

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. 97-031N]

Australia's Pilot Proposal for Its Export-Meat Inspection Program

AGENCY: Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) announces that it is making available for public comment an Australian proposal for a pilot program intended to demonstrate the equivalence of Australia's proposed system of export meat inspection with traditional meat inspection, which is performed by Government inspectors. This proposal is described in a document entitled "Summary of Australia's Project 2 Proposal," prepared by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service.

For the duration of the pilot program, the Australian Government requests that meat from the plants participating in the pilot maintain access to export markets, including the United States. FSIS seeks public comment on whether the inspection program detailed in the Australian proposal would ensure equivalence and the safety, wholesomeness, and truthful labeling of product produced under such a system.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before July 29, 1997.

ADDRESSES: An electronic version of the Australian document is available online at FSIS's homepage at <http://www.usda.gov/fsis>. Hard copies of the document are available from the FSIS Docket Clerk in the FSIS Docket Room, Room 102 Cotton Annex, 300 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3700, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Send comments on the Australian proposal to FSIS Docket Clerk, Docket

#97-031N, at the above address.

Comments received will be available for public inspection in the FSIS Docket Room during the above-stated hours.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Mark Manis, Director, International Policy Development Division, Office of Policy, Program Development, and Evaluation; (202) 720-6400, mark.manis@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

As a result of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (commonly referred to as the "SPS Agreement"), contracting parties, including the United States, are committed to harmonizing their human, animal, and plant health import requirements by basing their sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) import requirements on "equivalent" sanitary measures or standards. Among other things, the SPS Agreement obliges the United States to respond to requests by other contracting parties to establish the equivalency of specified meat and poultry processing measures with those of the United States.

The Australian Government has requested that the United States and certain other governments consider its proposal to pilot-test a revised meat inspection system. This revised system reorients inspection to focus on pathogenic microorganisms and chemical residues. The HACCP-based pilot program is called "Project 2." The proposal is described in a document entitled "Summary of Australia's Project 2 Proposal," prepared by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service.

Of particular interest to the United States is the aspect of the pilot program that replaces traditional Government meat inspection with inspection by plant employees under stringent Government oversight. For the duration of the project, the Australian Government requests that meat from the four affected plants participating in the pilot maintain access to export markets, including the United States.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), U.S. Department of Agriculture, solicits public comment on Australia's "Project 2" proposal. Does the proposal provide adequate Government oversight to ensure equivalence and the safety,

wholesomeness, and truthful labeling of product produced under such a system?

FSIS will take public comment into account in evaluating the Australian proposal. The Agency's decision will be announced in a notice in the **Federal Register** at the end of the public comment period.

Done at Washington, D.C., on: May 23, 1997.

Thomas J. Billy,

Administrator, Food Safety and Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 97-14116 Filed 5-29-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. 97-038 N]

National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods; HACCP Subcommittee Meeting

The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Subcommittee of the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) will hold a meeting on June 3, 1997, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in Suite 3709, West Franklin Court Building, 1099 14th Street, NW., Washington, DC 20250-3700.

NACMCF provides advice and recommendations to the Secretaries of Agriculture and Health and Human Services concerning the development of microbiological criteria by which the safety and wholesomeness of food can be addressed. This includes criteria pertaining to microorganisms that indicate whether food has been produced and transported using good manufacturing practices.

NACMCF decided at its April 2-4, 1997, meeting that the HACCP Subcommittee should meet to finalize its draft document entitled Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Application Guidelines before the full committee meets in August 1997 in Seattle, Washington. The Subcommittee meeting is open to the public on a space-available basis. Interested persons may file comments before and after the meeting takes place. Address your comments to Dr. Richard L. Ellis, Director, Scientific Research Oversight Staff, Department of