resilient supply chain by supporting independent small and very small meat and poultry establishments. FSIS has multiple programs in place to provide resources for these smaller plants, such as direct outreach and guidance materials attuned to their unique needs.

In addition to monthly calls with all establishments, FSIS hosts a series of small plant roundtables each year to connect small business owners with USDA to promote understanding of food safety regulations and connect with USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and USDA Rural Development (RD) for information on grants and funding opportunities. In 2023, FSIS hosted four regional roundtables in Mississippi, New York, Oregon, and Virginia, with the option to attend virtually. Three of the roundtables took place in areas of the country with a high number of businesses owned by underrepresented populations, and two were held at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. FSIS executed its first national roundtable in South Carolina with more than 100 attendees in-person and 38 virtually. Beginning in March 2023, FSIS began to make interpretation services at these roundtables available upon request. By offering virtual event access during these meetings, FSIS provides opportunities to those who may otherwise be unable to attend in person.

In July 2023, FSIS launched a monthly newsletter for small and very small establishments to help them stay on top of the latest developments that may impact their operations. The newsletter, *FSIS Updates for Small Plants*, compiles the most relevant information for this group of plants—regulatory updates, knowledge articles, upcoming events, and frequently asked questions—into one convenient and reliable resource.

The Agency strives to bridge barriers faced by smaller producers through specialized outreach and guidance materials that aid the development of safe and effective Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems and food safety programs that result in compliance with Federal food safety regulations. FSIS' small plant help desk and askFSIS are available year-round to provide answers to technical, inspection-related questions that help to maintain effective policy understanding and implementation. In 2023, askFSIS responded to 35,828 questions from customers and reviewed 819 askFSIS Q&As posted on the AskUSDA website that were viewed more than 341,000 times this year. Agency field personnel also provide one-on-one outreach to small and very small establishments. This includes conducting facility assessments at plants during the grant of inspection approval process and serving as a resource when establishments are developing HACCP plans. During the course of 2023, FSIS Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officers in every district conducted outreach activities to help ensure small and very small establishments had opportunities to receive proactive guidance on interpretation of regulations and other food safety requirements to ensure compliance.

FSIS also shares information on available Federal opportunities for financial and technical assistance through USDA's AMS, RD, and Farm Service Agency, as well as loan programs with the U.S. Small Business Administration. These programs help to provide capital, equipment, space, job training, and entrepreneurial skills that can help to start or grow a business. When new opportunities are made available, FSIS shares this information on its website and through its weekly constituent newsletter.

FSIS guidance materials help businesses meet Federal regulations applicable to their establishments. While these documents are specially tailored for small and very small meat and poultry establishments, large establishments can also benefit from the information. This year, FSIS released three new guidance documents:

- *FSIS Guideline for Label Approval*, which helps establishments determine whether their labels must be submitted to FSIS for approval.
- *FSIS Ready-to-Eat Fermented, Salt-Cured, and Dried Products Guideline*, which provides information on regulatory requirements associated with these products that rely on multi-hurdle approaches to achieve lethality and shelf-stability. The guidance also addresses many commonly asked questions concerning the food safety hazards associated with these products and the key steps in each process to ensure safety.
- *FSIS Guideline to Control Salmonella in Swine Slaughter and Pork Processing Establishments*, which contains information and recommendations to control *Salmonella* in market hogs from pre-harvest through slaughter as well as pork fabrication controls, including processing, packaging, and distribution controls for pork cuts and comminuted pork products.

In June 2023, FSIS posted translations of nine existing guidance documents. Depending on the target audience for each guidance, the documents were translated into one or more of the following languages: Arabic, Chinese,

Spanish, and Vietnamese. FSIS translated these existing resources as part of its initiative to reduce language barriers experienced by small and very small establishment owners and operators with limited English language proficiency.

2. Federal Food Safety and Inspection Program

Science and data inform all Agency decisions—its day-to-day inspection tasks, the design of FSIS’ sampling programs, FSIS’ laboratory methods, and the policies and regulations it implements—to ensure its actions are meaningful to food safety and protect public health. Thousands of FSIS employees across the United States work every day to achieve this goal by carrying out tasks to verify that imported and domestically produced products comply with applicable U.S. food safety regulatory requirements.

During 2023, FSIS protected public health by conducting ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection of 161 million head of livestock and 9.8 billion poultry carcasses. Additionally, FSIS inspected 2.7 billion pounds of liquid, frozen, and dried egg products and conducted 7.7 million food safety procedures to verify that systems at all federally inspected facilities continued to maintain food safety and wholesomeness requirements.

Our Inspection by the Numbers



FSIS strives to adopt innovative approaches to inspection to verify that regulated establishments meet the Agency’s requirements and produce safe and properly labeled products. FSIS continually updates its regulations, policies, guidance to industry, and instructions to field personnel to ensure they reflect the latest scientific advancements. Focusing on hazard control during food production provides FSIS with information on how to continually evolve policies impacting industry controls and FSIS verification. Since implementing HACCP in 1996, industry has progressed significantly in hazard control, with particular emphasis on microbiological hazards.

2.1 Optimization of Inspection Systems

In 2023, FSIS made significant progress in its efforts to optimize inspection systems, sampling programs, and labeling procedures through science-based approaches to food safety.

In 2014, FSIS amended the regulations to establish the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS) for young chicken and all turkey slaughter establishments. Five years later, in 2019, FSIS amended the regulations to establish the New Swine Slaughter Inspection System (NSIS) for market hog slaughter establishments. In response to litigation in 2021 and after consulting with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), worker safety advocates, and industry, FSIS developed a “time-limited trial” in 2022 for swine establishments operating under NSIS. The trial enables NSIS establishments to experiment with ergonomics, automation, and crewing to create custom work environments that will protect food and worker safety while maintaining productivity. Six establishments were approved to operate for a limited time at an increased line speeds provided

they submitted worker-safety related data. Also, in 2022, FSIS contracted with a team of worker safety experts to study the impact of increased line speeds on worker safety at poultry establishments operating under NPIS. FSIS granted modified waivers to 49 eligible poultry plants that agreed to participate in the study by a team of worker safety experts to determine the impact of increased line speed on worker safety. Once the team of experts finalizes their reports on the two studies, FSIS can assess each of the study report’s findings to determine future actions and potential rulemaking.

This year, the Agency began inspecting the production of cell-cultured meat products; proposed new regulatory requirements for the voluntary “Product of USA” claim; initiated a multi-step effort aimed at strengthening the substantiation of animal-raising claims; expanded generic label approval; determined avian leukosis a trimmable condition; established a uniform time period for filing appeals; expanded testing for Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) to additional raw ground beef products; and officially replaced the N60 excision sampling method with a cloth method.

Cell-Cultured Meat

FSIS continues to collaborate with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regarding the regulation of meat and poultry products made with cultured animal cells. Meat and poultry food products derived from the cells of animals amenable to the FMIA and the PPIA are under FSIS jurisdiction. In 2023, FSIS issued three grants of inspection to establishments producing FSIS-regulated poultry products derived from animal cells. The cell-cultured poultry products are currently exclusively available to consumers at select restaurants; at this time, no food products made from cultured animal cells are available in retail stores for consumers to purchase. As required for other processing establishments under FSIS jurisdiction, FSIS conducts inspections in cell-culture establishments at a frequency of at least once per operating shift to ensure that cell-cultured meat and poultry food products are safe, wholesome, and properly labeled. In 2023, FSIS issued one new directive and several revised directives with updated instructions for inspection personnel.

The Agency received more than 1,100 public comments on the 2021 advanced notice of proposed rulemaking pertaining to the labeling of cell-cultured meat and poultry products. FSIS is developing a proposed rule that is projected to be published in 2024 and is creating labeling guidance. Prior to rulemaking, FSIS will apply existing labeling requirements to these products. If an inspected establishment decides to sell cell-cultured meat or poultry food products in retail stores before FSIS completes rulemaking, the Agency will conduct an extensive review of all labels before approval. This review would ensure the labels clearly convey the product was made using animal cell-culture technology and differentiate the cell-cultured food products from slaughtered meat and poultry products. FSIS and FDA continue to coordinate closely on the science of animal cell technology, potential hazards, labeling considerations, and to ensure that regulatory oversight is in place so that food developers bring safe and properly labeled products to market.

Product of USA

In March 2023, FSIS published a proposed rule with new regulatory requirements that would better align the voluntary “Product of USA” labeling claim with consumers’ understanding of what the claim means. USDA initiated a comprehensive review in 2021 to understand what the claim means to consumers and inform rulemaking to define the requirements for making such a claim. This review included a nationwide consumer survey that revealed that the current “Product of USA” claim is misleading to most consumers surveyed, with a significant portion believing the claim means that product was made from animals born, raised, slaughtered, and processed in the United States. Results showed a clear need to revise the claim’s regulatory definition so that it more accurately conveys U.S. origin information. The proposed rule would allow the voluntary “Product of USA” or “Made in the USA” claim to be used only on FSIS-regulated products that are derived from animals born, raised, slaughtered, and processed in the United States. Under the proposed rule, the “Product of USA” claim would continue to be voluntary and remain eligible for generic label approval, meaning it would not need to be approved by FSIS before it could be used on regulated product, but would require supporting documentation on file for Agency inspection personnel to verify. FSIS also proposed to allow for other voluntary claims to indicate that a preparation or processing step of a FSIS-regulated product occurred in the United States (e.g., “sliced and packaged in the U.S.”).

Animal-Raising Claims

In June 2023, FSIS announced that it will be issuing a revised industry guideline on “animal-raising” claims, such as “pasture raised” and “grass fed.” The Agency is reconsidering the type of substantiation it requires to support such claims and indicated that it plans to strongly encourage the use of third-party certification to verify these claims. For a particularly popular animal-raising claim, “Raised without Antibiotics” (RWA), FSIS partnered with USDA’s

Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to initiate an exploratory sampling program that will assess whether antibiotic residues are detected in cattle intended for the RWA market. The results of this project will help inform whether FSIS should require that laboratory testing results be submitted for the RWA claim or start a new verification sampling program. This initiative builds on the significant work the Department has undertaken to protect consumers from false and misleading labels and to implement EO 14036 on promoting competition in the American economy.

Generic Label Approval

In January 2023, FSIS published a final rule that expanded the circumstances in which FSIS will generically approve the labels of meat, poultry, and egg products. Labels that can be generically approved do not need to be submitted to and approved by FSIS before they can be used on product in commerce. The final rule expanded generic approval to products only intended for export that deviate from domestic labeling requirements and permitted generic approval of the labels of products that receive voluntary FSIS inspection. This final rule also expanded generic approval to “organic” claims that appear in a product label’s ingredients statement, “geographic landmarks” displayed on a product label, and “negative” claims made on product labels that identify the absence of certain ingredients or types of ingredients. FSIS hosted four webinars to highlight these changes and the new categories of labels that may be generically approved.

Avian Leukosis

In August 2023, FSIS published a final rule that it would no longer condemn poultry carcasses affected with one or more forms of the avian leukosis complex. After carefully considering public comments, FSIS finalized the 2022 proposed rule, with no changes, to treat avian leukosis as a trimmable condition. The Agency initiated rulemaking for leukosis in response to a 2019 National Chicken Council petition, which stated the leukosis regulations reflected an outdated understanding of this disease, imposed unnecessary costs on industry, and presented a potential barrier to young chicken establishments that may want to convert to the new poultry inspection system. Avian leukosis presents no human health concern and, during the years, has become rarer and nearly eradicated among commercial broiler flocks as a result of widespread industry efforts that include vaccination, strict sanitation, and selective breeding. After careful evaluation, FSIS determined that current scientific evidence supports treating avian leukosis as a trimmable condition consistent with regulatory provisions for other poultry diseases and conditions such as arthritis, bruises, and abscesses. FSIS anticipates that small and very small poultry establishments that choose to address leukosis by trimming affected areas will benefit from cost savings associated with this rule.

Uniform Time Period for Appeals

In December 2022, FSIS established a uniform time period for filing appeals regarding certain Agency inspection decisions or actions. Prior to the rule for appeals, there were different regulatory requirements for appeals of FSIS decisions or actions related to inspection activities across multiple FSIS regulations. The final rule establishes a period of 30 calendar days from receipt of written notification of the contested inspection decision or action to file an appeal. FSIS updated guidance on the FSIS webpage and provided instructions to inspection personnel to implement the change.

Expansion of STEC Testing in Beef Products

In February 2023, FSIS expanded its routine verification testing for six adulterant STEC (non-O157 STEC; O26, O45, O103, O111, O121, or O145), in addition to the adulterant *E. coli* O157:H7 in samples of raw ground beef, bench trim, and other raw ground beef components collected at official establishments. Previously, the only category of raw beef products routinely tested for all seven targeted STEC serotypes was beef manufacturing trimmings, while all other raw beef products were only tested for *E. coli* O157. Now, FSIS is testing for these non-O157 STEC in ground beef samples collected at retail stores and in applicable samples of imported raw beef products.

N60 Sampling Replaced with Cloth Method

In February 2023, FSIS stopped using the “N60” excision sampling method to sample domestic beef manufacturing trimmings and bench trim for adulterant STEC and *Salmonella*, replacing it with a non-destructive surface sampling method that uses a cloth to conduct sampling. Available data from ARS and an FSIS in-field study conducted in 2022 and 2023 showed that the cloth method was as effective as the N60 excision sampling method at recovering organisms in beef manufacturing trimmings. The cloth method is also faster and safer for FSIS inspection program personnel to use because it does not require employees to use hooks or knives to collect samples. Additionally, the study showed that the method recovered more total aerobic bacteria and similar *Salmonella* levels compared to the N60 method. Moreover, the cloth sampling method allows FSIS to sample without destroying product, which reduces food waste.

2.2 Public Health Information System

The Public Health Information System (PHIS) is a dynamic, comprehensive web-based system used to collect, consolidate, and analyze data pertaining to FSIS-regulated products. It is used by industry to conduct daily activities, such as uploading and viewing data, viewing reports, submitting export applications, appealing noncompliance records, and reporting adulterated product, among many other capabilities. For more than a decade, PHIS has integrated FSIS data sources to support a comprehensive, timely, and reliable data-driven approach to FSIS inspection. PHIS data shows how well establishments maintain process control and reveals aspects of food safety systems that may require more attention. These data are readily available to FSIS field personnel conducting inspections, public health risk evaluations, and food safety assessments, as well as other FSIS employees who support these activities. Through improved data quality, reporting, management controls, and use, PHIS has enabled FSIS to communicate more effectively internally and with industry.

Transitioning PHIS to the cloud infrastructure in 2022 resulted in enhanced security and more reliable services for all PHIS users in 2023. FSIS refined maintenance procedures to limit downtime to no more than 15 minutes for software updates and deployed five key enhancements:

- Enhanced the ability to receive timely customer complaints and track outbreak investigations;
- Improved the efficiency of in-plant operations through managing inspection assignments;
- Replaced data-reporting software for industry reports to provide greater clarity and detail regarding FSIS findings;
- Implemented a new feature for industry users to review and suggest modifications to FSIS data associated with their establishment; and
- Deployed several technical software upgrades to enhance the user experience.

FSIS also created a PHIS staffing dashboard that serves as an Agency workforce analysis tool to identify where staffing resources could be optimized across establishments. It provides resource managers and headquarters staff the ability to quickly identify vacancies and obtain timely, reliable workforce data. The dashboard incorporates PHIS assignment data as well as Federal timesheet submission data, resulting in a more accurate representation of employment status and frontline staffing needs.

2.3 Labs and Sampling

FSIS laboratories operate 365 days a year, analyzing hundreds of product samples each day to identify potential hazards and threats to the food supply. In 2023, FSIS analyzed 123,685 samples submitted by inspectors and generated 2,153,981 individual test results on these samples. FSIS also collected and analyzed 506 retail ground beef samples for *E. coli* O157:H7. Using WGS, FSIS conducted microbiological characterization of 16,500 bacterial isolates, reporting 511,388 separate test results.

FSIS continued to improve sampling and testing methods to ensure the Agency has the best information to make decisions. FSIS implemented a new chemical residue testing method for veterinary drug residues in bovine muscle samples as well as a new multi-residue method to test for toxins. Other methods that were updated include the laboratory methodology for pathogen and chemical residue testing, *Salmonella* and STEC testing methodologies for raw beef product cloth sampling, and the *Salmonella* testing method instructions for processing meat carcass sponges and environmental sponges. Nine of these methods were reformatted to improve accessibility and provide instructional clarity.

FSIS expanded *Salmonella* enumeration and aerobic count indicator testing for poultry products. Between April and November 2022, FSIS conducted an exploratory two-point sampling project that compared *Salmonella* detection, enumeration and aerobic count analyses of chicken carcasses pre- and post-processing interventions. These analyses were added to chicken parts rinsates in January 2023, to comminuted chicken in February 2023, and to comminuted turkey in April 2023. Data generated from these analyses will be used to further characterize sampling results from chicken parts and comminuted products; they are available to industry in the establishment sampling summary report in PHIS.

In November 2022, FSIS suspended nitrofurantoin residue sampling and testing for all domestic and imported raw poultry products under the U.S. National Residue Program. FSIS testing for nitrofurantoin—a class of broad-spectrum antibiotics—uses the marker residue semicarbazide (SEM). Studies indicate that SEM in poultry products may occur

as a by-product from processing; therefore, detection of SEM as a marker residue does not always indicate nitrofurans misuse. Published data analyses also indicate that SEM may be detected in tissue samples of animals not exposed to nitrofurans drugs. Between 2020 and 2022, FSIS began testing young chicken carcasses samples from officially regulated establishments to test this hypothesis. No SEM was detected in the approximately 970 samples analyzed, supporting the hypothesis that SEM was generated as a by-product during food processing.

The National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS) is a national public health surveillance system that supports a one-health focused environmental surveillance of potential sources of antimicrobial resistance. Through NARMS, USDA, in partnership with State and local public health departments, FDA, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tracks changes in antimicrobial susceptibility of select foodborne enteric bacteria found in ill people, retail meats, and food animals. This year, FSIS collected and analyzed 5,658 intestinal and 49,905 meat and poultry samples as part of this partnership. Samples were tested for *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, and indicator bacteria (for intestinal samples only); all microorganisms detected were characterized to determine their antimicrobial resistance (AMR). In February 2023, FSIS released the NARMS multi-year report describing trends in *Salmonella* serotypes and AMR in select food animal species and products from 2014–2019. The report highlights changes in *Salmonella* serotypes and AMR in raw products derived from chicken, turkey, cattle, and swine, and the intestinal contents of these animals. These findings add to the Agency’s understanding of *Salmonella*.

In June 2023, FSIS upgraded the LabWare application that serves as the foundation of FSIS’ Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS). This upgrade resulted in significant performance improvements, such as reducing the time to import large volumes of residue chemistry result data from approximately 20 to 30 minutes down to 5 minutes. FSIS realized these improvements across the system, subsequently improving analyst efficiency and greatly enhancing the overall user experience. In September 2023, FSIS deployed a web-based version of the LabWare application known as “WebLIMS.” Previously, the LabWare application required a lengthy multi-step login process that involved multiple passwords. Through the upgrade, the WebLIMS can be accessed directly from a web browser utilizing secure government personal identity verification. With hundreds of logins each day, the WebLIMS implementation contributes to optimized workflow. FSIS also deployed an external laboratory results system that bridges information sharing with external partners. The system allows non-FSIS data customers, such as third-party labs participating in the FSIS Accredited Laboratory Program, to securely enter or upload sampling results that are fed into Agency data systems and shared with FSIS analysts.

In May 2023, FSIS collaborated with the U.S. General Services Administration in a groundbreaking ceremony for the new FSIS Midwestern Laboratory in the St. Louis, Missouri, metro region. The state-of-the-art facility will incorporate and support science and technology to address present and future public health challenges. Construction began during the summer and is expected to conclude in 2025.

2.4 Foodborne Illness, Investigations, and Recalls

FSIS continuously monitors foodborne illnesses through coordination and data sharing among its partners. In addition to using sampling results at the individual establishment level, the Agency monitors sampling results at a national level for indications of food safety hazards associated with FSIS-regulated products. The Agency’s focus is not only on preventing contamination in establishments, but also on quickly investigating illnesses potentially associated with FSIS-regulated products. FSIS relies on its collaboration with public health partners, Federal, State, and local governments, as well as with industry, to identify the contaminated product. If a source of an outbreak or contamination event is identified, FSIS promptly requests that the establishment recall adulterated product from commerce, and the Agency issues communications to alert consumers.

FSIS uses its consumer complaint monitoring system (CCMS), media reports, CDC PulseNet, and other data sources to conduct surveillance and investigate potential foodborne hazards associated with FSIS-regulated products. In 2023, FSIS received and evaluated 1,215 consumer complaints, 202 of which required additional investigations. Seventy-nine of the investigations resulted in actions: 58 voluntary actions (i.e., establishment re-training employees or updating HACCP plans), 11 enforcement actions, and 10 incidences of product control (i.e., recalls, detention, or seizure of product). In 2023, consumer complaints reported through CCMS led to two Class I recalls (reasonable probability that eating the food will cause serious adverse health consequences or death). There were 17 complaints reported after product recalls. These complaints were evaluated to determine if they fell under the scope of the recall or if an expansion may be warranted.

In 2023, FSIS monitored 43 illness clusters potentially associated with FSIS-regulated products. FSIS coordinated with CDC and other public health partners to investigate six foodborne illness outbreaks possibly associated with FSIS-regulated products, representing 103 illnesses and 32 hospitalizations. Of the six investigations, two were investigations for STEC, three for *Salmonella*, and one for *Clostridium botulinum*. None of the six outbreak investigations led to FSIS public communications because the investigations did not yield any specific or actionable information to share with the public.

The Agency began publicly posting information on active illness outbreak investigations in November 2020 to transparently share information that may be of interest and importance to consumers and other stakeholders. In early 2023, FSIS implemented revisions to the outbreak investigation table to make it a more constructive tool for public information. The table now includes the month in which an outbreak investigation began and lists outbreaks by reference numbers. FSIS updated definitions for technical terms and shares additional information on investigations that may be helpful to the public seeking to learn more about foodborne outbreaks and investigations.

There were 57 recalls in 2023: 16 beef, 10 poultry, 17 pork, 1 Siluriformes fish, 1 lamb, 1 goat, and 11 involving multiple species. A total of 4,013,756 pounds of meat and poultry products were recalled. Out of the 57 total recalls, 50 were Class I (reasonable probability that eating the food will cause serious adverse health consequences or death) and 7 were Class II (remote probability of adverse health consequences from eating the food). There were no Class III recalls (use of the product will not cause adverse health consequences). Twelve recalls were due to extraneous material contamination; 12 were due to product imported without FSIS import reinspection; 13 were due to undeclared allergens in the product; 10 involved products produced without required inspection; 4 were in response to possible microbiological contamination involving STEC; 1 was due to possible contamination of ready-to-eat (RTE) product by *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*); and the remaining 4 were in response to processing deviations, insanitary conditions, spoilage, and misbranding. FSIS also issued 24 public health alerts (PHAs) in 2023. PHAs are typically issued in lieu of a recall in situations when the product is no longer available to consumers in commerce but may still present a risk to human health (i.e., the implicated product may be in consumers' pantries, refrigerators, or freezers).

In September 2023, FSIS deployed an application programming interface (API) for recall and public health data—the first public API for the Agency. The public tool allows software developers to create digital services and apps using FSIS data on recalled meat and poultry products. This development will transform the way the public can benefit from this critical and timely public health information and is a notable example of how the Agency prioritizes transparency, innovation, and collaboration.

2.5 In-Commerce Activities

FSIS conducts extensive investigations, compliance activities, and outreach at in-commerce facilities, such as warehouses, distributors, food transporters, and retail stores and delicatessens. If these activities identify adulterated or misbranded meat, poultry, or egg products, the Agency removes these products from in-commerce facilities and takes appropriate regulatory action to deter future violations.

FSIS conducted 11,317 surveillance activities in 2023. The Agency detained 982,252 pounds of noncompliant meat, poultry, and egg products in commerce and facilitated the removal of 36,257 pounds of misbranded and adulterated meat, poultry, and egg products from commerce through voluntary destruction. The Agency resolved two pending seizure and condemnation actions initiated in prior fiscal years and conducted 861 investigations in response to alleged violations of the FMIA, PPIA, or EPIA, 92 percent of which were based on food safety violations with evidence to support enforcement actions or criminal and civil prosecutions. FSIS continued to verify retail compliance with beef grinding recordkeeping requirements and expand its outreach and education to improve compliance, conducting 1,240 beef grinding record verifications.

This year, FSIS released four new guidance documents for in-commerce facilities:

- *Best Practices Guidance for Controlling Listeria monocytogenes in Retail Delicatessens*, which provides information on steps retailers can take to prevent certain RTE foods that are prepared or sliced in retail delis and consumed in the home, such as deli meats and prepared salads, from becoming contaminated with *Lm*.
- *Control Listeria monocytogenes (Lm) in Your Deli*, which is a one-page guide that communicates key *Lm* controls in plain language directly to deli employees.

- *Food Defense Guidance for Large Scale Events*, which is designed to assist food service vendors and venue management with practical food defense measures at venues that host sporting events and conventions.
- *Grinding Log for Raw Ground Beef and Veal Products*, which is a one-page guide designed to communicate the recordkeeping requirements for grinding logs directly to retail employees.

3. State Food Safety and Inspection Programs

State Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) programs are an integral part of the Nation’s food safety system. States may operate their own MPI programs under a cooperative agreement with FSIS through which they must enforce requirements “at least equal to” those imposed under the FMIA, PPIA, and HMSA. In 2023, FSIS continued to fund State MPI programs to maintain State inspection. The MPI program supported more than 1,450 State-inspected establishments and more than 2,200 custom-exempt facilities across the 29 State MPI programs currently operating. FSIS has MPI agreements with Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Product produced under State MPI programs is limited to intrastate commerce unless a State opts into an additional program, the Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) Program. The CIS program promotes the expansion of business opportunities for State-inspected meat and poultry establishments. Under CIS, State-inspected plants must meet the same requirements as federally inspected facilities and can ship their product in interstate commerce. In 2023, there were 10 States participating in the CIS program. FSIS has CIS agreements with Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wisconsin. While the number of participating establishments fluctuates, there were a total of 129 establishments participating in CIS programs by the end of 2023.

FSIS conducted annual reviews of all 29 State MPI programs and their requirements—including enforcement of those requirements—with respect to slaughter, preparation, processing, storage, handling, and distribution of livestock carcasses and parts, meat and meat food products, and poultry products. FSIS also conducted onsite verification audits for 11 State MPI programs: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Illinois, Georgia, Montana, Ohio, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, and Wyoming. FSIS continued to ensure State MPI programs complied with civil rights laws and Agency policies and practices through their annual self-assessments. Similarly, the Agency conducted eleven comprehensive reviews of the States’ civil rights programs and determined all participating States complied with civil rights laws.

In 2023, FSIS continued virtual financial roundtable discussions to share information, boost outreach, and foster collaboration with the State agencies. These roundtables focused on sharing information regarding the States’ budget process and the preparation of required financial reports and documentation. They also created a platform for States to ask questions and share lessons learned with one another as well as with FSIS subject matter experts.

PHIS is also available to State users, providing data needed to manage their respective programs. In 2023, FSIS expanded the availability of PHIS self-service reports for State users. FSIS continues to work with State programs to help ensure PHIS access for States electing to use non-Federal information technology (IT) equipment. This flexibility helps States find the most cost-effective ways to manage their IT needs and improve data collection and management from non-PHIS users. FSIS’ ongoing investment in information technology initiatives, such as sharing data warehousing capabilities with State partners, continues to strengthen the quality of communication and information distributed across Federal and State public health regulatory agencies.

4. International Food Safety and Inspection Program

FSIS enforces Federal laws and Agency regulations to verify the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products, whether produced and consumed domestically or internationally. FSIS-regulated products are eligible to be imported from 37 countries, and FSIS-regulated establishments export U.S. product to more than 150 countries.

FSIS reinspects all imported products to ensure they originate from countries and establishments eligible to export to the U.S., follow the same labeling requirements as domestically produced product, and meet the animal disease requirements of the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). During 2023, importers presented more than 4.9 billion pounds of meat and poultry products to FSIS for reinspection and more than 6 million pounds of egg products. The tables below provide the 2023 import statistics for meat, poultry, and egg products:

Table FSIS-12. Imported Meat and Poultry Product

	Total Product Presented for Routine Reinspection (Pounds)¹	Product Subjected to Additional TOIs (Pounds)²	Total Product Refused Entry (Pounds)	Refused Product Rectified (Pounds)³	Total Accepted (Pounds)⁴
2023					
TOTAL ⁵	4,922,805,834	327,314,543	39,109,150	33,688,721	4,917,385,405

Table FSIS-13. Imported Egg Product

	Total Product Presented for Routine Reinspection (Pounds)¹	Product Subjected to Additional TOIs (Pounds)²	Total Product Refused Entry (Pounds)	Refused Product Rectified (Pounds)³	Total Accepted (Pounds)⁴
2023					
TOTAL	6,225,665	1,827,147	72,065	71,805	6,225,405

Abbreviation: TOI, Type of Inspection.

¹ Routine reinspection includes the Certification and Label Verification TOIs, as well as verification of product condition and identification of shipping damage.

² This column is a subset of the total product presented and identifies the amount of product subjected to more in depth physical or laboratory TOIs, in addition to the routine reinspection TOIs (Certification and Label Verification).

³ Refused Product Rectified is the pounds of product that were initially refused entry but were subsequently brought into compliance and accepted. Issues amenable to rectification include labeling and certification.

⁴ Total Accepted includes all products that were initially inspected and passed plus product that was initially refused entry but later rectified.

⁵ Data include Siluriformes fish.

FSIS has processes in place to conduct regular equivalence reviews and audits of foreign countries' food safety inspection systems and conducts point-of-entry reinspection of all shipments of FSIS-regulated product prior to entering U.S. commerce. Determining the equivalence of a country's food safety inspection system is a prerequisite to importing products into the U.S. The process evaluates whether a foreign country's food safety inspection system achieves an equivalent level of public health protection as applied domestically in the U.S. In 2023, FSIS reinstated Paraguay's eligibility to export raw beef products from certified Paraguayan establishments and Romania's eligibility to export processed (RTE and thermally processed/commercially sterile) pork products from certified Romanian establishments to the U.S. FSIS also provided equivalence-related feedback to 35 eligible countries, 15 countries seeking initial equivalence, five countries seeking reinstatement of equivalence, and four countries seeking expansions of their equivalence determinations.

Each year, FSIS completes verification audits to ensure compliance with equivalence requirements of the FMIA, PPIA, EPIA, and HMSA. This year, FSIS completed ongoing equivalence verification audits in the following 15 countries: Argentina, Canada, Chile, The Peoples' Republic of China, Dominican Republic, France, Honduras, Iceland, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Poland, Thailand, and Vietnam.

FSIS regularly updates on its website the import library and status chart for equivalence requests to reflect changes in foreign countries' equivalence status. Updates are made to these tools when a country becomes equivalent or seeks an initial, reinstatement, or expansion of equivalence determinations. These tools provide real-time updates to stakeholders on the status of a foreign country's eligibility and equivalence status with FSIS. FSIS continued to electronically exchange data on import applications with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

When U.S. exports are denied entry to another country or rejected by overseas customers and returned, FSIS extensively reviews requests for product return to identify possible food defense and food safety concerns. As necessary, FSIS coordinates reinspection of shipments to ensure returning products are safe before entering U.S. commerce. In 2023, FSIS reviewed applications to return approximately 558 shipments of exported meat, poultry, and egg products weighing approximately 20.1 million pounds. FSIS coordinates with industry and foreign governments to resolve issues, such as export and import certification errors, with FSIS-regulated products in foreign commerce and certify FSIS-inspected products held at foreign ports are safe and properly labeled and packaged. In 2023, FSIS resolved issues with shipments of U.S. meat and poultry products entering Canada, China, the European Union, Korea, Mexico, South Africa, and a number of Central American countries, saving millions of dollars of product. Throughout 2023, FSIS held bilateral technical meetings with 30 countries, resulting in removing

barriers and resolving questions related to the import and export of FSIS-regulated products, ensuring the safety of products entering the U.S., and facilitating the onboarding of countries and territories into FSIS' PHIS Export Module.

The safety of the food we eat is an issue that touches every person in every country around the world. FSIS offers global leadership in food safety, highlighting the strength of the U.S. meat, poultry, and egg products food safety regulatory system among foreign governments through bilateral engagements and support of foreign government audits. FSIS coordinated five onsite audits conducted by foreign governments—Taiwan (beef), European Union (beef), Japan (beef, bison), Korea (pork, beef), and Canada (bovine, swine, poultry, storage, and processing)—to verify that FSIS' inspection system meets those countries' requirements.

FSIS receives many requests from foreign governments and organizations to learn more about the United States' inspection system, including regulatory oversight, enforcement, verification, equivalence, and sampling approaches. FSIS conducts proactive outreach to enhance understanding of FSIS food safety policies, strategies, and import criteria. The Agency also conducts outreach to facilitate FSIS compliance with foreign countries' import conditions and other international obligations. In 2023, FSIS hosted or participated in more than 100 engagements on U.S. exports, foreign country equivalence requirements, and international coordination, including hosting a week-long virtual seminar with more than 30 participants from 8 countries. These outreach activities and technical consultations play an important role in enhancing the safety of imported products, facilitating the equivalence process, and increasing confidence in the safety of U.S. exports.

FSIS works to ensure U.S. perspectives are reflected in international food safety forums. FSIS participated in international food safety organizations such as Codex Alimentarius, WTO, and the Asian Pacific Economic Council. FSIS continued to participate as a delegate or alternate delegate on six Codex Alimentarius committees—food hygiene, food import and export certification and inspection systems, contaminants in food, food labeling, pesticide residues, and residues of veterinary drugs in foods. FSIS continued to chair the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, leading discussions among 51 member countries, one member organization, and 11 observer organizations to adopt revised guidelines for the management of microbiological foodborne pathogens. FSIS also supported the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative in the development of international trade agreements to ensure consistency with the Agency's regulations and practices. The agreements in development include the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, the U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade, and the U.S.-Kenya Strategic Trade and Investment Partnership.

4.1 PHIS Export Module

PHIS houses essential import and export information and resources for foreign and domestic industry users. It also incorporates key information for FSIS inspectors that impact import reinspection duties.

In 2023, FSIS expanded the PHIS export module to 46 additional countries and territories—Albania; Antigua and Barbuda; Armenia; Bahrain; Bonaire; Colombia; Congo, Republic of (Brazzaville); Dominica; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; Egypt; Fiji; Ghana; Guatemala; Haiti; India; Indonesia; Jamaica; Jordan; Kenya; Kiribati; Kuwait; Kyrgyzstan; Lebanon; Malaysia; Mauritius; Moldova; Namibia; Nicaragua; Oman; Pakistan; Paraguay; Saba; Seychelles; Senegal; Sint Maarten; Solomon Islands; St. Eustatius; St. Lucia; Sudan; Suriname; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Trinidad and Tobago; and Uruguay—for a total of 130 countries and territories using the PHIS export module to generate digitally signed export certificates. FSIS processed approximately 200,000 electronic export certificates in PHIS this year. The Agency also initiated discussions with Mexico to move toward generating export certificates in PHIS and prepared industry for Mexico's on-boarding into the system. In addition to increasing document security, these digitization efforts have expedited export certificate turnaround times and augmented the Agency's ability to track exports, identify trends, and facilitate recalls when needed. These achievements serve as a gateway towards an electronic certification (E-certification) process that would enable FSIS to directly transfer data among many Agency trading partners. To further facilitate e-certification, FSIS worked with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to eliminate the need for code changes to its automated commercial environment to add countries from which FSIS receives import electronic certification directly into PHIS.

5. Public Health Data Communication Infrastructure System

Protecting public health requires the ability to make decisions based on real-time data during food safety emergencies. Through the public health data communication infrastructure system, FSIS can access Agency data as well as data from partner agencies, nationally and internationally, through web-based tools. During the years, FSIS has continued to update its system to streamline data collection, conduct daily reporting tasks, manage resources, and provide robust, secure, adaptable, and on-demand IT services. Data generated from FSIS inspection actions and infrastructure support activities allow managers and administrators to make informed decisions efficiently and effectively.

The Agency leverages advanced commercial network technologies and data services to provide connectivity to Agency personnel. Migrating FSIS' key applications and services to secure cloud systems keeps the Agency forward facing on the cutting edge of technology and enables FSIS to deploy applications more efficiently and expediently. Since 2020, FSIS has migrated several mission-critical applications to cloud systems, including PHIS, LIMS, the FSIS public website, and the analytics portal. During 2023, FSIS continued to improve the security, dependability, integrity, and availability of its cloud infrastructure. These applications maintain near constant uptime to ensure operational efficiency. With 80 percent of FSIS applications in the cloud, the Agency is closing in on its goal to transition its entire suite of applications from on premise locations to the cloud. FSIS successfully implemented requirements outlined in EO 14028 to enhance the cybersecurity of the Nation's infrastructure systems. FSIS deployed a zero-trust architecture with multi-factor authentication for its systems in advance of Federal deadlines, receiving special recognition from USDA and the Department of Homeland Security for this achievement.

FSIS' enterprise architecture (EA) serves as a blueprint to simplify IT processes and describe how they work together to effectively accomplish the Agency's mission and goals. Performance is a key driver of FSIS' EA. This year FSIS launched a robust technical reference model for technology architecture and integration. In 2023, FSIS demonstrated the proof of concept for its line of sight to drive technical solutions—from inputs to outputs to outcomes—solidifying its commitment to using EA as a strategic tool for organizational alignment and decision-making precision. FSIS launched an EA portal that serves as a centralized hub for Agency programs to access key EA documents, FSIS IT processes, and critical IT resources. These developments mark a pivotal achievement in the Agency's pursuit of a robust infrastructure that can accommodate future advances and weather unforeseen challenges.

6. Cross-Cutting Accomplishments

In addition to the accomplishments that fall within FSIS' four funding categories, there were three areas of accomplishment that span multiple categories and Agency programs. These cross-cutting accomplishments include data, collaboration with other agencies and public health partners, and consumer education.

6.1 Data

FSIS uses data at every level of Agency functioning to inform decisions, regulations, policies, outreach, and education materials. Prioritizing transparency and data sharing, FSIS publicly posts the data it collects, analyzes, and uses in its decision-making process. Effective and efficient information flow is essential to stakeholder understanding and confidence in Agency actions and decisions.

FSIS conducted multiple activities to support the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 and the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010. Activities included updating the Agency's strategic planning for 2023–2026; finalizing evaluations related to undeclared allergens and data quality; initiating evaluations related to hiring and retention incentives and public health regulations; and conducting enterprise risk management to assess the potential impact of risks in the context of the Agency's interrelated portfolio.

In 2023, the Agency published a new laboratory sampling establishment-specific dataset on exploratory and special program poultry sampling. The dataset included results of FSIS' non-regulatory poultry microbiological sampling projects, including poultry establishments with very low volumes of production, religious-exempt chicken carcasses, comminuted or mechanically separated poultry, and chicken quarters or half-carcasses and chicken parts. The dataset also included data associated with special programs, such as a response to an outbreak or testing a new sampling methodology. In July 2023, FSIS pivoted to a commodity-based dataset approach for laboratory sampling establishment-specific datasets. The Agency combined four raw beef datasets—raw beef components sampling, raw ground beef sampling, raw beef trim sampling, and raw beef follow-up sampling datasets—into a single dataset for

raw beef sampling that incorporates data from the expansion of STEC testing for raw beef products and the new cloth sampling method. FSIS released this dataset in an open, non-proprietary comma-separated values format, rather than an XLSX format, in alignment with the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act. In August 2023, FSIS announced it would create a single raw poultry dataset with data from the exploratory young chicken carcass rehang sampling project, new variables for *Salmonella* enumeration, and sanitary indicator organisms such as aerobic count and Enterobacteriaceae. FSIS released this dataset in October 2023.

FSIS continued to proactively engage the poultry industry to request data on *Salmonella* in poultry to enhance the regulatory risk assessments for the proposed *Salmonella* framework. The Agency’s cooperative agreement and open dialogue with the University of Maryland resulted in the National Turkey Federation sharing 4 years (2019–2023) of *Salmonella* enumeration data from more than 1,060 samples collected at more than 15 establishments. This marks the first time in 25 years that industry shared pathogen testing data with FSIS for use in regulatory risk assessments to enhance model predictions to prevent foodborne illness.

6.2 Collaboration with Other Agencies and Public Health Partners

FSIS collaborates with a multitude of partners to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of food safety outcomes. These include Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial agencies Collaboration via working groups allows the Agency to improve prevention and response to foodborne illness. Each year, FSIS builds on successes from existing partnerships and initiates new relationships with food safety regulators and organizations to meet its public health goals.

6.2.1 Advisory Committees

FSIS has two advisory committees—the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection (NACMPI) and the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF).

NACMPI advises the Secretary of Agriculture concerning State and Federal programs with respect to meat and poultry inspection, food safety, and other matters that fall within the scope of the FMIA and the PPIA. The committee is made up of individuals representing State and local government, academia, public health organizations, and industry and consumer organizations. In 2023, USDA appointed 15 new members and 5 returning NACMPI members and hosted a virtual committee meeting. At the meeting, NACMPI members reviewed and discussed how FSIS could enhance outreach efforts to best promote equity and bring economic opportunity to underserved communities and individuals, while strengthening the food supply chain and ensuring compliance with food safety regulations. FSIS sought input on the topic regarding prospective applicants for FSIS inspection and existing small and very small establishments currently receiving FSIS inspection.

NACMCF provides impartial scientific advice to Federal food safety agencies, including FSIS, FDA, and CDC. The committee’s reports often serve as foundations for regulations and programs aimed at reducing foodborne disease and enhancing public health. NACMCF held three plenary meetings in 2023, with public subcommittee meetings at various times throughout the year. During the November 2022 plenary meeting, the committee adopted the report, “Response to Questions Posed by the Food Safety and Inspection Service: Enhancing *Salmonella* Control in Poultry Products.” The report, finalized in April 2023, contributes to FSIS’ efforts to reduce *Salmonella* illnesses attributable to poultry. The committee also adopted the report, “Response to Questions Posed by the Food and Drug Administration: *Cyclospora cayetanensis* in Produce,” during its August 2023 meeting. NACMCF solicited member nominations in Spring 2023, and new appointments are expected in early 2024.

6.2.2 OSHA

In addition to OSHA’s focus on the safety of industry workers, FSIS and OSHA both aim to protect the safety and health of FSIS employees in FSIS-regulated establishments. In August 2022, the two agencies finalized an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and defined short- and long-term outcomes to monitor progress in meeting our shared goal. The interagency workgroup began meeting quarterly in December 2022, with subsequent meetings in March and July 2023. These regular meetings help to strengthen trust by facilitating communication, cooperation, and collaboration. In September 2023, FSIS launched a training module on workplace safety and health hazards for all frontline inspectors to complete within 120 days. The training will enable FSIS inspectors to identify serious hazards and learn about procedures for making referrals, filing complaints, and reporting on-the-job accidents, injuries, and illnesses to OSHA.

6.2.3 FDA and CDC

FSIS collaborates closely with FDA and CDC on numerous cross-disciplinary topics. Collaboration takes place through outreach to retailers regarding pathogen controls and technologies that help to identify outbreak sources (e.g., grinding logs, shopper cards, smart labels, etc.), cross-promotion of consumer food safety information through the FoodSafety.gov website and social media, and participation in specialized collaboration groups.

The leading areas of collaboration between the three agencies are foodborne outbreak surveillance, management, and response. As described in section 2.3, the three agencies collaborate through NARMS to track changes in antimicrobial susceptibility of select foodborne enteric bacteria found in ill people, retail meats, and food animals. The Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network, “FoodNet,” was established in 1996 and accomplishes its work through active surveillance; surveys of laboratories, physicians, and the general population; and population-based epidemiologic studies. The interagency foodborne outbreak response collaboration (IFORC) among the three agencies improves coordination of Federal foodborne-outbreak responsibilities. The IFORC steering committee met in April 2023 to discuss reoccurring, emerging, and persisting pathogen strains and after-action reviews, and explored options for shared virtual workspaces. The three agencies play significant roles in the integrated foodborne outbreak response management meetings that integrate knowledge from laboratorians, epidemiologists, and environmental health professionals to discuss foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response. In 2023, FSIS contributed to the planning of and participated in three regional meetings in California, Missouri, and South Carolina. These meetings bring together Federal, State, and local officials to network and share knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned from past outbreaks, which help the national public health network build stronger connections and practices.

The interagency food safety analytics collaboration (IFSAC) addresses cross-cutting priorities for food safety data collection, analysis, and use. IFSAC includes members from each agency and currently focuses on foodborne illness source attribution—the process of estimating the most common food sources responsible for specific foodborne illnesses. In 2023, IFSAC posted its annual attribution report and published an updated strategic priorities document to replace the interim plan covering years 2022–2023. These documents outlined a commitment to improving foodborne illness source attribution estimates by focusing on three general areas: improving and expanding data, analytical methods, and communication activities.

FSIS also continued to collaborate closely with FDA. In addition to collaborating on the regulation of cell-cultured foods, the two agencies are working on a proposal to establish a framework on general principles for food standards. Food standards may describe in detail what a food must contain, the amount or proportion of ingredients or components, and prescribe a method of production or formulation. The agencies previously issued a joint proposal in 2005. After FDA reopened the comment period in 2020, many commenters suggested that the general principles be revised and consolidated to make them easier to understand and implement. As a result, FSIS and FDA withdrew the proposed rule to start anew. The agencies are considering technological advances and other changes in the food industry in drafting the new proposal.

6.2.4 Gen-FS

The Genomics for Food and Feed Safety (Gen-FS) consortium is another collaboration among FSIS, CDC, and FDA, as well as ARS, APHIS, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Gen-FS helped to harmonize approaches to whole genome sequencing (WGS) among these agencies in the detection and characterization of pathogens and the identification of their sources. Through this collaboration, FSIS has improved its food safety systems by enhancing the ability to identify outbreaks, alert the public, and identify gaps in FSIS-regulated food safety systems that would not otherwise be recognized. In 2023, Gen-FS improved the metadata associated with WGS data on the public database for NIH’s National Center for Biotechnology Information. The workgroup’s efforts promote standardized metadata from agencies on NIH’s database and help to ensure the metadata is meaningful, useful, and searchable.

6.2.5 Research and Studies

While FSIS is not a research funding organization, it recognizes the importance of scientific endeavors that may advance food safety related to the Agency’s mission. FSIS annually updates its list of research priorities and data gaps based on laboratory data, field findings, and outbreak information. In 2023, FSIS supported an interagency agreement with ARS to address three data gaps in guidance for small and very small establishments. ARS also

evaluated and optimized four laboratory methods, which will improve FSIS laboratory detection methods for microbial pathogens and contaminants. In March 2023, FSIS and ARS held a joint virtual conference that brought together food safety scientists from FSIS, ARS, FDA, and CDC to discuss studies being conducted under the interagency agreement. The conference also covered emerging food safety concerns and proposed future research to protect public health. For example, scientists at Michigan State University completed a study on safe production of salami, closing a data gap in our guidance for small and very small establishments.

FSIS, through USDA's Office of Food Safety, continued its food safety fellowship program with the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE). In 2023, the Agency selected five fellows who are working towards a Ph.D. During their fellowship year, ORISE fellows collaborate with FSIS scientists to apply their scientific and technical knowledge on specialized projects that inform Agency decisions to advance food safety. This program is integral to strengthening partnerships with academia, situating the Agency on the cutting edge of scientific research, and mentoring the next generation of food safety scientists.

Each year, FSIS conducts several scientific studies on food safety. In August 2023, FSIS released a *Clostridium Perfringens* (*C. perfringens*) market basket study, commissioned through the Food Emergency Response Network laboratories, to assess the presence of the bacteria in certain federally inspected RTE meat and poultry products sold at retail locations. The purpose of the study was to determine the potential risk to consumers from large mass non-intact products such as injected turkey breast or roast beef. The results of the study demonstrate minimal risk in following the cooling parameters for these products in FSIS' *Stabilization Guideline for Meat and Poultry Products* (Revised Appendix B). The study was not designed to be a baseline, so FSIS is not planning to make changes to regulatory performance standards based on results. However, FSIS issued a research priority on its website seeking studies to determine *C. perfringens* levels in raw products prior to cooking and cooling. The results of these studies could be used, along with risk assessments, to determine the public health impact from these products and whether changes are needed to performance standards.

6.3 Raise Consumer Awareness of Food Safety

FSIS' actions to protect public health extend to consumers through strategic outreach and education activities. In addition to participating in events and pitching food safety topics to the media, FSIS disseminates educational resources through its website and social media platforms, including X (formerly known as Twitter) in English and Spanish, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. These tools allow FSIS to provide real-time updates on policies, research, and recalls; share information and resources to improve consumer understanding and daily practices; and advance public knowledge and trust by providing examples of the different ways FSIS carries out its mission. With more than 1 million followers, the Agency's X account is the largest of all USDA accounts on the platform. FSIS is also one of the top USDA agencies contributing to the Department's Instagram account, designing 19 high-performing campaigns during the course of the fiscal year. These achievements highlight the value of food safety messaging in consumers' day-to-day lives.

Meanwhile, FSIS customer service representatives on the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline receive and respond to inquiries from consumers about how to keep their food safe. FSIS hotline representatives respond to inquiries in English and Spanish through a toll-free phone number, live chat, email, and self-service information database. During 2023, FSIS responded to 11,740 inquiries, and more than 7.9 million customers accessed the self-service resource database. The database streamlines functionality across all platforms by allowing consumers to find answers to common questions at their own pace. It also conserves Agency resources by allowing hotline staffers more time to focus on newer or more intricate questions in a timely manner.

The Agency continuously evaluates its methods to expand the reach of its messaging. FSIS led efforts among its partners to develop more culturally competent communications around sensitive consumer messaging. Poultry washing, for example, can be a deep-rooted behavior tied to family traditions and culture. The Agency shifted its messaging on this topic to a more risk-based and culturally inclusive approach. Rather than strictly advising against the behavior, FSIS promotes steps to reduce risk when engaging in this practice. FSIS conducted proactive outreach to allied public health agencies and food safety partners by proposing this approach at national conferences, influencing the tri-agency communications workgroup to adopt this approach, and building consensus across a broad coalition to adopt more equitable and inclusive approaches to consumer messaging.

FSIS executed new strategic partnerships with national food delivery service companies that culminated in new outreach to consumers across 29 states through more than 165,000 HelloFresh meal delivery boxes during the 2022

Thanksgiving season. FSIS also coordinated a “Food Safety Education in E-Commerce” roundtable with four of the largest companies in this sector, including Amazon, Home Chef, Instacart, and UberEats. FSIS’ new partnership with Instacart resulted in social media outreach to more than 614,000 consumers through their branded channels, and the company is in the initial stages of integrating FSIS’ recall API into their data channels.

While FSIS works hard to ensure the meat, poultry, and egg products consumers bring home are safe, there are also risks in the handling, preparation, and storage processes that could lead to foodborne illness. FSIS partners conduct in-depth research into human behavior and integrates the data into daily communications and targeted public health campaigns. FSIS released the results from the final year of its 5-year observational study on behaviors that impact food safety during meal preparation. FSIS presented its findings at eight national conferences throughout the year. FSIS also initiated a new contract for a study to inform effective updates to the safe handling instructions on product labels. A 2020 study on safe handling instructions did not yield meaningful results; neither of the proposed label revisions performed better in drawing consumer attention or adherence to instructions than the original. The new iteration of the project began in 2023 with listening sessions. These sessions included industry, consumers, food safety experts, communications specialists, and nutrition educators to collect insight on message delivery methods prior to label development and testing.

FSIS proactively pitched media outlets to share vital food safety information, reaching more than 27 million consumers through numerous high-profile outlets. Annual food events, holidays, and emergency situations such as power outages and natural disasters continued to spark consumer inquiries, FoodKeeper app downloads, and food thermometer requests. FSIS swiftly adapted to a record influx of consumer requests for food thermometers and safe temperature magnets amid the 2022 Thanksgiving food safety media tour that garnered nearly 6 million broadcast impressions across local and national TV and radio outlets. FSIS’ FoodKeeper mobile app remains a relevant, useful, and effective tool to educate consumers on proper food storage of more than 680 foods, safe food handling behaviors, and food waste.

In 2023, FSIS continued to enhance communication of key information and analyses among FSIS employees, consumers, industry, government partners, and other stakeholders. Through its weekly *Constituent Update* newsletter, FSIS highlighted policy, programmatic, and consumer education updates relevant to more than 50,000 subscribers that include industry, consumers, academia, and the media.

AGENCY-WIDE PERFORMANCE

Introduction

The Office of Planning, Analysis and Risk Management (OPARM) leads FSIS in performance management including, strategic planning, evaluation, evidence, and enterprise risk management (ERM) activities. OPARM actively engages internal and external stakeholders and works directly with Agency leadership and OBPA to ensure performance and evidence activities support the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 and the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010. OPARM participates in both the Performance, Evidence, Evaluation, and Risk Committee (PEER), which is comprised of individuals from different Mission Areas and backgrounds throughout USDA. OPARM works closely with the Chief Evaluation Officer and Chief Data Scientist to ensure evaluation, evidence, and risk activities align. All evaluation, evidence, and risk management activities are approved through FSIS’ governance process, including the Enterprise Steering Board, Office of the Administrator, and Management Council.

Alignment to USDA 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan

FSIS activities contribute to the success of USDA’s overall mission to provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues using sound public policy, the best available science, and effective management, to the benefit of all Americans. FSIS is responsible for achieving and measuring results with respect to the following 2022 – 2026 Strategic Goal and Objective:

Strategic Goal 4: Provide All Americans Safe, Nutritious Food

- Objective 4.3: Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

A more detailed report of the performance plan can be found at <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/about-usda/performance>. The following table summarizes the results for the Departmental Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for which FSIS is responsible.

Table FSIS-14 KPI- Salmonella Reduction

Strategic Objective 4.3	Item	2024	2025
Salmonella Reduction	Results	-	-
4.3.1 Reduction in the proportion of poultry samples with Salmonella serotypes commonly associated with human illness	Target	-6%	-8%

Expected Performance Progress Towards the Achievement of Strategic Objectives:

Strategic Objective 4.3: Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health

Salmonella Reduction: FSIS anticipates publishing the final determination for not-ready-to-eat breaded stuffed chicken products in 2024. FSIS also expects to publish a proposed new *Salmonella* framework in 2024 and would begin implementation of the framework in 2025.