

Food Safety

Food Safety and Inspection Service

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) was established by the Secretary of Agriculture on June 17, 1981, pursuant to authority contained in 5 U.S.C. 301 and Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (5 U.S.C. app.). At that time, the Service was delegated authority for regulating the meat and poultry industry to ensure that meat and poultry, and meat and poultry products moving in interstate and foreign commerce were safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled. Under the Secretary's Memorandum No. 1010-1, dated October 23, 1994, the Service's authority was extended to include the inspection of egg products. Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products Inspection Federal meat and poultry inspection is mandatory for the following animals and birds used for human food: cattle, calves, swine, goats, sheep, lambs, horses (and other equines), chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and guineas. The work includes inspection of each animal or bird at slaughter, and inspection of processed products during various stages of production. Under the Egg Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 1031-1056), the Service conducts mandatory, continuous inspection of the production of liquid, dried, and frozen egg products, to ensure that egg products are safe, wholesome, unadulterated, and accurately labeled. The Service tests samples of egg products, and meat and poultry products for microbial and chemical contaminants to monitor trends for enforcement purposes.

Facilities and equipment are approved by FSIS before inspection is granted, and each product label must be approved by

the agency before products can be sold. The agency monitors meat and poultry products in storage, distribution, and retail channels; and takes necessary compliance actions to protect the public, including detention of products, voluntary product recalls, court-ordered seizures of products, administrative withdrawal of inspection, and referral for criminal prosecution. The Service also conducts State programs for the inspection of meat and poultry products sold in intrastate commerce.

The Service monitors livestock upon arrival at federally inspected facilities to ensure compliance with the Humane Slaughter Act (7 U.S.C. 1901-1906); conducts voluntary reimbursed inspection for rabbits, other domestic food animals, and certain egg products not covered by the inspection law (7 U.S.C. 1621-1627); and ensures that inedible egg products and inedible products from meat or poultry, such as offal rendered for animal feed, are properly identified and isolated from edible products (21 U.S.C. 1031-1056 and 7 U.S.C. 1624, respectively).

The Service maintains a toll-free Meat and Poultry Hotline (800-535-4555; in the Washington metropolitan area, 202-720-3333) to answer questions about labeling and safe handling of meat and poultry, meat and poultry products, and egg products. The hotline is also accessible (on the same extension) by TDD.

For further information, contact the Director of Information and Legislative Affairs, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. Phone, 202-720-7943.

Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

This mission area of USDA ensures access to nutritious, healthful diets for all Americans. It coordinates USDA's consumer education and outreach activities, encourages consumer

involvement in USDA policymaking, and ensures that USDA adequately addresses consumer concerns and interests.

It also emphasizes increasing the use of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT), to

eliminate paper coupons and instead provide the recipient with a plastic card and personal identification number that functions like money. With EBT, no money and no Food Stamps change hands at the grocery checkout counter, and all accounting is done electronically.

Under the USDA reorganization legislation, a center for nutrition policy and education was created, underscoring the Department's commitment to nutrition and nutrition education.

Food and Consumer Service

[For the Food and Consumer Service statement of organization, see the *Federal Register* of June 6, 1970, 35 FR 8835]

The Food and Consumer Service is the agency of the Department that administers the programs to make food assistance available to people who need it. These programs are operated in cooperation with State and local governments.

The Service, formerly the Food and Nutrition Service, was established on August 8, 1969, by the Secretary of Agriculture, under authority of 5 U.S.C. 301 and Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (5 U.S.C. app.).

Food Stamps The Food Stamp Program provides food coupons through State and local welfare agencies to needy persons to increase their food purchasing power. The coupons are used by program participants to buy food in any retail store that has been approved by the Food and Consumer Service to accept and redeem the food coupons.

Special Nutrition Programs The Service administers several programs designed to improve the nutrition of children, particularly those from low-income families. Principal among these is the National School Lunch Program, which provides financial assistance to public and nonprofit private schools of high school grade and under, in operating nonprofit school lunch programs.

The School Breakfast Program provides cash assistance to State educational agencies to help schools in operating nonprofit breakfast programs meeting established nutritional standards.

It is especially important in improving the diets of needy children who may receive breakfast free or at reduced prices.

The Summer Food Service Program for Children helps various organizations get nutritious meals to needy preschool and school-aged children during the summer months or during vacations in areas operating under a continuous school calendar.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program is a companion activity that helps to get nutritious meals to preschool and school-aged children in child care facilities and to functionally impaired adults in facilities that provide nonresidential care for such individuals.

The Special Milk Program for Children, which is administered in schools, institutions, and split-session kindergartens that do not participate in any other Federal food program, is designed to help child nutrition by paying a share of the cost of increased servings of fluid milk made to children.

Food Distribution The Food Distribution Program makes foods available to eligible recipients. Foods purchased by the Department are made available principally to children in school lunch and breakfast programs, summer camps, and child care centers, and to the nutrition program for the elderly. Commodities are also distributed to needy families through food banks, charitable institutions, and local government agencies.

The program on Indian reservations provides Indians on or near reservations with access to a wide range of donated foods, including meat, fruit, vegetables, and dairy and grain products.

Supplemental Food Programs The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children—the WIC Program—provides specified nutritious food supplements, nutrition education, and health care referrals to pregnant women, breastfeeding women up to 12 months post partum, non-breastfeeding women up to 6 months post partum, and children up to 5 years of age. Participants are determined by competent professionals (physicians, nutritionists, nurses, and other health

officials) to be at nutritional risk because of nutritionally related medical conditions or inadequate nutrition.

Cash grants are made available to participating State health departments or comparable State agencies, or recognized Indian tribes, bands, or groups. The State agencies distribute funds to the local agencies, and the funds are used to provide foods for WIC recipients and to pay specified administrative and clinical costs. Commodity Supplemental Food Program This program provides supplemental foods and nutrition education to low-income infants and children; pregnant, post partum, and breastfeeding women; and elderly persons who are vulnerable to malnutrition and reside in approved project areas. The Department purchases

foods for distribution through State agencies.

Nutrition Education and Training Under this program funds are granted to the States for the development and dissemination of nutrition information and materials to children and for in-service training of food service and teaching personnel.

No person may be discriminated against—in the operation of any of the programs administered by the Food and Nutrition Service—because of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, or handicap.

For further information, contact the Public Information Officer, Food and Consumer Service, Department of Agriculture, Alexandria, VA 22302. Phone, 703-305-2276.

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

Through the Farm Service Agency (FSA), this mission area administers farm commodity, crop insurance, and resource conservation programs for farmers, and makes loans through a network of State and county offices. Agency programs are directed at agricultural producers or, in the case of loans, at those with farming experience.

Farm Service Agency

The Agency administers commodity and related land use programs designed for voluntary production adjustment, resource protection, and price, market, and farm income stabilization.

In each State, operations are supervised by a State committee of three or five members appointed by the Secretary. A State Executive Director, appointed by the Secretary, and staff carry on day-to-day operations of the State office. The State Director of the Agricultural Extension Service is an *ex officio* member of the State committee.

In each of approximately 2,500 agricultural counties, a county committee of three farmer members is responsible for local administration. A county executive director, with other

necessary staff, is employed to carry on day-to-day operations of the county office.

Commodity Programs The Agency administers the Commodity Credit Corporation's commodity stabilization programs for wheat, corn, cotton (upland and extra long staple), seed cotton, soybeans and minor oilseeds, peanuts, rice, tobacco, milk, wool, mohair, barley, oats, sugarbeets, sugarcane, grain sorghum, rye, and honey. Commodity stabilization is achieved through commodity loans, purchases, and payments to eligible producers.

For most commodities, loans and payments are made directly to producers on the unprocessed commodity through FSA's county offices. Some commodities are also purchased from producers. Price support loans, payments, and purchases also can be made available through cooperative marketing associations. The price of milk is stabilized through purchases of processed dairy products: butter, American-type cheese, and nonfat dry milk. Price stabilization programs for tobacco and peanuts are carried out through loans to producer associations that, in turn, make program benefits