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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. 01-017N]

Codex Alimentarius Commission: 24th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex)

AGENCY: Office of the Under Secretary for Food Safety, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting, request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Office of the Under Secretary for Food Safety, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is sponsoring a public meeting on June 6th, 2001.¹ The purpose of this meeting is to provide information and receive public comments on agenda items that will be discussed at the Twenty-fourth Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which will be held in Geneva, Switzerland from July 2-7, 2001. The Under Secretary recognizes the importance of providing interested parties with information about the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

DATES: The public meeting is scheduled for June 6, 2001, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The public meeting will be held in the Franklin-Adams Room at the Washington Plaza Hotel, 10 Thomas Circle, Washington, DC. 20005. To review copies of the documents referenced in this notice, contact the Food Safety and Inspection Service Docket Room, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Room 102, Cotton Annex, 300 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3700. The documents will also be accessible via the World Wide Web at the following address: <http://www.codexalimentarius.net/cac24/>

¹ FSIS is filing this notice for immediate public inspection on June 5, 2001 because FSIS was not able to publish notification in advance of this public meeting in the Federal Register due to late changes to the agenda.

doctiste.htm. Submit one original and two copies of written comments to the FSIS Docket Room at the address above and reference docket number 01-017N. All comments submitted in response to this notice will be available for public inspection in the FSIS Docket Room between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: F. Edward Scarbrough, Ph.D., U.S. Manager for Codex Alimentarius, U.S. Codex Office, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Room 4861, South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250; Telephone (202) 205-7760, Fax: (202) 720-3157.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) was established in 1962 by two United Nations organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Codex is the major international organization for encouraging fair international trade in food and protecting the health and economic interests of consumers. Through adoption of food standards, codes of practice, and other guidelines developed by its committees, and by promoting their adoption and implementation by governments, Codex seeks to ensure that the world's food supply is sound, wholesome, free from adulteration, and correctly labeled. Codex meets biennially. The Executive Committee serves as the executive body of Codex between the biennial meetings.

The provisional agenda items and the relevant documents to be discussed during the public meeting are:

1. Election of Officers of the Commission and appointment of Regional Coordinators, Document ALINORM 01/2
2. Report by the Chairperson on the Forty-seventh and Forty-eighth Sessions of the Executive Committee, Documents ALINORM 01/3 and ALINORM 01/4
3. Report on the financial situation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme for 2000/01 and 2002/03, Document ALINORM 01/5
4. Report by the Secretariat on relations between the Codex Alimentarius Commission and, (a) Other international intergovernmental organizations Part I, (b) International

non-governmental organizations Part II, Document ALINORM 01/8

5. Consideration of matters arising from FAO and WHO Conferences and Governing Bodies, Document ALINORM 01/7

6. Consideration of the Draft Strategic Framework, Proposed Draft Medium Term Plan 2003-2007 and Chairperson's Action Plan, Document ALINORM 01/6

7. Risk analysis policies of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Document ALINORM 01/9

8. Consideration of proposed amendments to the Procedural Manual of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, Document ALINORM 01/10

9. Consideration of Codex standards and related texts, (a) Draft standards and related texts at Step 8 or equivalent Part I, (b) Proposed draft standards and related texts at Step 5 Part II, (c) Proposals to elaborate new standards and/or related texts Part III, Document ALINORM 01/21

10. Matters arising from reports of Codex Committees and Task Forces Part IV, Document ALINORM 01/21

11. Codex Committees and ad hoc Task Forces, (a) Designation of Host Governments Part I, (b) Proposed schedule of Codex Sessions 2002-2003, Document ALINORM 01/16

Public Meeting

At the June 6th public meeting, the agenda items will be described and discussed, and attendees will hear brief descriptions of the issues and will have the opportunity to pose questions and offer comments.

Additional Public Notification

Public awareness of all segments of rulemaking and policy development is important. Consequently, in an effort to better ensure that minorities, women, and persons with disabilities are aware of this notice, FSIS will announce it and provide copies of this **Federal Register** publication in the FSIS Constituent Update. FSIS provides a weekly FSIS Constituent Update, which is communicated via fax to over 300 organizations and individuals. In addition, the update is available on-line through the FSIS web page located at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov>. The update is used to provide information regarding FSIS policies, procedures, regulations, **Federal Register** notices, FSIS public meetings, recalls, and any other types of information that could affect or would

be of interest to our constituents/stakeholders. The constituent fax list consists of industry, trade, and farm groups, consumer interest groups, allied health professionals, scientific professionals, and other individuals that have requested to be included. Through these various channels, FSIS is able to provide information to a much broader, more diverse audience. For more information and to be added to the constituent fax list, fax your request to the Congressional and Public Affairs Office, at (202) 720-5704.

Done at Washington, DC on May 24, 2001.

F. Edward Scarbrough,

U.S. Manager for Codex Alimentarius.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. 00-035N]

FSIS—A Public Health Approach to Processing Inspection

AGENCY: Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) will hold a public meeting, which is intended to be the first in a series, on an FSIS initiative to improve its inspection of processed meat and poultry products. At the first meeting, the Agency will provide an overview of the Agency's use of risk analysis in protecting public health. The Agency will also review its Strategic Plan for 2000-2005, and discuss its view of the key attributes of a public health regulatory agency. The Agency will then discuss the next steps that it proposes to take to develop an inspection system that minimizes the risks from processed products while making optimal use of processing inspection resources, and will invite comments on these next steps and on how best to achieve the Agency's objectives.

DATES: The public meeting is scheduled for June 7, 2001, from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn—Capitol, 550 "C" Street, SW., Washington, DC 20024.

Comments: FSIS welcomes comments at any time on the topics to be discussed at the public meeting, and particularly on the Agency's strategic plan. Please send an original and two copies of comments to the Food Safety and

Inspection Service Docket Clerk: Docket #00-035N, Room 102 Cotton Annex Building, 300 12th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20250. Comments may also be sent by facsimile to (202) 205-0381. The comments and the official transcript of the meeting, when it becomes available, will be kept in the Docket Clerk's office at the above address. FSIS has made copies of the FSIS Strategic Plan for 2000-2005 available in the docket room and on the FSIS website at "<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OM/planning/sp2005.htm>". Copies will also be available at the meeting.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Jane Roth, Director, Program Evaluation and Improvement Staff, Office of Policy, Program Development and Evaluation, at (202) 720-6735. Registration for the meeting will be on-site. Persons requiring a sign language interpreter or other special accommodation should notify Ms. Sheila Johnson at (202) 690-6498 by June 1, 2001.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

FSIS administers the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Products Inspection Act, and the Egg Products Inspection Act. The Agency's activities are intended to prevent the distribution in interstate or foreign commerce, for human food purposes, of adulterated or misbranded meat, poultry, and egg products, including products that may transmit diseases or that may be otherwise injurious to health.

In recent years, the Agency has placed increased emphasis on its public health protection role. Throughout the 1990's, the Agency's most important goal was an improved food safety inspection system, exemplified by the Pathogen Reduction/Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (PR/HACCP) regulations which were fully implemented last year. FSIS has consistently sought the enhancement of public health by minimizing foodborne illness from meat, poultry, and egg products. The Agency has worked toward achieving this by measures intended to reduce pathogens on raw products, by strengthening relationships with public health agencies at the Federal and State levels, food safety information and training at every point in the food production and marketing chain, and by promoting international cooperation in the field of food safety.

The Agency's Strategic Plan for 2000-2005 proposes that FSIS continue to focus its operations and resources on food safety and continue to strengthen

the scientific basis for its regulatory activities and initiatives.

FSIS wants the views, suggestions and comments of all of its food safety constituencies, and the general public on the approaches it is considering or should consider to achieve its mission.

Public Meeting

At the first public meeting, on June 7, 2001, FSIS officials will review the Agency's Strategic Plan for 2000-2005, and will discuss the basic public health objectives and the strategy for achieving these objectives. They will also discuss the role of risk analysis especially with respect to the optimal use of processing inspection resources; the next steps that FSIS proposes to take toward minimizing the risk to consumers of foodborne illness; and the coordination of the Agency's efforts with international authorities, other Federal agencies, and State and local authorities. Finally, the Agency will open the discussion and solicit comment from the attendees.

The following summarizes the major themes that will be discussed at the first meeting.

FSIS Strategic Plan 2000-2005

In its Strategic Plan for 2000-2005, FSIS has proposed a long-range program for protecting the public health by improving the Agency's effectiveness as a public health regulatory agency. In order to do this, the Agency has established as its strategic goal the protection of the public health by significantly reducing the prevalence of foodborne hazards from meat, poultry, and egg products. To achieve this goal, the Agency will use the risk analysis model—consisting of risk-assessment, risk-management, and risk-communication segments—recommended by the National Academy of Sciences to regulatory agencies. This model is reflected in the objectives the Agency seeks to meet in achieving its strategic goal.

The first objective is to provide national and international leadership by building within the Agency a risk assessment capability, supported by the latest research and technology, that can be applied to meat, poultry, and egg products. Risk assessment will help the Agency improve its operations to better ensure the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products. Better risk assessment is needed to strengthen the scientific basis for food safety policies and regulatory decisions.

The second objective is to create a coordinated national and international system to manage, from farm-to-table, the food safety risks that may be