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PREFACE

This publication summarizes the 2024 Budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Throughout this publication any reference to the "Budget" is in regard to the 2024 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 2021 and 2022, enacted levels for 2023, and the President's Budget request for 2024. Amounts for 2023 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 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 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.

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 2022, 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 6,800 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, 2022, the agency employment totaled 8,585 permanent full-time employees, including 581 in the Washington, DC area and 8,004 in the field. FSIS employed 8,471 Full Time Equivalents (FTE's) as of September 30, 2022. 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

Table FSIS-1. Completed OIG Reports

ID	Date	Title
50801-0003-12	08/14/2022	Secure Configuration of USDA's Virtualization Platforms
24801-0001-23	07/26/2022	COVID-19 – FSIS Pandemic Response at Establishments
24601-0004-21	07/14/2022	Initiatives to Address Workplace Misconduct
19-22-003-10-105	03/31/2022	Department of Labor – OIG Audit of COVID-19 OSHA Operations and Efforts to Protect Workers

Table FSIS-2. In-Progress OIG Reports

ID	Title
50801-0006-12	Security Over USDA Mobile Applications
50401-0021-11	USDA's Consolidated Financial Statements for Years 2021 and 2020

Table FSIS-3. Completed GAO Reports

ID	Date	Title	Result
GAO-23-104434	11/08/2022	Food Safety: FDA Oversight of Substances Used in Manufacturing, Packaging, and Transporting Food Could be Strengthened	2 open recommendations directed at FDA
GAO-22-105088	07/28/2022	Persistent Chemicals: Technologies for PFAS Assessment, Detection and Treatment	No recommendations directed at USDA agencies.
GAO-22-105051	10/27/2021	COVID-19: Additional Actions Needed to Improve Accountability and Program Effectiveness of Federal Response	No recommendations directed at FSIS

Table FSIS-4. In-Progress GAO Reports

ID	Title
105238	Federal Efforts to Address Zoonotic Diseases
105804	USDA Employee Civil Rights Complaints
105104	Meat and Poultry Worker Safety during the COVID-19 Pandemic
106142	DHS National Biosurveillance Integration Center (NBIC)

AVAILABLE FUNDS AND FTES

Table FSIS-5. Available Funds and FTEs (thousands of dollars, FTEs)

Item	2021 Actual	FTE	2022 Actual	FTE	2023 Estimated	FTE	2024 Estimated	FTE
Salaries and Expenses:								
Discretionary Appropriations	$1,091,617	8,297	$1,121,189	8,357	$1,158,266	8,666	$1,290,419	8,674
Mandatory Appropriations	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplemental Appropriations	-	-	-	-	29,700	-	-	-
Total Discretionary Appropriations	1,091,617	8,297	1,121,189	8,357	1,158,266	8,666	1,290,419	8,674
Total Mandatory Appropriations	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Supplemental Appropriations	-	-	-	-	29,700	-	-	-
Total Adjusted Appropriation	1,191,617	8,297	1,121,189	8,357	1,187,966	8,666	1,290,419	8,674
Balance Available, SOY	17,912	-	107,901	-	70,602	-	42,115	-
Recoveries, Other	5,607	-	2,013	-	-	-	-	-
Total Available	1,215,136	8,297	1,231,103	8,357	1,258,568	8,666	1,332,534	8,674
Lapsing Balances	-793	-	-247	-	-	-	-	-
Balance Available, EOY	-107,901	-	-70,602	-	-42,115	-	-17,115	-
Total Obligations	1,106,442	8,297	1,160,254	8,357	1,216,453	8,666	1,315,419	8,674
Total Obligations, FSIS	1,106,442	8,297	1,160,254	8,357	1,216,453	8,666	1,315,419	8,674
Other USDA:								
ARS, Nutrient Data Laboratory	163	-	50	-	-	-	-	-
APHIS	193	-	261	-	-	-	-	-
AMS	-	-	40	-	-	-	-	-
FAS	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-
FPAC BC	-	-	86	-	-	-	-	-
OGC	89	-	118	-	-	-	-	-
OSEC	204	-	707	-	-	-	-	-
USDA DA	1,299	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Other USDA	1,948	-	1,268	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Agriculture Available	1,217,084	8,297	1,232,371	8,357	1,258,568	8,666	1,332,534	8,674
Other Federal Funds:								
FDA, Salmonella, Campylobacter, E. Coli Enterococcus	735	-	330	-	-	-	-	-
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	249	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DHS	509	-	246	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Other Federal	1,493	-	576	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Federal Funds:								
Meat, Poultry and Eggs Product Inspection	253,172	21	232,592	23	230,361	23	230,361	23
Accredited Labs	199	-	264	-	260	-	260	-
Trust Funds	17,522	90	17,667	91	16,829	91	16,829	91
Total, Non-Federal	270,893	111	250,523	114	247,450	114	247,450	114
Total Available, FSIS	1,489,470	8,408	1,483,470	8,471	1,506,018	8,780	1,579,984	8,788

PERMANENT POSITIONS BY GRADE AND FTES

Table FSIS-6. Permanent Positions by Grade and FTEs

Item	2021 Actual			2022 Actual			2023 Estimated			2024 Estimated		
	D.C.	Field	Total	D.C.	Field	Total	D.C.	Field	Total	D.C.	Field	Total
SES	24	1	25	24	1	25	24	1	25	24	1	25
SL	4	-	4	4	-	4	4	-	4	4	-	4
GS-15	55	23	78	55	25	80	55	23	78	55	23	78
GS-14	179	91	270	185	93	278	179	91	270	179	91	270
GS-13	158	376	534	184	376	560	158	376	534	158	376	534
GS-12	75	1,000	1,075	70	981	1,051	75	1,000	1,075	83	1,000	1,083
GS-11	29	97	126	22	95	117	29	97	126	29	97	126
GS-10	1	478	479		199	199	1	199	200	1	199	200
GS-9	23	3,706	3,729	20	3,801	3,821	23	3,988	4,011	23	3,988	4,011
GS-8	3	303	306	2	467	469	3	303	306	3	303	306
GS-7	14	1,478	1,492	10	1,543	1,553	14	1,588	1,602	14	1,588	1,602
GS-6	3	14	17	4	12	16	3	14	17	3	14	17
GS-5	2	437	439		410	410	2	467	469	2	467	469
GS-4	1	3	4	1	1	2	1	3	4	1	3	4
Total Permanent	571	8,007	8,578	581	8,004	8,585	571	8,150	8,721	579	8,150	8,729
Total Perm. FT EOY	571	8,007	8,578	581	8,004	8,585	571	8,150	8,721	579	8,150	8,729
FTE	587	7,821	8,408	589	7,882	8,471	591	8,189	8,780	592	8,196	8,788

Note: In addition to those numbers above, there are temporary positions as well.

VEHICLE FLEET

FSIS inspects in 6,800 meat, poultry, and egg products plants and import establishments located throughout the United States. A large number of FSIS inspection personnel have responsibilities in multiple plants and work "patrol/relief assignments" traveling from plant to plant on a daily basis. Depending on the inspector's proximity to given assignments and remote locations, inspectors may be required to travel over larger geographical areas.

All FSIS vehicles are leased from the General Service Administration's (GSA) fleet.

Table FSIS-7. Size, Composition, and Annual Costs of Motor Vehicle Fleet

	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**	**$12,426,223**
2021 End of Year Operating Inventory	**2,177**	**79**	**75**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**2,331**	**13,665,466**
2022 Planned Acquisitions	-	-	65	18	6	-	-	-	89	**743,718**
2022 Planned Disposals	62	54	-	-	-	-	-	-	116	
2022 End of Year Operating Inventory	**2,115**	**25**	**140**	**18**	**6**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**2,304**	**14,171,533**
2023 Planned Acquisitions	82	2	14	-	-	-	-	-	98	**506,067**
2023 Planned Disposals	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	
2023 End of Year Operating Inventory	**2,157**	**27**	**154**	**18**	**6**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**2,362**	**15,354,515**
2024 End of Year Operating Inventory	**2,157**	**27**	**154**	**18**	**6**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**2,362**	**16,582,876**

Note: Number of vehicles by type include vehicles owned by the agency and leased from commercial sources or GSA.
Annual Operating Costs excludes acquisition costs and gains from sale of vehicles as shown in FAST.

SHARED FUNDING PROJECTS

Table FSIS-8. Shared Funding Projects (thousands of dollars)

Item	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Estimated	2024 Estimated
Working Capital Fund:				
Administrative Services:				
Material Management Service	$4,523	$4,604	$4,427	$4,507
Mail and Reproduction Services	794	891	1,063	1,081
Integrated Procurement Systems	240	279	298	306
Procurement Operations Services	12	9	13	17
Human Resources Enterprise Management Systems	126	118	138	168
Subtotal	5,695	5,901	5,939	6,079
Communications:				
Creative Media & Broadcast Center	85	137	199	243
Finance and Management:				
National Finance Center	2,643	2,477	2,691	2,787
Financial Management Systems	5,448	5,366	6,246	6,669
Internal Control Support Services	55	60	50	53
Subtotal	8,146	7,903	8,987	9,509
Information Technology:				
Client Experience Center	13,236	35,770	40,848	42,110
Department Administration Information Technology Office	52	107	26	24
Digital Infrastructure Services Center	8,084	7,754	8,149	8,333
Enterprise Network Services	6,702	6,074	12,673	12,044
Personnel Document Security	-	-	408	437
Ask USDA Contact Center	-	-	1,652	1,732
Enterprise Cybersecurity Services	-	-	2,842	2,964
Enterprise Data & Analytics Services	-	-	2,848	2,864
Subtotal	28,074	49,705	69,446	70,508
Office of the Executive Secretariat	397	501	157	164
Total, Working Capital Fund	42,397	64,147	84,728	86,503
Department-Wide Shared Cost Programs:				
Advisory Committee Liaison Services	3	4	6	6
Agency Partnership Outreach	622	569	676	676
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility	-	-	180	180
Human Resources Priority Goals Program	1	-	343	343
Medical Services	114	115	123	123
National Capital Region Interpreting Services	143	31	90	90
Office of Customer Experience	871	786	270	270
Personnel and Document Security Program	188	187	-	-
Physical Security	387	384	383	383
Security Detail	415	406	436	436
Security Operations Program	583	559	592	592
Talent Group	-	-	303	303
TARGET Center	107	116	147	147
USDA Enterprise Data Analytics Services	490	396	-	-
Total, Department-Wide Reimbursable Programs	3,924	3,553	3,549	3,549
E-Gov:				
Budget Formulation and Execution Line of Business	9	8	7	7
HR Assessment Tool	-	21	-	-
E-Rulemaking	31	24	20	17
Financial Management Line of Business	7	1	1	1
Geospatial Line of Business	13	13	12	12
Human Resources Line of Business	28	26	25	25
Integrated Acquisition Environment	-	5	6	5
Total, E-Gov	88	98	71	67
Agency Total	46,409	67,798	88,348	90,119

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ACCOUNT 1: SALARIES AND EXPENSES

APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE

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

For necessary expenses to carry out services authorized by the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Products Inspection Act, and the Egg Products Inspection Act, including not to exceed $10,000 for representation allowances and for expenses pursuant to section 8 of the Act approved August 3, 1956 (7 U.S.C. 1766), [1,158,266,000]$1,290,419,000; and in addition, $1,000,000 may be credited to this account from fees collected for the cost of laboratory accreditation as authorized by section 1327 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 138f): *Provided,* That funds provided for the Public Health Data Communication Infrastructure system shall remain available until expended: *Provided further,* That no fewer than 148 full-time equivalent positions shall be employed during fiscal year [2023]2024 for purposes dedicated solely to inspections and enforcement related to the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (7 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.): *Provided further,* That the Food Safety and Inspection Service shall continue implementation of section 11016 of Public Law 110-246 as further clarified by the amendments made in section 12106 of Public Law 113-79: *Provided further,* That this appropriation shall be available pursuant to law (7 U.S.C. 2250) for the alteration and repair of buildings and improvements, but the cost of altering any one building during the fiscal year shall not exceed 10 percent of the current replacement value of the building.

LEAD-OFF TABULAR STATEMENT

Table FSIS-9. Lead-Off Tabular Statement (In dollars)

Item	Amount
Estimate, 2023	$1,158,266,000
Change in Appropriation	+ 132,153,000
Budget Estimate, 2024	1,290,419,000

PROJECT STATEMENTS

Table FSIS-10. Project Statement on Basis of Appropriations (thousands of dollars, FTE)

Item	2021 Actual	FTE	2022 Actual	FTE	2023 Estimated	FTE	2024 Estimated	FTE	Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.	Chg Key
Discretionary Appropriations:											
Federal Food Safety & Inspection	$957,216	8,156	$989,767	8,218	$1,036,888	8,526	$1,159,572	8,534	+$122,684	+8	(1)
State Food Safety & Inspection	66,730	20	66,875	18	67,131	20	73,530	20	+6,399	-	(2)
International Food Safety & Inspection	17,045	121	17,442	121	18,975	120	20,987	120	+2,012	-	(3)
Public Health Data Communication Infrastructure System (PHDCIS)	34,580	-	34,580	-	35,272	-	36,330	-	+1,058	-	(4)
Goodfellows Mid-Western Lab Relocation (General Provision)	16,046	-	12,525	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Subtotal	1,091,617	8,297	1,121,189	8,357	1,158,266	8,666	1,290,419	8,674	+132,153	+8	
Mandatory Appropriations:											
American Rescue Plan	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Subtotal	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Supplemental Appropriations:											
Goodfellows Mid-Western Lab Relocation (Division N)	-	-	-	-	29,700	-	-	-	-29,700	-	
Subtotal	-	-	-	-	29,700	-	-	-	-29,700	-	
Offsetting Collections:											
Subtotal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Adjusted Appropriation	1,191,617	8,297	1,121,189	8,357	1,187,966	8,666	1,290,419	8,674	+102,453	+8	
Add back:											
Rescission, Transfers In and Out	-15,914	-	-12,749	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Appropriation	1,175,703	8,297	1,108,440	8,357	1,187,966	8,666	1,290,419	8,674	+102,453	+8	
Transfers In:											
Mid-Western Laboratory Relocation	16,046	-	12,525	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
COVID Emergency Leave	368	-	224	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Transfers In	16,414	-	12,749	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Transfers Out:											
Federal Food Safety & Inspection	-500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Transfers Out	-500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Recoveries, Other	5,607	-	2,013	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Bal. Available, SOY	17,912	-	107,901	-	70,602	-	42,115	-	-28,487	-	
Total Available	1,215,136	8,297	1,231,103	8,357	1,258,568	8,666	1,332,534	8,674	+73,966	+8	
Lapsing Balances	-793	-	-247	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Bal. Available, EOY	-107,901	-	-70,602	-	-42,115	-	-17,115	-	+25,000	-	
Total Obligations	1,106,442	8,297	1,160,254	8,357	1,216,453	8,666	1,315,419	8,674	+98,966	+8	

Table FSIS-11. Project Statement on Basis of Obligations (thousands of dollars, FTE)

Item	2021 Actual	FTE	2022 Actual	FTE	2023 Estimated	FTE	2024 Estimated	FTE	Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.
Discretionary Obligations:										
Federal Food Safety & Inspection	$956,657	8,156	$989,667	8,218	$1,036,888	8,526	$1,159,572	8,534	+$122,684	+8
State Food Safety & Inspection	66,723	20	66,826	18	67,131	20	73,530	20	+6,399	-
International Food Safety & Inspection	16,969	121	17,344	121	18,975	120	20,987	120	+2,012	-
Public Health Data Communication Infrastructure System (PHDCIS)	34,688	-	34,560	-	38,678	-	36,330	-	-2,348	-
Goodfellows Mid-Western Lab Relocation (General Provision)	-	-	28,571	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subtotal Discretionary Obligations	1,075,037	8,297	1,136,968	8,357	1,161,672	8,666	1,290,419	8,674	+128,747	+8
Mandatory Obligations:										
American Rescue Plan	11,286	-	21,600	-	25,000	-	25,000	-	-	-
Subtotal Mandatory Obligations	11,286	-	21,600	-	25,000	-	25,000	-	-	-
Supplemental Obligations:										
Covid 19- Supplemental	16,839	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PHV Incentives Carryover	3,801	-	1,914	-	81	-	-	-	-81	-
Goodfellows Mid-Western Lab Relocation (Division N)	-	-	-	-	29,700	-	-	-	-29,700	-
Subtotal Supplemental Obligations	20,640	-	1,917	-	29,781	-	-	-	-29,781	-
Offsetting Collections:										
COVID Emergency Leave	368	-	224	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subtotal Offsetting Collections	368	-	224	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Obligations	1,107,331	8,297	1,160,709	8,357	1,216,453	8,666	1,315,419	8,674	+98,966	+8
Add back:										
Lapsing Balances	793	-	247	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mid-Western Lab Relocation	16,046	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PHDCIS	3,084	-	3,406	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PHV Incentives Carryover	57	-	81	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
American Rescue Plan	88,714	-	67,115	-	42,115	-	17,115	-	-25,000	
Total Bal. Available, EOY	107,901	-	70,602	-	42,115	-	17,115	-	-25,000	-
Total Available	1,216,025	8,297	1,231,558	8,357	1,258,568	8,666	1,332,534	8,674	+73,966	+8
Less:										
Total Transfers In	-16,414	-	-12,749	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Item	2021 Actual	FTE	2022 Actual	FTE	2023 Estimated	FTE	2024 Estimated	FTE	Inc. or Dec.	FTE Inc. or Dec.
Total Transfers Out	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Recoveries, Other	-5,607	-	-2,013	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bal. Available, SOY	-17,912	-	-107,901	-	-70,602	-	-42,115	-	+28,487	-
Total Appropriation	1,176,592	8,297	1,108,895	8,357	1,187,966	8,666	1,290,419	8,674	+102,453	+8

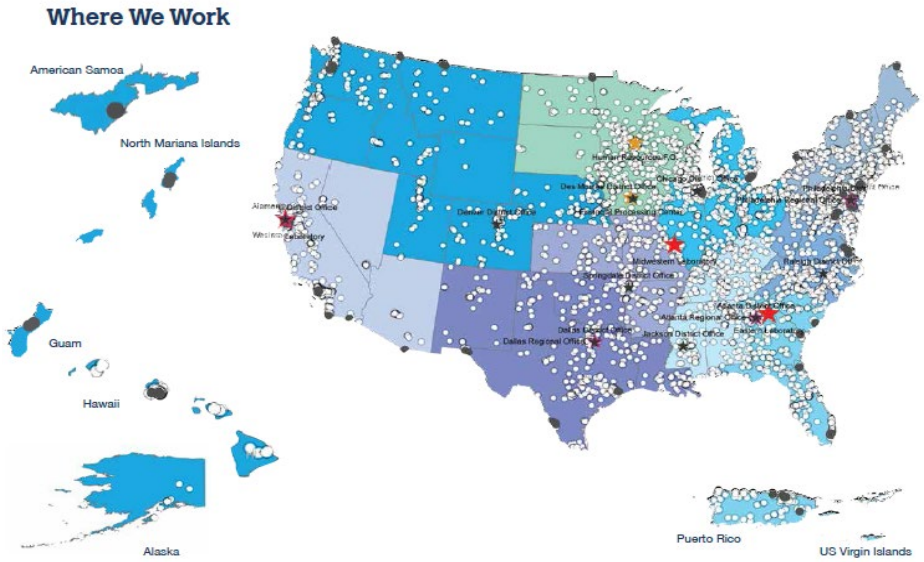
JUSTIFICATIONS OF INCREASES/DECREASES

Food Safety and Inspection Service

FSIS provides in-plant inspection of all domestic processing and slaughter establishments preparing meat, poultry, and processed egg products for sale or distribution into commerce, as well as surveillance and investigation of all meat, poultry, and egg product facilities. FSIS inspection program personnel are present for all domestic slaughter operations, inspect each livestock and poultry carcass, and inspect operations at each processing establishment at least once per shift. In addition to in-plant personnel in federally inspected establishments, FSIS employs a number of other field personnel, such as laboratory technicians and investigators. Program investigators conduct surveillance, investigations, and other activities at food warehouses, distribution centers, retail stores, and other businesses operating in commerce that store, handle, distribute, transport, or sell meat, poultry, or processed egg products to the consuming public. FSIS ensures the safety of imported products through a three-part equivalence process which includes (1) analysis of an applicant country's legal and regulatory structure, (2) initial and periodic on-site equivalence auditing of the country's food regulatory systems, and (3) continual point-of-entry re-inspection of products received from the exporting country. FSIS also has cooperative agreements with 27 States that operate intrastate meat and poultry inspection programs. FSIS conducts reviews of these State programs to ensure that they are "at least equal to" the Federal program. Additionally, FSIS regulates interstate commerce through cooperative agreements with five States that already have MPI programs that are identical to the Federal program and allows those establishments to ship products across state lines and also, potentially, to export them to foreign countries.

To carry out these Congressional mandates, FSIS:

- Has 8,700 employees which includes other-than-permanent employees, in addition to, permanent full-time employees
- Regulates over 250,000 different meat, poultry, and egg products
- Regulates operations at over 6,800 federally regulated establishments
- Ensures public health requirements are met in establishments that each year slaughter or process:
  - 162 million head of livestock
  - 9.7 billion poultry carcasses
  - 2.8 billion pounds of egg products
- Conducts 7.6 million food safety & food defense procedures
- Condemned:
  - Over 14.6 million poultry carcasses
  - More than 254,801 head of livestock during postmortem (post-slaughter) inspection
- In 2022, performed 184,447 Humane Handling (HH) verification procedures



This map represents the geographic distribution of FSIS operated/regulated establishments.

1. A net increase of $122,684,000 and 8 FTEs in salaries and expenses in the Federal Food Safety and Inspection program ($1,036,888,000 and 8,526 FTEs available in 2023 Enacted).

   a) Federal: An increase of $44,502,000 for Pay. This increase will support the annualization of the 2023 4.6 percent cost of living pay increase and the 2024 5.2 percent cost of living pay increase. Nearly 80 percent of FSIS's budget goes for salary and benefits (89 percent being frontline employees), FSIS would need to cut 495 FTEs without the requested funding for 2024 which in turn would degrade the Agency's ability to perform its food safety mission.

   b) Federal: An increase of $2,834,000 to fund inflationary adjustments to non-pay object classes. Costs for items such as travel, utilities and contracts have experienced inflationary increases over time. Many of these items have been held at the same level or only increased with programmatic increases for several years. The increased costs cannot continue to be absorbed by the agency without affecting the agency's mission. This funding will cover the inflation estimate in 2024 applied to all non-pay object classes.

   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. This funding 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.

   d) Federal: An increase of $37,959,000 for 2024 for Increased Information Technology (IT) Programs. FSIS spends approximately 80 percent on salaries and benefits, predominantly for inspection personnel in establishments and other frontline employees. This fact leaves little room for the agency to absorb cost increases of this magnitude. FSIS is already incurring these costs to fix security vulnerabilities, expanding network/computer access to field inspectors, and increased cost of IT support, commercial applications, and licenses. If FSIS does not receive the requested funding, FSIS would have to increase the vacancy rate (cutting about 389 FTEs) which in turn would degrade the Agency's ability to perform its food safety mission.

      FSIS must maintain a modern and stable IT infrastructure to achieve operational excellence. Mission critical IT assets, such as the Public Health Information System (PHIS), and other FSIS applications that drive transformative solutions for business intelligence and reporting, produce real-time data analysis, impact global commerce, and facilitate the collection and sharing of vital data that allows FSIS to meet its food safety mission. Therefore, it is vital that FSIS has secure, reliable, and modernized IT infrastructure support. To achieve these requirements and ensure PHIS has 99% or more availability FSIS must leverage newer approaches and provide increased common support services for all FSIS IT end users such as integrated communication and business application services.

      FSIS is increasingly dependent on IT for all aspects of its mission, especially in making science-based decisions and promoting global commerce. As technology has evolved, IT has become a critical component in FSIS' efforts to link and integrate the various components of FSIS operations. Reliable, scalable, and modernized IT functions are essential to an integrated effort to improve the quality and quantity of data that FSIS captures. Additionally, these changes will improve the quality of information, allow FSIS to conduct better analysis to become more efficient in reducing illnesses, and increase the agency's cyber threat detection.

FSIS estimates $9 million is needed to mitigate IT security vulnerabilities. FSIS has been challenged in funding a robust IT security program due to the limited program dollars available for discretionary programs outside its core functions. FSIS spends approximately 94 percent of all appropriated funds on salaries and benefits, frontline inspector travel, and items required to carry out inspections. Meanwhile, FSIS is increasingly dependent on IT to perform its mission and continues to increase industry usage of FSIS systems with reliance on the systems continuing to grow, including for exported products. This situation increases FSIS security risks, requiring more comprehensive capability to address them. Recent evaluations show that FSIS needs more cyber security tools to sustain the integrity of its network and systems, increasing the annual costs for licenses and services that are needed to counter the increase in malware, ransomware, and other security concerns. Additional cost increases are due to application security testing, the cascading effects of changes to operating systems and third-party Application Program Interfaces (APIs) that affect FSIS applications/systems, increased costs of cyber security tools, and the need for more rapid patching. FSIS has a backlog of required tasks for its critical systems that will only continue to grow if better tools and capabilities are not procured. A breach of FSIS cyber security could potentially have a major impact on systems like the Public Health Information System (PHIS), which in turn could create a devastating effect on the ability of frontline inspectors and lab personnel to perform their missions and industry's ability to operate, including impacts on international trade.

FSIS has expanded computer access to its workforce and estimates it has driven up costs approximately $6 million for network cost for new users. Normal business operations now require that all FSIS employees have access to a government computer. Additionally, more operational tasks such as managing and processing exports now require computer access to perform the work, further increasing network usage. FSIS deployed additional computers to front-line inspection employees who previously did not have access to a computer, increasing overall use of IT services to share data and analysis throughout FSIS and with our stakeholders to better assist establishments and protect public health. As operations and customer support improve, network costs will increase because of the higher network usage and the additional support required for help desk support, additional inventory management, training, and license fees.

Due to the rapidly changing technology environment and Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act requirements, FSIS must spend about $4 million more for basic commercial applications and licenses, including operating systems and software packages, which are required for computer and network functions. The cost of license fees is constantly increasing, generally with few or no alternatives available. In addition, companies are expanding their products' capabilities and bundling them, thereby increasing the software license cost. FSIS is increasingly dependent on IT for all aspects of its mission and cannot operate without these software systems.

e) Federal: An increase of $1,389,000 and 8 FTEs for Animal Biotechnology.

Animal Biotechnology is a Secretarial high priority. The U.S. agricultural industry is interested in using biotechnology to develop desirable agricultural traits in animals. Bioengineering can modify an animal's genetic structure in ways that mimic conventional breeding practices, but take less time, and is also more readily available to small developers and researchers who do not have the resources required traditional approaches. Through the biotechnology, livestock producers can introduce naturally occurring and other traits within their herds, such as greater disease resistance, greater heat tolerance, and animals without horns —all of which would make the U.S. food supply more efficient, humane, sustainable and competitive (both domestically and internationally).

USDA intends to develop the technical expertise to evaluate genetic modifications to certain farm animals (amenable animals), based on science and with consideration of associated risks. Amenable animals would be cattle, sheep, swine, goats, equines, Siluriformes fish, and poultry produced for agricultural purposes.

This expertise will be used to ensure that the slaughter and processing of amenable animals modified or developed using genetic engineering would remain safe and not result in meat or poultry products that are adulterated or misbranded. In order to complete these assessments FSIS would require eight multi-discipline personnel.

f) Federal: A increase of $30,000,000 for Reduced User Fees for Small and Very Small Establishments.

The overtime and holiday inspection services fees for establishments have a disproportionate financial impact on small and very small establishments compared to large establishments. Small and very small establishments already have smaller profit margins due to lower production volume and have less capability to absorb additional costs. The resulting additional cost per pound of product attributed to overtime and holiday rates is much higher for smaller establishments. Requiring them to pay the full rate for these fees impacts their ability to continue to be competitive.

Reduced inspection fees not only help small establishments stay in business, but it also helps provide smaller farmers with more options for their products and their ability to operate. If smaller establishments don't have to pay full cost for overtime and holiday inspection, they might be able to expand their operations thereby also increasing opportunities for smaller farmers. When small establishments must pay the full overtime fees for FSIS inspection personnel, the establishment must make up these additional costs by passing the cost onto the consumer, farmer, or by absorbing the costs all of which result in lower profits hurting these smaller entities. The situation becomes even more dire for small farmers if the smaller establishment goes out of business.

The American Rescue Plan Act provided funding as a temporary relief to reduce overtime and holiday inspection fees for small and very small establishments. The goal of the program is to help increase the capacity of small and very small establishments. New establishments continue to enroll in the program, and some establishments will be making decisions to increase capacity based on the reduced fees. However, when that funding is expended, there must be permanent appropriated base funding for FSIS to cover the fee reductions. Otherwise, establishments who increased capacity based on reduced rates would be seriously jeopardized by any disruption of federal funding.

g) Federal: $3,000,000 for the Workforce Development Program. This funding request will enable FSIS to invest in its employees through workforce development and continuing education and improve employee retention and succession planning. FSIS is experiencing challenges in getting sufficient candidates to fill leadership positions and other specialized positions. Staffing these positions with competent leaders is vital for the long-term success of FSIS because they provide direct management of the day-to-day activities, help employees develop into their specific roles and help resolve emergent issues. Without investing in the development of our personnel FSIS risks falling further behind in the ability to effectively manage the food safety mission. Additionally, employees may see the lack of sufficient training and development as a lack of commitment from the Agency, which negatively impacts morale and retention. This funding will address the urgent need to develop employees for internal opportunities through training that will prepare employees for each subsequent step in their careers, ensuring the continuity of leadership talent.

Benefits of investing in workforce development and continuing education will help make FSIS an employer of choice for recruiting purposes, as well as to help reduce turnover, increase job productivity, and improve career mobility for employees.

2. An increase of $6,399,000 in salaries and expenses for the State Food Safety and Inspection Program ($67,131,000 and 20 FTEs available in 2023 Enacted).

   a) State: An increase of $6,068,000 for State Program Expansion and Increased Reimbursement Costs. The Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) and the Poultry Product Inspection Act (PPIA) provide 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, FSIS anticipates at least two new states will establish MPI programs by 2024. Furthermore, the Cooperative Interstate Shipment (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 is part of USDA's priority to expand meat processing capacity and strengthen resilience of the supply chain.

   This increase is needed to maintain current reimbursement rates. Otherwise, FSIS will be required to lower the state MPI reimbursement rate below the current 50 percent level and states may drop out of the program. If the states drop their programs, FSIS is required by law to provide the inspectors for those establishments. State inspection programs provide coverage that is often more efficient than what FSIS could provide to small and very small 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 $60-70 million which in turn would degrade the Agency's ability to perform its food safety mission.

   b) State: An increase of $331,000 for pay costs. This increase will support the annualization of the 2023 4.6 percent cost of living pay increase and the 2024 5.2 percent cost of living pay increase.

3. An increase of $2,012,000 in salaries and expenses for the International Food Safety Inspection program ($18,975,000 and 120 FTEs available in 2023 Enacted).

   a) International: An increase of $1,910,000 for pay. This increase will support the annualization of the 2023 4.6 percent cost of living pay increase and the 2024 5.2 percent cost of living pay increase.

   b) International: An increase of $102,000 to fund inflationary adjustments to non-pay object classes. FSIS employees ensure that meat, poultry, and egg products imported to the United States are produced under standards equivalent to the U.S. inspection system and conduct re-inspection at U.S. ports of entry as well as facilitate the certification of exported goods.

4. An increase of $1,058,000 in salaries and expenses for the Public Health Data Communication Infrastructure System program ($35,272,000 from the 2023 Enacted).

   a) This increase consists of $1,058,000 in 2024 inflation projections that increase the costs for FSIS to provide internal infrastructure support.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Food Safety and Inspection Service

User Fee Overtime Status

Current legislative authority to be amended:

In 2024, FSIS will re-propose changes to provide inspection personnel flexible work arrangements. In 2022 and 2023 a General Provision provided FSIS with the requested flexibility. FSIS is currently implementing the policy change and requires that the General Provision become permanent.

FSIS proposes continuing the General Provision authorization while we seek permanent statute changes to provide flexible scheduling for inspectors to allow for work-life balance. 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. FSIS will also review how fees are applied to establishments outside of their normal hours of operations to ensure that there is equity between very small, small, and large establishments.

There will be no offsets in 2024. No change in budget authority is anticipated.

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).

GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF OBLIGATIONS AND FTE

Table FSIS-13. Geographic Breakdown of Obligations and FTE (thousands of dollars, FTE) - Appropriated

State/Territory/Country	2021 Actual	FTE	2022 Actual	FTE	2023 Estimated	FTE	2024 Estimated	FTE
Alabama	$32,008	276	$32,281	282	$33,837	293	$38,031	293
Alaska	881	7	909	8	953	8	1,071	8
Arizona	3,723	36	3,874	34	4,061	35	4,564	35
Arkansas	35,070	304	35,878	315	37,608	328	42,269	329
California	69,452	515	70,928	540	74,347	562	83,562	563
Colorado	28,739	247	29,746	234	31,180	243	35,044	243
Connecticut	1,755	14	1,772	15	1,857	16	2,087	16
Delaware	11,357	100	10,967	100	11,496	104	12,921	104
Florida	12,297	134	12,661	134	13,271	139	14,916	139
Georgia	85,848	589	83,719	612	87,759	637	98,636	638
Hawaii	2,801	27	3,066	26	3,214	27	3,612	27
Idaho	4,675	52	4,806	48	5,037	50	5,661	50
Illinois	31,901	229	33,590	226	35,210	235	39,574	235
Indiana	14,841	136	15,063	133	15,789	138	17,746	138
Iowa	44,152	393	44,860	389	47,023	404	52,851	405
Kansas	19,763	220	20,185	211	21,158	219	23,780	219
Kentucky	14,141	148	14,895	146	15,613	152	17,548	152
Louisiana	10,588	85	10,685	85	11,200	88	12,588	88
Maine	1,622	11	1,738	12	1,821	12	2,047	12
Maryland	42,636	151	45,118	152	47,294	158	53,156	158
Massachusetts	2,793	24	2,898	26	3,038	27	3,415	27
Michigan	10,173	103	10,424	101	10,927	105	12,281	105
Minnesota	34,514	320	36,255	324	38,003	337	42,713	338
Mississippi	31,387	239	31,486	243	33,004	253	37,095	253
Missouri	33,164	301	34,668	296	36,339	308	40,843	308
Montana	3,492	24	3,806	25	3,990	26	4,485	26
Nebraska	30,230	290	31,072	289	32,570	300	36,607	300
Nevada	967	13	1,017	12	1,066	12	1,198	12
New Hampshire	1,020	12	1,039	11	1,089	11	1,224	11
New Jersey	11,985	119	12,384	116	12,981	121	14,590	121
New Mexico	1,749	16	1,759	16	1,843	17	2,071	17
New York	15,073	174	15,527	165	16,276	172	18,293	172
North Carolina	44,819	322	46,596	355	48,842	369	54,896	370
North Dakota	2,037	14	2,033	13	2,131	14	2,395	14
Ohio	18,918	122	19,374	123	20,308	128	22,825	128
Oklahoma	9,191	71	9,584	72	10,046	75	11,291	75
Oregon	5,235	52	5,433	52	5,695	54	6,401	54
Pennsylvania	34,780	303	35,769	302	37,493	314	42,140	314
Rhode Island	1,109	13	1,075	12	1,127	12	1,267	12
South Carolina	13,055	113	13,642	114	14,300	119	16,072	119
South Dakota	6,052	61	6,343	59	6,649	61	7,473	61
Tennessee	17,581	179	17,582	173	18,430	180	20,714	180
Texas	70,123	555	73,275	583	76,808	607	86,328	608
Utah	6,644	47	6,594	46	6,912	48	7,769	48
Vermont	2,676	15	2,719	13	2,850	14	3,203	14
Virginia	17,275	166	17,225	160	18,055	166	20,293	166
Washington	10,304	112	10,622	106	11,134	110	12,514	110
West Virginia	3,726	34	3,894	33	4,082	34	4,588	34
Wisconsin	20,880	167	21,716	165	22,763	172	25,584	172
Wyoming	1,009	8	1,205	9	1,263	9	1,420	9
District of Columbia	145,597	587	149,344	589	153,091	591	161,052	592
Guam	418	4	410	4	418	4	440	4
Puerto Rico	4,117	44	4,221	44	4,325	44	4,550	44
Virgin Islands	124	1	127	1	130	1	137	1
Argentina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

State/Territory/Country	2021 Actual	FTE	2022 Actual	FTE	2023 Estimated	FTE	2024 Estimated	FTE
American Samoa	7	-	6	-	7	-	7	-
N. Mariana Islands	132	1	129	1	132	1	139	1
China	-	-	152	1	159	1	167	1
Mexico	-	-	250	1	262	1	276	1
Obligations	1,080,608	8,297	1,108,396	8,357	1,158,266	8,666	1,290,419	8,674
Lapsing Balances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rescinded Balances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bal. Available, EOY	19,187	-	3,487	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Available	1,099,795	8,297	1,111,883	8,357	1,158,266	8,666	1,290,419	8,674

Table FSIS-14. Geographic Breakdown of Obligations and FTE (thousands of dollars, FTE) – Supplemental

State/Territory/Country	2021 Actual	FTE	2022 Actual	FTE	2023 Estimated	FTE	2024 Estimated	FTE
Alabama	$128	-	$197	-	$228	-	$228	-
Alaska	2	-	3	-	3	-	3	-
Arizona	25	-	28	-	33	-	33	-
Arkansas	1,783	-	175	-	203	-	203	-
California	2,254	-	3,204	-	3,701	-	3,701	-
Colorado	1,792	-	253	-	293	-	293	-
Connecticut	128	-	158	-	183	-	183	-
Delaware	25	-	22	-	25	-	25	-
Florida	250	-	603	-	698	-	698	-
Georgia	1,822	-	572	-	670	-	670	-
Hawaii	51	-	120	-	140	-	140	-
Idaho	179	-	338	-	390	-	390	-
Illinois	1,782	-	1,190	-	1,375	-	1,375	-
Indiana	235	-	327	-	378	-	378	-
Iowa	2,253	-	724	-	838	-	838	-
Kansas	216	-	172	-	200	-	200	-
Kentucky	121	-	187	-	218	-	218	-
Louisiana	113	-	199	-	230	-	230	-
Maine	28	-	24	-	28	-	28	-
Maryland	1,179	-	299	-	345	-	345	-
Massachusetts	209	-	405	-	470	-	470	-
Michigan	209	-	373	-	433	-	433	-
Minnesota	87	-	275	-	318	-	318	-
Mississippi	1,808	-	134	-	155	-	155	-
Missouri	305	-	29,019	-	30,218	-	518	-
Montana	16	-	62	-	73	-	73	-
Nebraska	255	-	480	-	555	-	555	-
Nevada	63	-	130	-	150	-	150	-
New Hampshire	7	-	25	-	30	-	30	-
New Jersey	803	-	1,331	-	1,540	-	1,540	-
New Mexico	36	-	74	-	85	-	85	-
New York	1,052	-	1,794	-	2,075	-	2,075	-
North Carolina	2,057	-	317	-	368	-	368	-
North Dakota	29	-	46	-	53	-	53	-
Ohio	317	-	735	-	850	-	850	-
Oklahoma	160	-	243	-	283	-	283	-
Oregon	96	-	219	-	253	-	253	-
Pennsylvania	1,896	-	1,274	-	1,475	-	1,475	-
Rhode Island	9	-	27	-	33	-	33	-
South Carolina	34	-	167	-	193	-	193	-
South Dakota	29	-	55	-	63	-	63	-
Tennessee	211	-	308	-	358	-	358	-
Texas	2,933	-	2,102	-	2,430	-	2,430	-
Utah	271	-	236	-	273	-	273	-
Vermont	16	-	75	-	88	-	88	-
Virginia	78	-	117	-	135	-	135	-
Washington	413	-	642	-	743	-	743	-
West Virginia	10	-	24	-	28	-	28	-
Wisconsin	227	-	420	-	485	-	485	-
Wyoming	25	-	83	-	95	-	95	-
Guam	30	-	29	-	33	-	33	-
Puerto Rico	67	-	155	-	180	-	180	-
Obligations	28,124	-	50,171	-	54,700	-	25,000	-
Bal. Available, EOY	104,760	-	67,115	-	42,115	-	17,115	-
Total, Available	132,884	-	117,286	-	96,815	-	42,115	-

CLASSIFICATION BY OBJECTS

Table FSIS-15 Classification by Objects (thousands of dollars) – Appropriated

Item No.	Item	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Estimated	2024 Estimated
	Personnel Compensation:				
	Washington D.C.	$79,357	$81,427	$85,866	93,109
	Personnel Compensation, Field	512,736	526,113	554,799	601,595
11	Total personnel compensation	592,093	607,540	640,665	694,704
12	Personal benefits	263,526	273,373	288,906	316,092
13.0	Benefits for former personnel	886	773	773	790
	Total, personnel comp. and benefits	856,505	881,686	930,344	1,011,586
	Other Objects:				
21.0	Travel and transportation of persons	31,924	33,023	33,023	34,744
22.0	Transportation of things	4,111	4,038	4,038	4,133
23.1	Rental payments to GSA	7,920	7,650	7,650	7,815
23.3	Communications, utilities, and misc. charges	13,405	13,829	13,829	14,253
24.0	Printing and reproduction	744	296	296	301
25.1	Advisory and assistance services	3,199	3,011	3,011	3,076
25.2	Other services from non-Federal sources	41,566	29,896	30,321	33,253
25.3	Other goods and services from Federal sources	46,135	59,348	60,135	99,372
25.4	Operation and maintenance of facilities	735	952	952	972
25.7	Operation and maintenance of equipment	364	352	352	359
26.0	Supplies and materials	7,970	9,193	9,193	9,398
31.0	Equipment	5,984	4,260	4,260	4,404
41.0	Grants, subsidies, and contributions	58,579	60,425	60,425	66,307
42.0	Insurance Claims and Indemnities	50	422	422	431
43.0	Interest and Dividends	16	15	15	15
	Total, Other Objects	222,702	226,710	227,922	278,833
99.9	Total, new obligations	1,079,207	1,108,396	1,158,266	1,290,419
	DHS Building Security Payments (included in 25.3)	$1,363	$1,349	$1,411	$1,411
	Information Technology Investments:				
	Major Investment				
11	External Labor (Contractors)	6,632	7,759	6,994	7,176
	Total Major Investment	6,632	7,759	6,994	7,176
	Mission Area Non-Major Investment Totals	16,268	24,915	14,659	14,224
	Mission Area Standard Investment Totals	54,699	45,390	41,521	40,691
25.3	Mission Area WCF Transfers	29,513	57,191	66,100	68,801
	Total Non-Major Investment	100,480	127,496	122,280	123,716
	Total IT Investments	**107,112**	**135,255**	**129,274**	**130,892**
	Position Data:				
	Average Salary (dollars), ES Position	$190,042	$192,671	$200,378	$210,397
	Average Salary (dollars), GS Position	$71,218	$72,470	$75,630	$79,433
	Average Grade, GS Position	10.3	10.3	10.3	10.4

Table FSIS-16 Classification by Objects (thousands of dollars) – Supplemental

Item No.	Item	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Estimated	2024 Estimated
	Personnel Compensation:				
	Washington D.C.	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Personnel Compensation, Field	25,934	21,600	17,500	17,500
11	Total personnel compensation	25,934	21,600	17,500	17,500
12	Personal benefits	1,124	-	7,500	7,500
13.0	Benefits for former personnel	-	-	-	-
	Total, personnel comp. and benefits	27,058	21,600	25,000	25,000
	Other Objects:				
21.0	Travel and transportation of persons	36	-	-	-
25.2	Other services from non-Federal sources	2	-	-	-
25.3	Other goods and services from Federal sources	295	-	-	-
25.4	Operation and maintenance of facilities	-	28,571	29,700	-
25.7	Operation and maintenance of equipment	1	-	-	-
26.0	Supplies and materials	753	-	-	-
31.0	Equipment	-21	-	-	-
	Total, Other Objects	1,066	28,571	29,700	-
99.9	Total, new obligations	28,124	50,171	54,700	25,000

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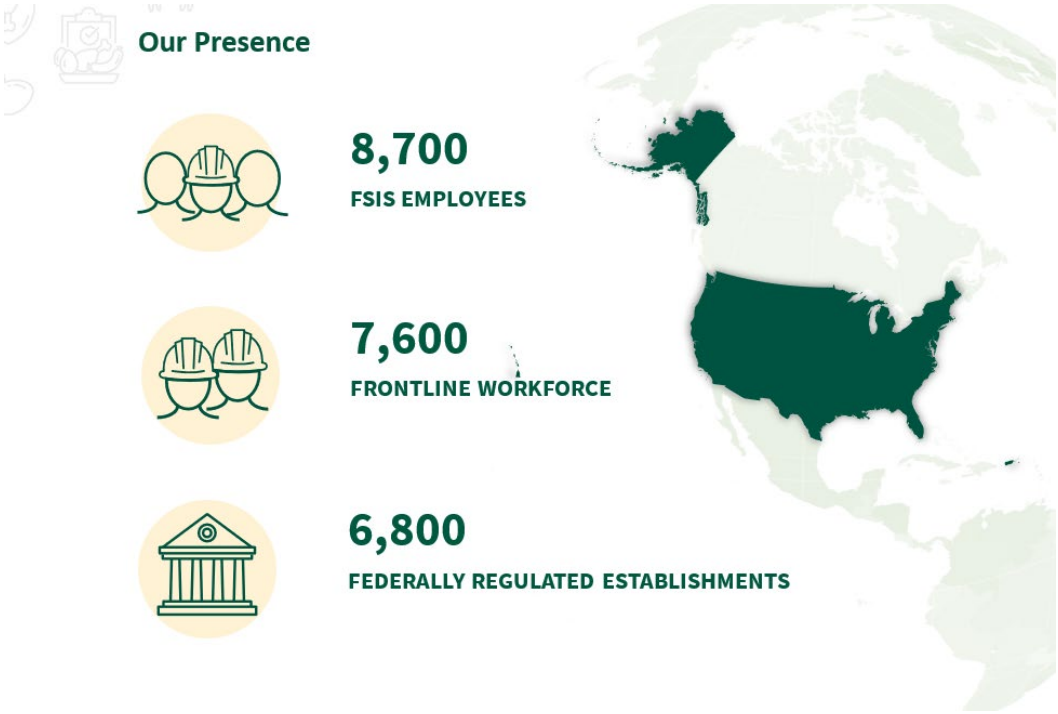
STATUS OF PROGRAMS

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 accurately labeled. Consistent with its role, FSIS' mission is to protect public health by preventing illness from these products. This mission guides Agency actions, from implementing and enforcing 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), the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA), and the Agricultural Marketing Act—to incorporating data and science into Agency decision making and continually improving operations to ensure the Agency functions in the most efficient and effective manner. FSIS' food safety mission extends to ensuring the safety and integrity of FSIS-regulated food products imported from 35 countries, as well as U.S. products exported to more than 140 countries.

Thousands of FSIS inspection personnel across the Nation conduct daily inspection activities, verifying industry compliance with applicable food safety regulatory requirements. The work that FSIS employees do 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.



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, 2022 highlights include the launch of the Agency's new initiative to reduce *Salmonella* illness linked to poultry, its intentional hiring and retention efforts, and its continued support to small and very small establishments.

1.1 Reducing Illnesses Linked to *Salmonella* in Poultry

Salmonella remains a significant food safety concern in the United States, particularly through its presence in poultry products. In October 2021, USDA announced FSIS would reevaluate its approach to controlling *Salmonella* in poultry to better prevent foodborne illness and achieve national food safety targets. Over the years, FSIS has overseen the reduction in the prevalence of *Salmonella* by more than 50 percent in poultry products at regulated establishments, but without an observed reduction in attributable illnesses. Nevertheless, more than 1 million consumer *Salmonella* illnesses occur annually, with more than 23 percent attributed to poultry consumption. Throughout 2022, FSIS invested in data gathering and outreach to generate the science and data needed to develop a proposed framework for controlling *Salmonella* in poultry.

Since launching this effort, information gathering has been the Agency's top priority. Key among these efforts in 2022 included:

- Meeting with a wide range of stakeholders, including a well-attended '*Salmonella* in Poultry: Research and Science Roundtable' to gather ideas and recommendations for potential components of a revised strategy;
- Seeking guidance from one of the Agency's advisory committees, the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Food (NACMCF), on the types of microbiological criteria FSIS might use to better prevent *Salmonella* infections associated with poultry products;
- Inviting poultry slaughter and processing establishments to submit proposals for pilot projects to test different control strategies for *Salmonella* contamination in poultry products;
- Developing a risk profile and two quantitative risk assessments: one for *Salmonella* in chicken and one for *Salmonella* in turkey;
- Expanding the Agency's exploratory sampling program for young chicken carcasses to generate microbial data to help inform future policies;
- Incorporating a new FSIS laboratory method to measure the quantity of *Salmonella* present in FSIS young chicken samples, not solely its presence or absence; and
- Collaborating with USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to develop new sampling and detection technologies and mitigation approaches.

In August 2022, FSIS announced its intention to propose to declare *Salmonella* an adulterant in not ready-to-eat stuffed, breaded chicken products. That same month, FSIS completed development of a draft risk profile for *Salmonella* in poultry in collaboration with ARS. The risk profile provides the supporting evidence needed for FSIS to determine whether certain poultry products containing certain types or amounts of *Salmonella* are adulterated within the meaning of the PPIA. The risk profile was independently peer reviewed in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Information Quality Act guidance and provides a comprehensive review of the scientific literature and *Salmonella* outbreaks linked to poultry. By the end of the fiscal year, the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) cooperative agreement program laboratories collected 500 such products at retail and analyzed these for *Salmonella*. Data generated will inform the design of future sampling of these products.

In early 2023, FSIS plans to present a proposed framework for a new comprehensive strategy to reduce *Salmonella* illnesses attributable to poultry and convene a public meeting to discuss it. The effort to reduce *Salmonella* in poultry will leverage USDA's strong research capabilities and strengthen FSIS' partnership with the Research, Education, and Economics mission area to address data gaps and develop new laboratory methods to guide future policy. Each day, multiple teams of FSIS employees are working toward the shared goal to reduce illnesses caused by *Salmonella* in poultry products. These efforts aim to move the Agency closer to achieving the Healthy People 2030 national target of a 25 percent reduction in *Salmonella* illnesses and lay the groundwork for more developments in 2023 as FSIS continues its efforts to seek public feedback to inform potential rulemaking.

In addition to poultry, FSIS is reevaluating its approach to controlling other pathogens associated with significant illness linked to FSIS-regulated products. For example, in February, FSIS proposed pathogen reduction performance standards for *Salmonella* in raw comminuted pork and raw pork cuts and plans to assess whether establishments producing these products are effectively addressing *Salmonella*. Results from an FSIS study published in the peer-reviewed journal Epidemiology & Infection this year showed an increase in the proportion of

Salmonella outbreaks associated with pork over the last 20 years. FSIS remains committed to implementing pathogen reduction initiatives that will have a positive impact on the safety of regulated products and result in notable illness reduction.

1.2 Hiring and Retention

To carry out Federal mandates, FSIS depends upon attracting and retaining a qualified and competent workforce that represents the diversity across the United States. 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 (FI), Consumer Safety Inspectors (CSI), and Public Health Veterinarians (PHV). 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, agile, and responsive. FSIS will continue to prioritize scheduling and staffing to ensure all establishments' inspection needs are met, while proactively recruiting to reduce vacancy rates.

Recruitment

In 2022, FSIS significantly scaled up 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 to result in shorter times to hire, growing programs to support veterans and professionals with disabilities, and using new platforms to broaden applicant pools.

A key element of the Agency's recruitment strategy is monetary incentives. FSIS offers a $5,000 recruitment incentive to eligible new inspectors (FIs and CSIs) joining the Agency, which requires a two-year service agreement. For veterinarians, FSIS offers both recruitment and retention incentives. Newly hired PHVs receive $5,000 for every year of service up to $20,000 and four years. FSIS also offers student loan repayments for eligible in-plant PHVs annually. To invest in the future of the Agency's workforce, the Adel A. Malak Scholars program—a Federal employment pathway for qualified veterinary students to train for careers at FSIS—offers a maximum of $15,000 in tuition assistance per year for up to four years. FSIS seeks to expand this program to stay competitive in recruiting and retaining veterinarians in these critical frontline positions. At the end of 2022, FSIS began a referral bonus award incentive for employees who refer new qualified in-plant FIs, CSIs, PHVs to join FSIS. This initiative will begin in 2023, granting $1,000 to the referring FSIS employee once their referred new hire has onboarded and performed successfully for 90 days.

FSIS continues to strive toward its goal of modeling equal employment opportunity (EEO) excellence by promoting EEO, civil rights, and diversity. In 2022, FSIS supervisors received training on "Diversity Recruiting," which examines biases in the recruitment processes and strategies for achieving success. Such training is paramount to building a workforce more representative of America and ensuring the Agency can best meet the needs of all those it serves. The Agency also conducts various outreach to under-represented populations, including persons with disabilities, when advertising job opportunities. FSIS' talent management pilot program has complemented these efforts, entering its second year in 2022, and is set for expansion into 2023. The program was designed to improve the quality and diversity of applicant pools and leverage the opportunity to be competitive with private industry through virtual career fairs and recruiting events. FSIS' internal workgroup, consisting of representatives across the Agency, developed new recruitment materials, including tailored "Insider View" stories that provide first-person accounts of different employees' roles in the Agency and how they help protect public health. Through these tools, the Agency expanded its outreach to more than 1,400 schools, universities, and alumni associations, with a reach of nearly 10 million students and graduates and covering over one third of all minority-serving institutions. FSIS also entered a partnership with The State University of New York, resulting in the opportunity to directly recruit for positions within the largest comprehensive university system in the United States. Results from recruitment events—including print and digital promotion in targeted spaces—garnered significant successes throughout the year, such as in Dodge City, Kansas, where following two separate events, the Agency successfully recruited and hired 67 new FIs. These strategic recruitment activities complement the Agency's succession planning efforts to reduce vacancy rates.

FSIS has also leveraged technology to proactively source, attract, and recruit candidates to join the Agency. FSIS' digital presence has significantly expanded across recruitment platforms such as LinkedIn, Handshake, Craigslist, Indeed, ZipRecruiter, Facebook, and Twitter. By growing its digital presence on LinkedIn, FSIS tripled its follower count and nearly quadrupled the average reach of its messaging. To increase the diversity and breadth of candidates applying for specialized laboratory positions, FSIS shared announcements via talent management tools to reach additional private and public universities including land grant colleges. Based on initial data across platforms, hundreds of applicants used these digital tools to find FSIS positions with a notable increase in interest from those in under-represented groups. In 2022, FSIS' workforce diversity increased by over two percent. FSIS learned, anecdotally, that many applicants only found out about the available positions through these digital platforms and had been previously unaware of Federal employment opportunities on USAJobs.gov. FSIS continues to participate in virtual and in-person career fairs, course lectures, and national veterinary conferences to promote career opportunities.

To inform recruitment strategy, FSIS created an internal recruitment dashboard to provide insights into the mission-critical field inspector recruitment processes. Authorized Agency users are able to examine vacancies by district, State, and inspection position. The dashboard shows status in six easily interpretable recruitment stages—pre-announcement, job announcement open, certificate of qualified applicant resumes issued to the hiring manager, candidate selection made, tentative offer, and start date—that can be compared by district and position. Additional time-to-hire details and insight on vacancies (i.e., where a selectee declined or was disqualified) enable leadership to identify potential issues in recruitment timeliness and success rates. This dashboard provides actionable data on recruitment, retention, and vacancy rates of mission-critical field positions in an easy-to-digest manner and provides reports in minutes versus days for the previous static reports.

The data dashboard helps to inform process improvements, such as FSIS' expansion this year of qualifying experience that would be accepted at both the GS-5 and GS-7 grade levels for prospective FIs. FSIS also began personalized outreach by phone to applicants in the pre-employment medical qualification process to help them understand the medical process and timeline. This added step, along with additional refinements, reduced the medical pre-employment timeline by an average of 17 days. In August, FSIS launched the Professionals with Disabilities (PWD) page on the FSIS website to serve as an outreach knowledge bank for managers and PWD seeking information on disability intelligence training and strategies for recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing PWD. FSIS assisted 36 veterans and PWD with resume building and job searches, which resulted in the placement of 10 veterans and one PWD. These process improvements have allowed FSIS to issue job offers more quickly and secure quality candidates amidst high competition with private industry.

2022 was the second year of FSIS' Pre-Apprenticeship Program that provides a pathway to Federal civilian employment to transitioning service members, which delivers targeted inspector training to service members so they may acquire the skills necessary to enroll in FSIS' paid Apprenticeship Program for veterans. Eight individuals successfully completed the program and transitioned to the Apprenticeship Program. To aid in the transition to full employment, FSIS launched an open continuous job opportunity announcement for apprentices, resulting in nine hires. By the end of 2022, one apprentice graduated from the program and eight are scheduled to graduate in 2023. FSIS secured approval for veterans to use their G.I. Bill education benefits during the one-year apprenticeship. By the close of 2022, five apprentices used the G.I. Bill benefits.

Additional pathways to employment for other mission critical positions include Pathways Internships, the Presidential Management Fellowships, and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities internship program. FSIS also provides unpaid externships as part of the Federal volunteer student program that provides students experience that is directly related to their education and career goals while preparing to assume future roles in food safety and food security. 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.

Retention

FSIS strives to ensure that the Agency is a great place to work. The Agency upholds its commitment to performance excellence, promoting equity, and fostering an inclusive, discrimination- and harassment-free work environment. Throughout the year, FSIS received and processed feedback from monthly employee town hall calls, its employee feedback email inbox, employee surveys, and discussions with its union (the National Joint Council), which resulted in positive changes to leave, 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 recognizes the value of investing in top performers and its awards program allows the Agency to acknowledge the dedication of its employees throughout the year. During 2022, FSIS spent its award budget, issuing a total of 22,000 awards. FSIS also issued 297 recognition coins to employees who embody FSIS' values of being accountable, collaborative, empowered, and solutions-oriented. In 2023, the Agency will work to maximize FSIS' award allocation to continue recognizing performance excellence.

To support career growth within the Agency, FSIS developed and published four visual career pathway charts showing possible avenues for employees to develop a career in FSIS. FSIS laboratory leadership, for example, created a forum to discuss the skills needed to develop staff not only within their current positions, but also prepare them for future opportunities including leadership.

The Agency is also dedicated to meaningfully addressing conflict in the workplace. Its alternative dispute resolution program was particularly effective in providing a variety of conflict resolution services that resulted in a 23 percent decrease in its formal complaint inventory.

Investing in continuous educational development is another key pillar of FSIS' retention strategy that contributes to opening pathways for career development within the Agency. FSIS adjusts training initiatives on a regular basis, with the goal of providing accessible, high-quality instruction to its employees throughout the country. Trainings cover the skills employees need to carry out daily tasks as well as key skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, professional writing, teamwork, digital literacy, leadership, career management, and equity and inclusion awareness. In 2022, FSIS delivered all mission training virtually, using several delivery platforms to conduct 79 training sessions to a total of 5,066 mission critical employees. FSIS' "Help Resources" site contains webinars, training videos, interactive tutorials, and job aids that support FSIS employees with performance and training needs.

FSIS also offers monthly seminars to provide PHV participants with continuing education (CE) credits. All seminars this year were conducted virtually, offering interactive and non-interactive module options to accommodate all schedules. Approximately 2,662 CE credits were earned by PHVs in 2022.

The Agency also invested in additional leave benefits over the past year, including the expansion of its emergency dependent backup care program—helping employees find and pay for quality child or adult care when their regular arrangements are disrupted—and a new parental bereavement leave program for employees who had a child pass away. In 2022, FSIS continued the use of emergency paid leave for employees who experienced a qualifying event between March 11, 2021, and September 30, 2022. The Agency also continued to grant leave flexibilities for employees to receive COVID-19 vaccinations and recover, and/or escort family members to receive the COVID-19 vaccines and boosters. As guidance from the Safer Federal Workforce Taskforce changed regarding the appropriate use of leave for COVID-19 related reasons, FSIS continually communicated with employees and supervisors on updates or changes to ensure the proper use of leave for various situations. Throughout the year, the Agency supported employees with donated leave through its leave bank program and voluntary leave transfer program. In the next fiscal year, the Agency will continue to work with all employees to find better ways to support their lives and careers. In 2022, FSIS received temporary Congressional authority to not require inspection personnel to be in overtime status when an establishment is operating outside its scheduled hours of inspection, providing more flexible scheduling for inspectors who prefer to work fewer hours rather than requiring them to work all hours and days of plant operations. FSIS intends to expand this scheduling flexibility to improve work-life balance while

continuing to uphold its food safety mission; however, sustaining this long term will require permanent legislative authority. Employee satisfaction matters to FSIS. Implementing new retention and recruitment strategies will help the Agency attract and retain top talent in the years to come.

Contracting

In efforts to level the playing field for underserved small business owners, FSIS prioritized awareness and communication to the small business community. These efforts resulted in increased competition and contract awards to small businesses. FSIS increased its competition rate from 56 percent in 2021 to 62 percent in 2022. Additionally, FSIS exceeded all small business goals established by the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization. FSIS' small business achievements by the end of 2022 are as follows:

Table FSIS-17 USDA Office of Small and Disadvantages Business Utilization Goals and Results

	2022 USDA-wide Goals	2022 Results	2021 Results
Small Business	47%	66.4%	69.25%
Small Disadvantaged Business	21.50%	50.33%	41.43%
Women-Owned Small Business	5%	24.64%	22.44%
HUBZone Small Business	3%	14.33%	10.73%
Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business	3%	12.36%	11.97%
8(a) Business	5-15% by 2025/26	19.74%	17.36%

FSIS' actions enabled the Agency to exceed small business goals across all socioeconomic categories by increasing supplier diversity outreach efforts; meeting with small businesses on an ongoing basis to discuss capabilities, aligning businesses with future requirements; participating in USDA's Industry Day, which provided vendors insight on the acquisition process and future requirements; and scrutinizing all non-competitive awards and requiring even higher levels of approval than those required under USDA policy.

1.3 Supporting Small and Very Small Establishments

USDA is committed to expanding processing capacity and a more resilient supply chain through 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 overtime fee reductions, plant outreach, and direct support and guidance materials.

The set rate for overtime and holiday inspection services for all establishments has disproportionate negative financial impacts on small and very small establishments compared to large establishments that can more easily absorb extra charges due to higher production volumes. Particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, FSIS recognized the need to assist small establishments in weathering economic impacts to remain in the marketplace. In the American Rescue Plan Act, enacted on March 11, 2021, Congress provided FSIS with $100 million to reduce the costs of overtime inspection for small and very small official meat, poultry, and egg product establishments. FSIS quickly and effectively implemented the program within four months from passage, reducing overtime and holiday inspection fees for small establishments by 30 percent and very small establishments by 75 percent. Establishments that qualified for a fee reduction were also eligible to receive a partial refund for overtime and holiday inspection fees paid since October 11, 2020. The deadline to apply for the partial refund was initially set for March 11, 2022, but FSIS eliminated the deadline on June 9, 2022. Therefore, all establishments that qualified and submitted relevant forms in 2022 were eligible to receive the partial refund. Since its enactment, FSIS has issued credits and refunds to more than 2,800 small and very small establishments, providing more than $33 million in savings. FSIS will continue to offer the reduced fees until the funds are exhausted.

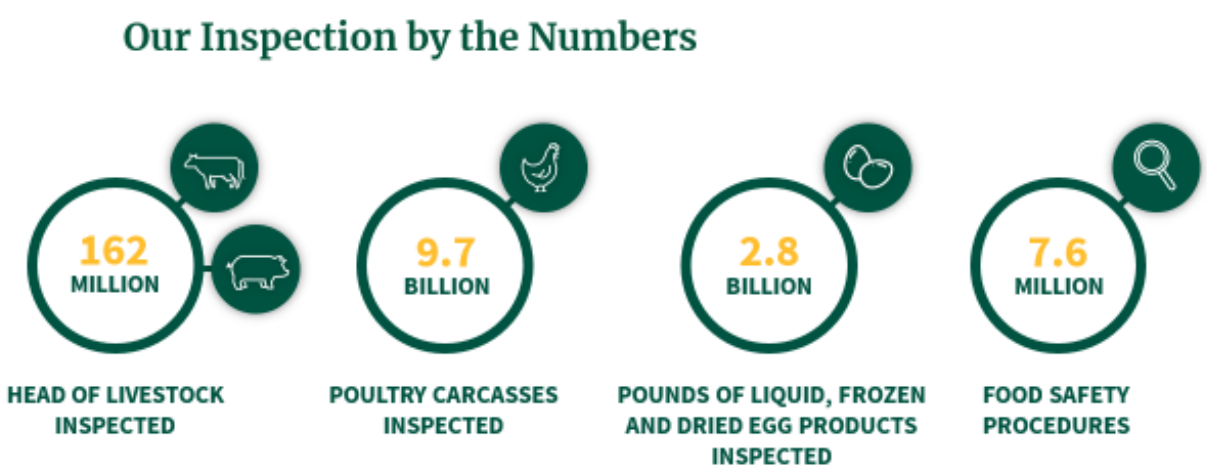
As part of its ongoing efforts to provide customer-focused outreach to small and very small establishments, FSIS hosted six roundtables and listening sessions in 2022 that had both virtual and in-person attendance. These events foster open communication with industry and help FSIS identify unique barriers and challenges faced by small and very small plants. FSIS is committed to advancing equity and reducing disparities in accessing FSIS programs among historically underserved groups. The Agency's small plant roundtables are an integral part of this commitment and include outreach to minority business owners and Tribal groups. This year's sessions took place in Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, South Dakota, and Texas, reaching more than 360 participants. In response to a Congressional mandate, FSIS held listening sessions, including one focused on stakeholders in Indian Country, to gauge interest in transitioning bison to the amenable species list under the FMIA. Before the listening session on bison in Rapid City, South Dakota, FSIS visited three Tribal nations and witnessed diverse approaches to raising and harvesting buffalo. Through FSIS' engagement with Indian Country, it became clear that bison hold a deep cultural, historical, and environmental significance distinct from their viability as a commercial meat product. The prevailing sentiment captured by these listening sessions is that bison should not be made an amenable species under the FMIA. It is notable that this position is consistent across tribes and a vast majority of stakeholders from within the commercial bison industry, including large and small processors. FSIS will continue to hold roundtables for small and very small plants to answer questions and provide guidance to ensure compliance with Federal systems and regulations.

The Agency strives to bridge barriers faced by smaller producers through specialized outreach and guidance materials to 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. Over the course of 2022, FSIS Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officers in every district devoted up to 25 percent of their time to outreach activities to ensure small and very small establishments see the value of working with FSIS before there is a food safety issue. FSIS' small plant help desk through the askFSIS database provides online answers to technical, inspection-related questions that help to maintain effective policy understanding and implementation. In 2022, askFSIS responded to 34,134 questions from customers and reviewed 692 askFSIS Q&As that are publicly posted on the AskUSDA website and have been viewed 200,733 times.

In support of the Small Business Administration's initiative to provide small businesses with compliance assistance under the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act, FSIS developed compliance guidelines considering the specific needs of small and very small establishments. Although all establishments can benefit from the information, tailoring resources to the needs of those that are smaller in size provides specialized guidance that otherwise may be unavailable to smaller producers. FSIS has a dedicated resource page on its website for these establishments that highlights relevant guidelines, educational materials, and training resources, including information on how to develop a recall plan, HACCP plan, and a robust systematic approach to humane handling. FSIS published six HACCP models this year to assist small and very small establishments with the development of effective food safety plans. These models cover various processes for poultry, beef, catfish, and egg products. The Agency also revised and issued five resources on inspection in commercial kitchens, label applications, importing amenable products, and the lethality and stabilization of meat and poultry products. The latter guidance, referred to as "Appendices A and B," were complemented by seven webinars—four for industry and three for FSIS inspection program personnel (IPP)—to provide an overview of the revisions and answer participant questions. Originally issued in 1999, the revised guidelines include recommendations from previous versions, incorporate new updates based on the latest science, and have improved readability.

2. Federal Food Safety and Inspection Program

Science and data inform all Agency decisions—what FSIS inspectors do day-to-day, how FSIS sampling programs are designed, what methods FSIS laboratories use, and what policies and regulations the Agency implements—to ensure that FSIS' actions are enhancing food safety and improving public health. Thousands of FSIS inspectors 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 2022, FSIS protected public health by conducting ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection of 162 million head of livestock and 9.7 billion poultry carcasses. Additionally, FSIS inspected 2.8 billion pounds of liquid, frozen, and dried egg products and conducted 7.6 million food safety procedures to verify that systems at all federally inspected facilities continued to maintain food safety and wholesomeness requirements.



FSIS strives to adopt innovative approaches to inspection to verify that regulated establishments meet the Agency's requirements and produce safe and accurately labeled products. FSIS continually updates its regulations, policies, guidance to industry, and associated implementation instructions to field personnel to ensure these all reflect the latest scientific advancements. Understanding 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

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

In 2014, FSIS amended the regulations to establish a 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. Plants that do not choose to operate under these new systems continue to operate under traditional inspection systems. The new systems were carefully designed and informed by decades of pilot program data and continue to be evaluated based on the latest science, data, and impacts on worker safety. In 2022, four establishments converted to NPIS, and one establishment converted to NSIS. In response to recent litigation 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" for swine establishments operating under NSIS. This time-limited trial allows establishments operating under NSIS to experiment with ergonomics, automation, and crewing to create custom work environments that will protect food and worker safety while increasing productivity. FSIS permits participating establishments to operate at increased line speeds for a limited time to collect data that measures the impact of line speed on workers. FSIS also developed a modified waiver program for poultry establishments operating under NPIS to facilitate a study conducted by third-party experts on the effects of increased line speeds on worker safety, which will inform future rulemaking. Participating poultry establishments are permitted to operate at increased line speeds for a limited time to collect data that measures the impact of line speed on workers. The worker safety study began in 2022 and will extend into 2023.

In addition to poultry and swine, beef slaughter also has seen developments in the optimization of its inspection systems this fiscal year. Under the beef waiver program, FSIS has begun to gather data that may be used to inform future rulemaking. Two additional establishments have fully implemented cattle slaughter waivers this year, for a total of three establishments operating under the beef waiver program.

In 2021, the new sanitation requirements for egg products establishments went into effect. Since the start of 2022, egg product establishments began implementing new sanitation procedures consistent with USDA's meat and poultry regulations. In October 2022, these establishments will also begin implementing HACCP systems. To guide implementation efforts, FSIS updated several of its directives on sanitation tasks to incorporate egg products.

FSIS routinely evaluates the effectiveness of Agency inspection, sampling, and labeling regulations and procedures to ensure they are based on the best available information and are meaningful to public health protection. In 2022, FSIS eliminated the regulations on voluntary pet food certification and the dual labeling requirement (e.g., both pounds and ounces) for certain packages of meat and poultry products. FSIS also discontinued its *Salmonella* sampling and testing for Siluriformes fish.

The voluntary pet food certification regulations allowed FSIS inspectors to provide a fee-for-service certification that certain pet foods were produced under sanitary conditions and met compositional and labeling requirements. FSIS eliminated the regulations because no firms were paying for FSIS certification services for pet food. In addition, the final rule clarified that FDA has sole regulatory jurisdiction over pet food production. The Agency discontinued its *Salmonella* sampling program for Siluriformes fish after concluding that the pathogen does not pose a significant health hazard given the low occurrence of *Salmonella* positives from FSIS sampling and the lack of recent outbreaks attributed to Siluriformes fish. This decision was informed by an FSIS report posted in April describing the decline in *Salmonella* in Siluriformes fish over the last five years. Regarding dual labeling, FSIS determined that it would no longer be necessary for meat or poultry products to bear dual statements of weight that contain at least one pound or pint but less than four pounds or one gallon. FSIS published the final rule after reviewing public comments on the proposed rule that affirmed one statement of measure that provides consumers with sufficient information. FSIS will continue to review inspection, sampling, and labeling programs to ensure the optimal use of Agency resources while continuing to verify that establishments are effectively addressing hazards.

Faced with new challenges and opportunities presented by technology and globalization, FSIS continued considering issues involving the labeling of meat and poultry products made with cultured animal cells, as well as its comprehensive review of the "Product of USA" claim. Consumers rely on labels when purchasing FSIS-regulated products and the authorizing statutes require that these labels are truthful and not misleading. In 2019, FSIS and FDA established a formal agreement regarding the shared regulatory oversight of products made from cultured animal cells. Under this agreement, FDA oversees cell collection, cell banks, and cell growth and differentiation. FSIS would then oversee the further processing, labeling, and packaging of these products. In 2021, FSIS published an advance notice of proposed rulemaking to request comments pertaining to the labeling of meat and poultry products comprised of or containing cultured cells derived from animals subject to the FMIA or the PPIA. FSIS is reviewing the comments, which will inform future rulemaking. There are currently no food products made from cultured animal cells available in U.S. commerce. FSIS is closely coordinating with FDA to ensure that regulatory oversight is in place, so that food developers bring safe and properly labeled products to the market. FSIS and FDA have continued to meet to discuss the science of animal cell culture technology, potential hazards, and labeling considerations.

The Department began its comprehensive review of the "Product of USA" label near the end of 2021. In 2022, FSIS commissioned a survey to analyze U.S. consumers' understanding of the voluntary labeling claim. In 2023, the agency will receive the survey results, which will inform planned rulemaking on this topic. FSIS is committed to ensuring that the "Product of USA" label is truthful and not misleading, understanding that American consumers depend upon accurate, transparent labels to obtain important information about the food they consume.

FSIS also maintained regular communications with industry regarding labeling requirements in 2022, conducting two webinars on general labeling requirements and sharing regular tips for industry in the Agency's weekly Constituent Update to navigate the label approval process. This regular outreach has resulted in more accurate label submissions and turnarounds, averaging five to seven days—sustaining the great progress from previous years.

2.2 Labs and Sampling

FSIS stays abreast of developments in food production technologies and scientific knowledge to ensure its laboratory infrastructure and methods incorporate advancements that will best protect public health and accomplish the Agency's food safety mission. FSIS evaluates and implements new laboratory methods to increase the speed, scope, and accuracy of its laboratory detection technologies.

FSIS continues to evaluate innovative approaches and technologies to improve sampling and testing for food safety hazards to ensure the Agency has the best information it needs for decision making. Through laboratory technological advancements, including rapid microbial diagnostics and whole genome sequencing (WGS), FSIS can more efficiently and effectively detect, characterize, and track food safety hazards in regulated products. In 2022, FSIS' laboratory system analyzed 135,131 samples submitted by inspectors and generated 2,429,738 individual test results on these samples. FSIS also collected 525 retail ground beef samples for *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) O157:H7. Using WGS, FSIS conducted microbiological characterization of 17,849 bacterial isolates reporting 508,563 separate test results. Posted publicly on the FSIS website, these data are used by several stakeholders, including academic researchers, and support foodborne outbreak investigations, policy development, and FSIS inspection to assess establishment food safety systems.

The FSIS laboratory system implemented and improved six methods this year, including:

- Enumeration (i.e., quantification) of *Salmonella* in raw poultry rinses;
- A new *Campylobacter* enrichment protocol to reduce sample analysis time;
- An updated canned foods method to make the procedure easier to follow;
- An updated pesticides method to eliminate a dry ice grinding step, which removed a potential worker hazard, saved dry ice costs of roughly $40,000 annually, and reduced the time to result for pesticide samples;
- An updated multi-residue method to use generic tissue blanks instead of tissue-matched controls, reducing costs and time to result for samples; and
- An update to FSIS' Microbiology Laboratory Guidebook Chapter to increase transparency of the laboratory methods for the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS).

NARMS is a national public health surveillance system through which FSIS partners with State and local public health departments, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and FDA to track changes in antimicrobial susceptibility of select foodborne enteric bacteria found in ill people (CDC), retail meats (FDA), and food animals (FSIS). This year, FSIS collected and analyzed 6,486 cecal samples, 51,069 meat and poultry samples, and 1,053 Siluriformes fish samples as part of this partnership. Samples were tested for *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, and indicator bacteria, and all microorganisms detected were characterized to determine their antimicrobial resistance.

In August, FSIS published a final regulation to expand its accredited laboratory program (ALP), a voluntary fee-based program that provides establishments access to accredited commercial laboratories to perform routine food safety testing services in support of their HACCP-based food safety systems. Effective in 2023, the program will offer laboratory accreditations for the first time in microbiology, along with expanded accreditation choices in residue chemistry. FSIS also modernized the statistics used to evaluate these laboratories. Expanding the ALP to cover more food safety testing offerings provide FSIS-regulated establishments more options and greater confidence in their routine testing, which will aid in the rapid detection of potential food safety hazards.

2.3 Foodborne Illness, Investigations, and Recalls

As a public health agency, 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 progress in reducing food-safety hazards associated with FSIS-regulated products. FSIS' focus is not only on preventing contamination in regulated products in establishments, but also on quickly investigating illnesses potentially associated with regulated products. When illnesses associated with FSIS-regulated products occur, the Agency investigates them and quickly focuses on containing related illnesses. FSIS relies on its collaboration with public health partners, Federal, State, and local governments, as well as with industry, to identify the contaminated product and quickly ensure that FSIS requests that establishments recall adulterated product and take contaminated product out of commerce or that FSIS issues a public health alert notification (e.g., when adulterated product is no longer available for sale) to alert consumers. FSIS uses its consumer complaint monitoring system, the CDC's PulseNet, and other data sources to conduct surveillance and investigate potential foodborne hazards associated with FSIS-regulated products. In 2022, FSIS received and evaluated 1,158 consumer complaints, 193 of which required additional investigations. Twenty-two of

the investigations resulted in actions—14 enforcement and 8 product control and/or public communications (i.e., recalls, public health alerts, detention, or seizure of product).

FSIS monitored 42 illness clusters potentially associated with FSIS regulated products. Evidence obtained in six clusters suggested involvement of FSIS-regulated products, which were subsequently investigated as foodborne illness outbreaks. FSIS coordinated with the CDC and other public health partners to investigate seven foodborne illness outbreaks representing 106 illnesses and 30 hospitalizations (see table below). Of the seven investigations, three were investigations for Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC), three for *Salmonella*, and one for *Clostridium botulinum*. Two outbreaks led to FSIS public communications; one outbreak led to both a public health alert (PHA) and a recall: and one led to a PHA. FSIS issues communications related to outbreak investigations when there is specific and actionable information to share with the public. FSIS posted seven after-action review reports highlighting illness outbreak lessons learned on the Agency website.

There was a total of 46 recalls in 2022: 9 beef, 12 poultry, 13 pork, 2 Siluriformes fish, 1 lamb, and 9 involving multiple species. A total of 4,845,599 pounds of meat, poultry, and egg products were recalled. Out of the 46 total recalls, 40 were considered Class I (reasonable probability that eating the food will cause serious adverse health consequences or death), and 6 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). Of the 46 recalls, 8 were directly related to possible microbiological contamination caused by the presence of *Listeria monocytogenes (Lm)*; 2 were in response to possible microbiological contamination caused by the presence of STEC; 1 was due to possible contamination of product by *Salmonella*; 1 was due to possible contamination of product by *Bacillus cereus*; 7 were due to extraneous material contamination; 11 were due to undeclared allergens in the product; and the remaining 16 were in response to undeclared or unapproved substances, processing deviations, product produced without benefit of inspection, or product imported without receiving FSIS reinspection. FSIS also issued 23 PHAs in 2022. 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).

2.4 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 food safety violations.

FSIS conducted 13,439 surveillance activities in 2022. These surveillance activities focused on examination of food safety and food defense activities in accordance with Agency policy and directives. The Agency detained 3,977,233 pounds of noncompliant meat, poultry, and egg products in commerce; facilitated the removal of 434,039 pounds of misbranded and/or adulterated meat, poultry, and egg products from commerce through voluntary destruction. In 2022, FSIS conducted 852 investigations in response to alleged violations of the FMIA, PPIA, or EPIA, 92 percent of which were based on food safety violations. Additionally, the investigative findings and evidence collected and documented supported criminal and civil prosecutions as well as other enforcement actions. In 2023, FSIS intends to target a larger number of high-risk in-commerce facilities for surveillance and conduct follow-up investigations, as warranted, to reduce the rate of food safety violations. In 2022, FSIS also continued to verify retail compliance with beef grinding recordkeeping requirements and expand its outreach and education to improve compliance, conducting 1,712 beef grinding record verifications this year. Through collaboration with public health and industry partners, FSIS developed a concise, plain-language guidance document for beef grinding that will be distributed in 2023 through partnerships with trade associations and State and local health officials.

2.5 Food Defense

Food defense is the protection of food products from contamination or adulteration intended to cause public health harm or economic disruption. FSIS promotes food defense through guidance documents and tools, outreach, and education to industry to facilitate the adoption of effective risk mitigation strategies. In regulated establishments,

these efforts include monitoring to ensure (1) establishments have adopted food defense practices; and (2) Agency personnel have integrated food defense principles, concepts, and practices into their daily activities.

Food defense is also a key in-commerce surveillance activity that strives to protect food from acts of intentional adulteration or in response to natural disasters to ensure adulterated or misbranded products do not enter commerce. In 2022, FSIS conducted 11,263 food defense surveillances, including national special security events such as Super Bowl LVI in Los Angeles, California, and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Houston, Texas. During these activities, FSIS observed more than 97 percent of firms visited had implemented food defense practices. These activities look to identify potential vulnerabilities that increase the risk of intentional adulteration and inform potential FSIS actions that could reduce these risks.

During 2022, FSIS conducted emergency response activities related to two tornados, three wildfires, and two winter snowstorms. FSIS monitored flooding, electrical outages, and structural damage to determine if any federally regulated distributors or warehouses were impacted, and to verify that affected meat, poultry, and egg products were handled appropriately.

FSIS conducts food defense vulnerability assessments to identify food defense countermeasures and mitigation strategies to prevent or reduce the impact of an intentional attack on the food supply. They also help identify research gaps and strengthen communication and collaboration between government and industry partners. In 2022, FSIS completed its biennial survey report for the vulnerability assessment framework, a risk-based research methodology to prioritize updates and new assessments.

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. In the United States, plants have the option to apply for Federal or State inspection. 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, EPIA, and HMSA. In 2022, FSIS continued to fund 50 percent of State MPI programs—over $60 million—to maintain cost-effective State inspection. The MPI program supported 1,450 State-inspected establishments and 2,021 custom-exempt facilities across the 29 State MPI programs currently operating, including the two new States—Oregon and Arkansas—that joined this year. All of the establishments participating in MPI programs are small or very small in size.

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 can operate as federally inspected facilities under specific conditions and ship their product in interstate commerce. In 2022, FSIS finalized a CIS agreement with Montana for a total number of 10 States participating in the CIS program by the end of 2022. In addition to Montana, FSIS has agreements with Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wisconsin. By the end of the fiscal year, there were a total of 113 establishments participating in CIS Programs.

FSIS assessed the laboratory capabilities of the States currently participating in the State MPI and CIS programs and found them to be in good standing. FSIS completed initial assessments of laboratory capabilities for the two new States—Oregon and Arkansas—and a full audit will be carried out during 2023. FSIS also conducted annual reviews of 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 nine State MPI programs: Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin. FSIS continued to ensure State MPI programs complied with civil rights laws and Agency policies and practices through their annual self-assessments.

In 2022, FSIS began virtual financial roundtable discussions to share information, boost outreach, and foster collaboration with the CIS program State agencies. These roundtables focus on sharing information regarding the States' budget process and the preparation of required financial reports and documentation. They also create a platform for States to ask questions and share lessons learned with one another as well as with FSIS subject matter experts.

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 imported from more than 35 countries, and FSIS-regulated establishments export U.S. product to more than 150 countries worldwide. The Agency must also meet food safety commitments that the United States has made in trade agreements and trade protocols, as well as obligations as members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Codex Alimentarius. 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 United States. 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. During 2022, FSIS finalized equivalence determinations for Poland's eligibility to export poultry products; Croatia's eligibility to export thermally-processed – commercially sterile beef products; the Republic of Korea's eligibility to export processed duck products; Vietnam's eligibility to export processed Siluriformes fish products; Ireland and the United Kingdom's eligibility to export raw sheep and mutton products; the Dominican Republic's eligibility to export raw intact beef products; and Lithuania's eligibility to export egg products and additional processed beef and pork products. FSIS also notified 43 countries of the process for maintaining eligibility to export egg substitutes and freeze-dried egg products to the U.S. as preparation for the transition of jurisdiction of these products from FDA to FSIS in 2024.

Each year, FSIS completes verification audits to ensure compliance with equivalence requirements of the FMIA, PPIA, EPIA, and HMSA. These audits represent the Agency's risk-based approach to verifying the implementation of equivalent food safety requirements for products imported into the U.S. Due to international pandemic travel restrictions, FSIS continued using a remote audit process developed in 2021, where necessary. For countries requiring direct observation, the Agency identified ways to streamline portions of the process by using virtual platforms to conduct meetings when feasible. A combination of on-site and virtual audits has now become standard practice. This year, FSIS completed ongoing equivalence verification audits in the following 20 countries: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Japan, The Republic of Korea, Lithuania, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay. FSIS also completed audits in Paraguay to determine possible reinstatement of equivalence.

FSIS regularly updates two tools 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. The Agency also updates its Public Health Information System (PHIS) with this information, enabling FSIS inspectors to be aware of and plan for changes to eligibility that may impact import reinspection duties. FSIS reinspects all commercial shipments of meat, poultry, and egg products imported to the U.S. from eligible foreign countries at import inspection establishments. During 2022, importers presented approximately 5.3 billion pounds of meat and poultry products to FSIS for reinspection and approximately 9.6 million pounds of egg products. FSIS continued automated data exchange capabilities with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, with more than 250 customs brokers participating in the data exchange and FSIS receiving 90 percent of all import applications electronically.

FSIS also plays a role when U.S. exports are denied entry to another country or rejected by overseas customers and returned. FSIS extensively reviews requests for such products to return to U.S. commerce to identify possible food defense and food safety concerns. When necessary, FSIS coordinates reinspection of shipments to ensure returning products are safe. In 2022, FSIS reviewed applications to return approximately 540 shipments of exported meat, poultry, and egg products weighing approximately 16 million pounds.

The tables below provide the 2022 import statistics for meat, poultry, and egg products:

Table FSIS-18 Imported Meat and Poultry Product

2021	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]
TOTAL [5]	**5,329,689,411**	**438,167,864**	**57,171,131**	**51,031,293**	**5,323,549,573**

Table FSIS-19 Imported Egg Product

2021	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]
TOTAL [5]	**9,629,816**	**3,014,358**	**83,505**	**83,253**	**9,629,564**

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.

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 its expertise and 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 two onsite audits conducted by foreign governments—Taiwan (pork) and the Republic of Korea (beef and pork)—to verify that FSIS' inspection system meets those countries' requirements.

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 2022, FSIS resolved issues with shipments of U.S. meat and poultry products entering Canada, China, the European Union, Korea, Mexico, South Africa, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom, saving millions of dollars of product. Through 2022, FSIS held bilateral technical meetings with a total of 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.

FSIS plans to continue its outreach activities to facilitate the understanding of FSIS food safety policies, strategies, and import criteria, as well as to facilitate FSIS compliance with foreign countries' import conditions and other international obligations. In 2022, 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 70 participants from 22 countries. 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. Such outreach and technical consultations with foreign governments can 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 strengthen U.S. and

international food safety standards and promote regulatory cooperation among domestic and foreign audiences. FSIS will continue to proactively conduct outreach through various means, such as technical exchanges, meetings with foreign government officials and organizations, and educational seminars.

FSIS also actively works to ensure U.S. perspectives are reflected in international food safety forums. FSIS participated in international food safety work groups such as Codex Alimentarius, the World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, WTO, and the Asian Pacific Economic Council. In 2022, FSIS participated as delegates or alternate delegates 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 also contributed to the Ad Hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on antimicrobial resistance and chaired the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, leading discussion among 106 countries to adopt revised guidelines for the management of microbiological foodborne outbreaks.

5. Public Health Data Communication Infrastructure System

FSIS continues to try to build robust, secure, adaptable, and on-demand IT services. Since January 2020, FSIS has successfully migrated several mission critical applications to cloud systems, including PHIS, the FSIS public website, the analytics portal, and the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS).

For over a decade, PHIS has integrated FSIS data sources to support a comprehensive, timely, and reliable data-driven approach to FSIS inspection. PHIS contains data that indicates how well establishments maintain food safety process control and implement food safety programs. The data also highlight aspects of establishments' food safety systems that may require more focused attention. These data are readily available to FSIS personnel who conduct in-plant inspections, public health risk evaluations, and food safety assessments to verify that regulated establishments have adequate systems. FSIS employees reference PHIS regularly to develop new tools and processes that will help in-plant personnel focus on preventing food safety hazards. Through improved data quality, reporting, management controls, and use, this virtual platform has enabled FSIS to communicate more effectively internally as well as with industry. PHIS is a valuable tool that allows FSIS to stay ahead of food safety threats by identifying emerging trends, patterns, and anomalies in data.

PHIS infrastructure migration to the cloud in March resulted in more informative, user-friendly reports that include filters and new information, such as WGS results. The transition of PHIS to the new government cloud system has boosted security, decreased operating expenses, and delivered more reliable and secure services to regular users. To prepare for the transition, FSIS built out an industry test environment, encouraging industry stakeholders to test their connections and processes over a month in advance of its official launch. Shortly after the transition, FSIS deployed an upgraded establishment profile page. The new page simplified the establishment dashboard, creating a streamlined look to enhance the user experience. The update also made certain data elements mandatory so that the Agency can continue to modernize the system to populate in-plant personnel tasks as originally envisioned, with added flexibility and features that allow industry to update certain data elements with approval from IPP. Other updates to PHIS included the export module expansion and enhanced industry reports. In 2022, FSIS expanded the PHIS export module to four additional countries and territories—Canada, French Polynesia (Tahiti), St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Turks and Caicos Islands—for a total of 84 countries and territories using the PHIS export module to generate digitally signed export certificates. FSIS also initiated a switch to permit the printing of export certificates on plain paper instead of specialized security paper, providing cost and time savings for the Agency and industry by reducing paperwork. Canada has taken notable advantage of the PHIS export certificate system, with FSIS processing more than 15,000 export certificates for the country in the last three and a half months of the fiscal year. These improvements will decrease the time it takes to issue export certificates while increasing the security around those certificates. These improvements will also provide the Agency with the ability to track exports, identify trends, and facilitate recalls when needed. In addition, these changes will serve as a gateway to move toward an electronic process of directly transferring data to many of the Agency's trading partners (e-certification), creating further efficiencies and enhanced security. These efforts will be complemented by work to add countries from which FSIS receives import electronic certification directly into PHIS.

PHIS is also available to State and regulated industry users. In 2022, FSIS continued to work with State MPI program directors on ongoing data development of enhancements to the State PHIS functionality, which mirrors

the Federal PHIS. FSIS also worked with States on the web-based data system—the State review and communication tool—to improve the review process for making "at least equal to" determinations concerning State MPI programs and improve data collection and management from non-PHIS users. These ongoing communications resulted in increased investments to support the refinement of FSIS data warehousing capabilities for State MPI programs.

FSIS strives to report laboratory sampling result data as quickly as possible by continuously improving the electronic LIMS, which reports results through PHIS to inspectors and industry. This year, FSIS modernized and enhanced the capabilities of its multi-terabyte LIMS data as a result of cloud conversion and the creation of an automated dashboard and notification system, which reduced the time from sample receipt to result reporting. The cloud transition eliminated the on-premises vulnerable software, old hardware, and unsupported operating systems, resulting in improved reporting performance and security. Other IT improvements included the adoption of LincPass use as part of multi-factor authentication for the LabWare application; consolidating LIMS functions governing the microbiology sample preparation process; and creating the necessary tools to record, import, and report *Salmonella* enumeration results to industry and the Agency.

FSIS also disseminated updated laptops to a significant portion of its workforce that relies on connectivity when performing key field visits and communications tasks.

The Agency continues to investigate and leverage the most advanced commercial network technologies and data services to provide connectivity to inspection personnel. Over the next two years, FSIS hopes to move its entire suite of applications from on premise locations to the cloud infrastructure. Migrating the Agency's key applications and services to secure cloud systems places the Agency forward facing on the cutting edge of technology.

6. Cross-Cutting Accomplishments

In 2022, FSIS continued to enhance communication of key information and analyses among FSIS employees, consumers, industry, government partners, and other stakeholders.

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.

In 2022, FSIS released two new establishment-specific datasets on inspection tasks pertaining to humane handling and good commercial practices. Being the first datasets released by USDA containing unstructured text, they represent an important step forward in supporting transparency and accountability. Notably, these proactive postings contributed to a reduction of incoming Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests by more than 40 percent this fiscal year. With fewer incoming FOIA requests, FSIS was able to concentrate staff time and attention on reducing the overall FOIA backlog by 49 percent. Collectively, this saved Agency resources that typically accompany FOIA requests and possible litigation costs.

FSIS also added a new aggregate quarterly report that provides a yearlong snapshot of livestock humane handling activities at federally inspected establishments by quarter, district, and HACCP size. The report includes elements such as the number of slaughter establishments, slaughter volume (in heads), number of humane handling tasks performed and percentage noncompliant, number of suspensions and notices of intended enforcement, and time spent on humane handling activities. The report reflects data from the four most recent fiscal quarters.

In July 2022, FSIS published expanded establishment-specific datasets on laboratory sampling that include the "FSIS number"—a unique identifier assigned to pathogen isolates that have been characterized using WGS—and allele codes with date stamps. The FSIS number is now applied to sampling results for *Lm*, *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, and STEC. At this time, the allele codes with date stamps are only applied for *Lm*, *Salmonella*, and STEC. Additionally, FSIS added a new laboratory sampling establishment-specific dataset for raw pork products,

which contains similar information as other laboratory sampling establishment-specific datasets, such as pathogen test results and isolate characterization.

Promoting data sharing internally ensures that offices and teams Agencywide are using and understanding the most up-to-date and relevant data in their programs and decisions. FSIS' sixth annual conference, "Data-Driven: Food Safety Led by Science," showcased how data informs FSIS' food safety and public health mission and featured presentations from district, field, and headquarters personnel. The 21 presentations and 5 roundtable discussions had an audience of more than 300 FSIS employees—nearly a 30 percent increase in attendance from the previous year.

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. Engaging with Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial stakeholders at meetings, conferences, and in 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.

FSIS has two advisory committees—the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection (NACMPI) and NACMCF. The role of NACMPI is to advise 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 State and local government officials and members from academia, states, public health organizations, and industry and consumer organizations, and serves as a forum for sharing ideas and insight about issues or policies related to the safety or efficacy of products to be marketed to American consumers. NACMCF provides impartial scientific advice to Federal food safety agencies, including FSIS, FDA, and CDC. NACMCF's reports often serve as foundations for regulations and programs aimed at reducing foodborne disease and enhancing public health. This year, charters for both NACMPI and NACMCF were re-established. Although NACMPI did not hold a meeting in 2022, a virtual public meeting will take place in 2023. FSIS will request the committee provide suggestions on ways to improve outreach and equity for new and existing establishments, including those in underserved communities while strengthening the food supply chain and ensuring compliance with food safety regulations.

NACMCF held four meetings throughout 2022, issuing two new work charges including "Enhancing *Salmonella* Control in Poultry Products." NACMCF held a public meeting in November 2022 to discuss and vote on adopting a report on the *Salmonella* charge, which will contribute directly to FSIS' efforts to reduce *Salmonella* illnesses attributable to poultry.

In August, FSIS signed an updated memorandum of understanding (MOU) on worker safety with OSHA. The updated MOU provides guidance over the next five years on how both agencies will collaborate to advance worker safety through annual trainings, information sharing, and identifying workplace hazards.

FSIS also works closely with FDA and CDC on numerous cross-disciplinary collaborations. In March, FSIS and CDC signed a new MOU to enhance data sharing and coordinating critically important public health activities. FSIS also updated its MOU with FDA to improve coordination on regulatory efforts with dual jurisdiction establishments. FSIS and FDA routinely share *Lm,* WGS, harborage, and cross contamination data in dual jurisdiction establishments, which has led to more efficient use of resources and collaboration on sampling priorities and food safety actions. Through participating in the Conference for Food Protection (CFP), FSIS assisted in the review of the FDA Food Code relevant to meat, poultry, and egg products. Though the conference has no formal regulatory authority, it significantly influences food safety guidance, model laws, and regulations among all government agencies and minimizes disparate interpretations and implementation.
FSIS and FDA also work closely together to administer FERN, a network of food testing laboratories consisting of more than 160 Federal, State, local, and Tribal laboratories that test for microbiological, chemical, and radiological contaminants in foods. Cooperative agreements between FSIS and State laboratories have increased States' capacities and capabilities for testing. The network has worked to protect the food system through targeted surveillance activities associated with imported foods, retail samples, and national special security events. This

year, FERN labs added two new methods for analyzing meat and tested 5,106 samples from retail: 2,133 microbiology samples, 2,514 chemistry samples, and 459 radiochemistry samples.

All three agencies work together through the Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC), which addresses cross-cutting priorities for food safety data collection, analysis, and use. IFSAC's current focus is foodborne illness source attribution—the process of estimating the most common food sources responsible for specific foodborne illnesses. In addition to releasing its annual report, the group published an article on the structural factors and characteristics of outbreaks reported during 2009-2018, considering the potential biases in foodborne outbreak-based source attribution. FSIS, CDC, and FDA also work together through the Interagency Foodborne Outbreak Response Collaboration (IFORC) to improve coordination of Federal foodborne-outbreak responsibilities. The IFORC steering committee met in March to discuss reoccurring, emerging, and persisting strains and after-action reviews and explored options for shared virtual workspaces.

In addition, the three agencies work together on the Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet). FoodNet was established in July 1996 and accomplishes its work through active surveillance; surveys of laboratories, physicians, and the general population; and population-based epidemiologic studies. The network conducts surveillance for *Campylobacter*, *Cryptosporidium*, *Cyclospora*, *Lm*, *Salmonella*, STEC O157 and non-O157, *Shigella*, *Vibrio*, and *Yersinia* infections diagnosed by laboratory testing samples from patients.

The Interagency Collaboration on Genomics for Food and Feed Safety is another collaboration among CDC, FDA, FSIS, USDA's ARS and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and the National Center for Biotechnology Information at the National Institutes of Health. In March 2022, the group published an article in the peer-reviewed Journal of Food Protection summarizing the transition to WGS to detect and characterize pathogens commonly transmitted by food and to identify their sources and how the agencies systematically harmonized the differences in WGS approaches. The transition to WGS improves FSIS' food safety systems through the ability to identify outbreaks, alert the public, and identify gaps in FSIS-regulated food safety systems that would not otherwise be recognized.

Finally, FSIS, CDC, and FDA coordinate closely on outreach to retailers regarding pathogen controls and technologies to enhance the ability to link foodborne outbreaks to specific food sources or practices (e.g., grinding logs, shopper cards, smart labels, etc.). To promote safe food handling among consumers, the agencies meet weekly to collaborate on a shared website and social media accounts under FoodSafety.gov.

6.3 Research and Studies

While FSIS is not a research funding organization, it recognizes the importance of keeping abreast of the latest scientific endeavors as well as its role in promoting research in areas important to the FSIS mission. Updated annually, FSIS' list of research priorities is informed by outbreaks, laboratory data, and findings in the field. For 2022, FSIS listed a total of 20 research priorities. These priorities are presented as suggestions for researchers interested in pursuing food safety objectives relevant to the Agency. FSIS worked closely with USDA partners in ARS and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture to promote these priorities. In 2022, FSIS funded an interagency agreement with ARS to fill data gaps and generate scientific information needed to update laboratory system methods. Nine projects were initiated under the agreement this year. In May, FSIS and ARS held a joint virtual conference, bringing together food safety scientists from FSIS, ARS, FDA, and CDC to discuss studies being conducted under the agreement, as well as emerging food safety concerns and proposed future research to protect public health. FSIS established a new cooperative agreement this year with Michigan State University to close a data gap on the safe production of salami.

FSIS, through USDA's Office of Food Safety, continued its food safety fellowship program with the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education. The program is integral in strengthening partnerships with academia and staying on the cutting edge of science and research while educating the next generation of food safety scientists. In 2022, FSIS selected six students to be food safety fellows, with two of the six students attending minority serving institutions.

Each year, FSIS also conducts several scientific and behavior studies on food safety. Of note this year, FSIS released the preliminary results from an exploratory study on sampling methods for beef trim.

FSIS, in collaboration with ARS, FDA, and the Environmental Protection Agency, conducts periodic surveys for dioxins in meat and poultry. In April, FSIS published the 2018-2019 survey: Dioxins and Dioxin-Like Compounds in the U.S. Domestic Meat and Poultry Supply. Dioxins and dioxin-like compounds are a group of chemical compounds that are persistent organic pollutants in the environment and are by-products of burning or various industrial processes. In comparison to previous surveys, dioxin and dioxin-like compounds were 30 percent lower in young chickens and young turkeys, 16 percent lower in market hogs, and 26 percent higher in steers/heifers. The 2018-2019 survey included Siluriformes fish for the first time. Given the long and consistent decline of dioxin and dioxin-like compounds in poultry, FSIS is considering focusing a potential future survey on cattle, swine, and Siluriformes fish.

In 2022, FSIS continued its in-field study to determine if a manual "cloth" surface sampling method developed by ARS could replace the current "N60" excision sampling method for beef manufacturing trimmings. Initiated last year, the cloth improves inspector safety by removing the need for knives to collect these samples and increases efficiency by reducing the time needed to perform the sampling. FSIS sampled product from the same production lot of beef manufactured trimmings using both the cloth and N60 method through 2022, collecting more than 3,500 paired samples. It was observed that the cloth recovered more total aerobic bacteria and similar *Salmonella* levels compared to the N60 method, supporting plans to replace N60 sampling of beef manufacturing trimmings with cloth sampling.

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. To best develop targeted public health messaging, FSIS conducts in-depth research into human behavior. In 2022, FSIS examined consumers in a test kitchen preparing a breakfast meal with sausage, eggs, and fruit salad. By coordinating with FDA and CDC on the research approach and products, FSIS is able to maximize the amount of data obtained beyond our own regulated products. The study is ongoing, and results should offer unique behavioral insights and data to inform future food safety messaging. In February, FSIS released results from a study conducted on safe handling instructions (SHI) on food labels. The label is required to appear on the packaging of all raw or partially cooked meat and poultry products intended for sale. It advises consumers on the four key food safety steps: clean (including handwashing), separate (avoid cross-contamination), cook food thoroughly, and chill (refrigerate leftovers). In 2014, NACMPI recommended FSIS pursue changes in its existing SHI label to reflect updated guidance and conduct consumer research to evaluate new labels' effectiveness. The SHI label had not been updated since its initial implementation in 1994. The study evaluated consumer reaction to three revised SHI labels on product packaging to determine if the revised labels resulted in greater adherence to safe handling steps. The study found that the revised SHI labels did not perform better than the current SHI label in drawing the attention of consumers or in consumers following the instructions. The results showed that message delivery methods and targeting is necessary to influence consumer behavior. At the end of 2022, the agency began researching alternatives to the SHI label that will result in greater consumer adherence to safe food handling behaviors.

6.4 Raise Consumer Awareness of Food Safety

FSIS' actions to protect public health extend to consumers through strategic outreach and education activities. FSIS provides safe food handling guidance to consumers nationwide to prevent foodborne illness. In addition to hosting events and pitching food safety topics to the media, FSIS disseminates educational resources through its website and social media accounts. 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. The Agency continuously evaluates its methods to expand the reach of its messaging. FSIS will continue to use public service announcements, media outreach, events, partnerships, and social media campaigns to convey food safety information to all consumers.

In 2022, FSIS proactively pitched media outlets to share vital food safety information, reaching more than 31 million consumers through numerous high-profile outlets. Successful messaging during annual events—including holidays or emergency situations such as power outages and natural disasters—resulted in a greater number of

consumer inquiries, FoodKeeper app downloads, and food thermometer requests this year. Through its weekly Constituent Update newsletter, FSIS continued to highlight key policy, programmatic, and consumer education updates relevant to more than 50,000 subscribers that include industry, consumers, academia, and the media.

FSIS customer service representatives on the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline respond to consumer food safety inquiries in English and Spanish through a toll-free phone number, live chat, email, and self-service information database. During 2022, FSIS responded to 10,210 inquiries, and more than 6 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 and/or more intricate questions in a timely manner.

FSIS' new website, since launching in 2021, has improved the Agency's digital communications and the user experience for site visitors. Overall, FSIS website traffic increased by more than 19 percent, with more than 18.5 million pageviews in 2022. The ongoing growth in website traffic continues to reflect the success of the redesign, as well as a more cohesive approach to leveraging social media, recruitment tools, and email subscriptions to promote online resources to targeted audiences. Additionally, in 2022, FSIS deployed 10 website updates to improve features and update underlying systems.

During 2022, FSIS used a variety of social media platforms—Twitter (English and Spanish), Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram—to broaden engagement with key stakeholders and amplify Agency messaging on food recalls, foodborne illness, and safe food handling practices. In 2022, FSIS' overall engagement rate grew by 25 percent compared to the previous year, indicating a strong and growing interest in Agency messaging. While a collaborative effort with CDC and FDA, FSIS is charged with managing the FoodSafety.gov Facebook account, which continues to see audience growth. The FSIS Twitter account is the largest of all USDA Twitter accounts, with more than 1 million followers.

FSIS' FoodKeeper mobile app remains a relevant, useful, and effective tool to educate consumers on proper food storage of more than 650 foods, safe food handling behaviors, and food waste. The app was downloaded by more than 54,000 devices this year, bringing the cumulative download totals of the application to 390,000 since its launch in April 2015.

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, Evaluation, and Evidence Committee (PEEC) and ERM committees, which are 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-20 KPI- Salmonella Reduction

Strategic Objective 4.3		**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**
***Salmonella* Reduction**	Results	-	-	-	-	-
4.3.1 Reduction in the proportion of poultry samples with *Salmonella* serotypes commonly associated with human illness	Target	3%	4%	6%	8%	10%

Expected Performance Progress Towards the Achievement of Strategic Objectives:
Strategic Objective 4.3: Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health

Salmonella Reduction: In 2023, FSIS published a proposed framework for a new strategy to reduce *Salmonella* illnesses attributable to poultry. The framework under consideration includes requiring that incoming flocks be tested for *Salmonella* before entering the establishment, enhancing establishment process control monitoring and FSIS verification, and implementing an enforceable final product standard. FSIS solicited public comment on the proposal at a public meeting and in writing. The agency will continue to engage with stakeholders as it refines the proposed strategy based on public comment; recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods; and ongoing risk assessments, data collection, and analysis. FSIS intends to publish proposed rules and policies implementing the revised strategy in 2023, with the goal of finalizing any rules by mid-2024.