USDA Announces New Efforts To Improve Poultry Safety

WASHINGTON (USDA) — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) today announced new steps to protect consumers by improving the food safety plans required for companies that produce poultry products.

Companies producing raw ground chicken and turkey and similar products will be required to reassess their Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans. The HACCP reassessment, which establishments must conduct in the next 90 days, must account for several Salmonella outbreaks that were associated with those types of products.

"HACCP reassessments improve a company's ability to identify hazards and better prevent foodborne illness," said USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Elisabeth Hagen. "Incorporating information obtained from Salmonella outbreaks will enhance food safety efforts, helping to avoid future outbreaks and ensure a safer food supply for consumers."

In today's notice, FSIS also announced that it will:

- Expand the Salmonella verification sampling program to include other raw comminuted poultry products, in addition to ground product;
- Increase the sample size for laboratory analysis from 25 grams to 325 grams to provide consistency as the Agency moves toward analyzing samples for Salmonella and Campylobacter; and,
- Conduct sampling to determine the prevalence of Salmonella in not-ready-to-eat comminuted poultry products and use the results to develop new performance standards for those products.

The policy notice announced today will be posted on the FSIS website at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/federal_register_publications_&_related_documents/index.asp [1] and comments can be submitted at www.regulations.gov [2] shortly after December 5, 2012. Stakeholders interested in mailing their comments should send them to: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) FSIS, Docket Clerk, Patriots Plaza 3, 1400 Independence Avenue S.W., Room 8-163A, Mailstop 3782, Washington, D.C. 20250-3700. All items submitted by mail or electronic mail must include the Agency name and docket number FSIS-2012-0007.

Today's announcements are the latest significant public health measures FSIS has put in place during President Barack Obama's Administration to safeguard the food supply, prevent foodborne illness, and improve consumers' knowledge about the food they eat. These initiatives support the three core principles developed by the

President's Food Safety Working Group: prioritizing prevention; strengthening surveillance and enforcement; and improving response and recovery. Other actions taken by the USDA include:

- Zero-tolerance policy for non-O157:H7 STECs. On June 4, 2012, FSIS began routinely testing raw beef manufacturing trim for six strains of non-O157:H7 Shiga-toxin producing E. coli (STEC) serogroups. Trim found to be contaminated with these pathogens, which can cause severe illness and even death, will not be allowed into commerce and will be subject to recall.
- Labeling requirements that provide better information to consumers about their food by requiring nutrition information for single-ingredient raw meat and poultry products and ground or chopped products.
- Public Health Information System, a modernized, comprehensive database with information on public health trends and food safety violations at the nearly 6,100 plants FSIS regulates.
- Performance standards for poultry establishments for continued reductions in the occurrence of pathogens. After two years of enforcing the new standards, FSIS estimates that approximately 5,000 illnesses will be prevented each year under the new Campylobacter standards, and approximately 20,000 illnesses will be prevented under the revised Salmonella standards each year.

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