United States Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and Inspection Service

1400 Independence Avenue, SW.
Washington, D.C. 20250

August 21, 2020

TRANSMITTED VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Austin Evers
Executive Director
American Oversight
1030 15th St NW
Washington, DC 20005

RE: FOIA-2020-00271
Human Pandemic Operations Plan

Dear Mr. Evers:

This is the final response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, dated April 17, 2020, to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), in which you requested a copy of FSIS' Human Pandemic Operations Plan. We received your request in our office on April 20, 2020.

The FSIS FOIA staff works with subject matter experts across the Agency to locate responsive documents. For this request, we conducted a record search with the Significant Incident Preparedness and Response Staff. FSIS' search began on April 21, 2020. Our search includes responsive records in FSIS' control on that date.

We have located 42 pages of records that are responsive to your requests. After a thorough review, we have determined that this record can be released in its entirety. Accordingly, your request is granted in full.

You may appeal this determination within 90 days from the date of this letter. Your appeal should include copies of your original request and this response, as well as a discussion of the reasons supporting your appeal. The envelope should be plainly marked to indicate that it contains a FOIA appeal. If you decide to appeal this determination, please send your appeal to:

Paul Kiecker
Deputy Administrator
Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 1170, South Building
Washington, DC 20250-3700

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Please be advised that your FOIA requests, including your identity and any information made available, is releasable to the public under any subsequent FOIA requests. However, FSIS does not release your personal privacy information, such as home addresses, telephone numbers, or Social Security Numbers, all of which are protected from disclosure under FOIA Exemption 6.

If you have any questions about the processing of your request or about the USDA's FOIA regulations, please contact Ethan Pickrell at 202-260-8912 or via email at Ethan.Pickrell@usda.gov. You may seek dispute resolution services from me, the FSIS FOIA Public Liaison and FOIA Director at 202-690-2760 or via email at Arianne.Perkins@usda.gov. If you have general questions about FSIS' FOIA procedures or regulations, please feel free to reach out to me as well.

You also have the option to seek assistance from the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS). Please visit https://www.archives.gov/ogis/mediation-program/request-assistance for information about how to request OGIS assistance in relation to a FOIA request.

Thank you for your interest in FSIS programs and policies.

Sincerely,

ARIANNE PERKINS Digitally signed by ARIANNE PERKINS
Date: 2020.08.21 12:02:39 -04'00'

Arianne M. Perkins
Director, Freedom of Information Act Staff
Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education
Food Safety and Inspection Service

Attachment: Responsive Document (42 pages)

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

FSIS Human Pandemic Operations Plan

March 2020
Office of the Administrator

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Contents

1.0 FSIS HUMAN PANDEMIC OPERATIONS PLAN 4

1.1 PURPOSE 4

1.2 BACKGROUND 4

1.3 PRINCIPLES GUIDING FSIS PLANNING 4

1.4 PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS 5

1.5 GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS 5

1.6 FOOD SAFETY IN THE EVENT OF A HUMAN PANDEMIC. 7

1.7 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES 7

2.0 FSIS HUMAN PANDEMIC PLANNING ACTION ITEMS 9

3.0 TESTS 19

4.0 REFERENCES 19

ANNEX A - FSIS' PRIMARY AND MISSION ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS 211

ANNEX B - SOCIAL DISTANCING PLAN 27

ANNEX C - HIRING FLEXIBILITIES AND PAY OPTIONS 34

ANNEX D - FSIS EMPLOYEE AND REGULATED FACILITIES TRACKING PROCEDURES 36

ANNEX E - FSIS PANDEMIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN 39

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

1.0 FSIS HUMAN PANDEMIC OPERATIONS PLAN

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the public health agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture responsible for verifying that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged.

1.1 PURPOSE

The *FSIS Human Pandemic Operations Plan* specifically addresses how the Agency plans to (a) protect the safety and health of FSIS employees and (b) maintain essential FSIS functions and services during an outbreak of pandemic disease. This plan does not replace the *FSIS All Hazards Response Plan* during a Human Pandemic. Instead, this plan builds on the strong foundation of the *FSIS All Hazards Response Plan*, while including actions specific to the unique realities of protecting employee safety and health and maintaining operations during a Human Pandemic.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The *FSIS Human Pandemic Operations Plan* is a working document and will be reviewed and updated as needed. This document has been revised to embrace the reality that a Human Pandemic may result from a variety of diseases. Even so, most current government planning has been based on the threat of pandemic influenza which is reflected in many of the documents referenced by this plan

1.3 PRINCIPLES GUIDING FSIS PLANNING

Regarding employee safety and health, as well as continued provision of essential functions and services, FSIS has based its planning on the following overarching principles:

- In a pandemic, **employee safety and health** and **continuation of primary and mission essential functions** are the Agency's main concerns.
- The *FSIS Pandemic Operations Plan* may be modified or supplemented based on the evolving disease threat.
- FSIS will maximize the use of technology to support business continuity and social distancing.
- FSIS officials will coordinate closely with local partners, stakeholders, State, local, and tribal governments, and health officials.
- Planning for absenteeism is a part of normal FSIS operations. FSIS has a plan and authority to address staffing considerations and is prepared to act accordingly.
- All FSIS employees are needed to perform their duties; however, mission essential functions will be completed first.
- FSIS retains the flexibility in assigning tasks to employees regardless of grade or series.
- FSIS will provide its employees with information on pandemic disease through regular communication using the USDA Be Prepared web site at https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus as a primary resource of USDA information.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

- FSIS will ensure that non-Federal service providers receive pandemic planning information and require contractors who provide support that is integral to the delivery of essential services to present a plan outlining how they will meet their contractual obligations during a pandemic.

1.4 PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

- Susceptibility to the pandemic disease will be universal.
- Efficient and sustained person-to-person transmission and community transmission over a wide geographic area signals an imminent pandemic.
- Illness rates will vary among segments of the population but could include 30% or higher in the overall population during a pandemic.
- Some persons will become infected, but not develop clinically significant symptoms. Asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic individuals can transmit infection and develop immunity to subsequent infection.
- Of those who become ill, 50% will seek medical care.
- Rates of absenteeism will depend on the severity of the pandemic.
- In a severe pandemic, absenteeism attributable to illness, the need to care for ill family members and fear of infection may reach 40% during the peak weeks of a community outbreak, with lower rates of absenteeism during the weeks before and after the peak.
- Certain public health measures (closing schools, quarantining household contacts of infected individuals, "snow days") are likely to increase rates of absenteeism.
- Multiple waves (periods during which community outbreaks occur across the country) of illness could occur with each wave lasting 2-3 months.
- Illness among the public and absenteeism in the private sector workforce may impact essential functions and services needed by FSIS.
- The disease is spread through droplets from an infected person. FSIS planning must recognize that viral transmission occurs as much or more through touch (contact with contaminated objects) as through respiratory droplets (e.g. coughing).
- Persons contracting the virus will be infectious before the onset of symptoms, during the illness, and for a period of time after symptoms have disappeared. FSIS will follow CDC guidance (www.cdc.gov) on medical issues and amend its actions as necessary based on new guidance.

1.5 GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS

- **Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) --**the ability of FSIS to continue to perform Primary Mission Essential Functions and Mission Essential Functions.
- **Critical Infrastructure Facility (Formerly Mission Critical Facility)** – a designation given to certain USDA facilities based on a mission review and other security evaluations.
- **Essential Employees** – those employees identified as being necessary for the continued performance of essential functions and services. Agencies must inform employees identified as essential in advance, so that they can be prepared to support and sustain essential USDA functions and services during a pandemic. Essential employees are expected to remain in contact with their agencies during any emergency.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

- **Essential Functions and Services** – those critical functions that enable FSIS, at each organizational level, to protect the nation's supply of meat, poultry and processed egg products. When identifying essential functions and services, program managers should consider collaborative relationships with State and local governments, industry partners, stakeholders, and other Federal departments.
- **Evacuation Order** – the Secretary of Agriculture may order evacuation of one or more employees from their worksite upon an official announcement by Federal, State or local officials, public health authorities, and/or tribal governments, of a pandemic health crisis affecting certain geographic areas**.** The Secretary of Agriculture may delegate authority to one or more designated officials to order the evacuation of agency employees, employees assigned to certain geographic areas, or employees in certain components/divisions of an agency.
- **Government Function** – the collective functions of a Mission Area/Agency/Staff Office as defined by statute, regulations, Presidential Directive, or other legal authority.
- **Human Capital Plan** – a plan that guides USDA towards improvements in human capital. As part of the development of this plan, USDA human resources personnel have determined mission-critical job series and evaluated flexibilities.
- **Human Pandemic** – a worldwide outbreak of a disease that infects and can be transmitted between humans and to which humans have little or no immunity.
- **Mission Critical Position** – a designation given to certain job series requiring increased attention to staffing and recruiting
- **Mission Essential Functions (MEFs) –** the limited set of agency-level Government functions that must be continued throughout, or resumed rapidly after, a disruption of normal activities.
- **Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (MAC)—**A formalized structure developed to work in conjunction with the Incident Command System (ICS) and Area Command to facilitate interagency coordination. The group consists of senior representatives from Mission Areas, Agencies, and Staff Offices that provide significant support to issues or incidents or have jurisdictional or functional involvement in them.
- **National Essential Functions (NEFs) –** the functions the President and the Nation's leadership focus on to lead and sustain the National during a catastrophic emergency.
- **Primary Mission Essential Functions (PMEFs) –** department and agency Mission Essential Functions (MEFs), validated by the National Continuity Coordinator, that must be performed in order to support performance of National Essential Functions (NEFs) before, during, and in the aftermath of an emergency. PMEFs need to be performed continuously or resumed within 12 hours of disruption.
- **Quarantine** – an action placed in effect by local health authorities that places restrictions on people and their movement in and out of a home, a neighborhood, a community, or other geographical designations. During a pandemic, quarantine could be a tool used by local officials to prevent further spreading of a disease.
- **Social Distancing** – an infection control strategy that reduces the duration, frequency, or intimacy of social contacts in order to limit the transmission of a pandemic disease. Social distancing may include, for example, increased use of telework, placing employees on shifts, and canceling of large gatherings.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

- **Telework** – working at locations other than the workplace, such as an employee's home or at a telework center, using telecommunications.
- **USDA Mission Area/Agency/Staff Office Pandemic Action Officers –** senior Mission Area/Agency/Staff Office official appointed by the Subcabinet to work with the USDA Pandemic Coordinator to assure local operations plans are developed and in place that focus on employee safety and health, and business continuity.
- **Wave** – a period during which an outbreak of pandemic disease occurs within a specific community or a larger geographic area. Waves include periods of time of rapid increase of disease occurrence, peak occurrence, and decline toward more normal levels. Waves can last several weeks to several months. A pandemic would be expected to occur in several waves.

1.6 FOOD SAFETY IN THE EVENT OF A HUMAN PANDEMIC.

Public health and food safety experts consider the risk of contracting human pandemic disease through food contact (as opposed to person-to-person contact) to be negligible.

- Ill FSIS employees pose a risk of transmitting disease to co-workers and establishment employees. All employees should follow current CDC guidance (www.cdc.gov) and should not report to work until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications. Supervisors should require employees who are sick to request sick leave and go home. In accordance with FSIS Directive 4630.2, *Leave,* sick leave shall be granted to employees when they must care for family members who have a contagious[1] disease or who are exposed to a contagious disease such that his/her presence at work could jeopardize the health of co-workers.

1.7 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of senior officials, Mission Areas/Agencies/Staff Offices, Pandemic Action Officers, and individual employees and families during the planning and implementation phases of a pandemic.

- **Under Secretary for Food Safety** – Exercise line authority for protecting employee safety and health and the continuity of essential functions and services. The Subcabinet will provide leadership for human pandemic planning by appointing representatives to the MAC Group, designating Pandemic Action Officers and Local Human Pandemic Coordinators (if applicable), and overseeing the development of operations plans.
- **Food Safety Human Pandemic Action Officer (PAO)**
  The Food Safety Human Pandemic Action Officer exercises lines of authority over program areas for protecting employee safety and health and the continuity of essential functions and services. He/she provides executive leadership for the FSIS human pandemic planning and will oversee the establishment of policies related to pandemic planning. He/she oversees the testing and exercising of operation plans. At the department level, he/she participates in the establishment of a headquarters

[1] Defined as a disease ruled subject to quarantine, requiring isolation or restriction of movement by the patient for specified period, as prescribed by health authorities having jurisdiction.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

operation plan. PAO responsibilities rest at the Office of the Deputy Undersecretary for Food Safety. The PAO acts as the principal representative of the Office of Food Safety at the Pandemic MAC.

- **FSIS Pandemic Liaison Officer (PLO)**
  The PLO assists the PAO in pandemic planning and preparedness and serves as a liaison between the PAO and the FSIS Emergency Management Committee (EMC). He/she represents FSIS in USDA Pandemic planning and preparedness activities and serves as the FSIS principal representative at the Pandemic MAC. PLO responsibilities rest with the Director of the Significant Incident Preparedness and Response Staff (SIPRS).
- **FSIS Emergency Management Committee (EMC)**
  The EMC will be activated during a pandemic to guide the program areas in the affected areas in making human capital decisions and ensure that available FSIS personnel and resources are focused where they are needed in order to maintain the Agency's essential functions, while protecting employee health under a unified command structure.
- **Program Area, District and/or Regional Offices**
  During a human pandemic response, officials from FSIS program areas, district offices and regional offices will be responsible for implementing the decisions and incident objectives issued by the EMC. In addition, they will be responsible for tracking the status of their employees and reporting illnesses, absences and other information through the proper chain of command to the FSIS EMC. More information regarding the type of information they will need to collect can be found in Annex D.
- **Supervisors During a Human Pandemic**
  Managers are to review, identify, and have employees perform any duties conducive to being performed from home. In addition, they will be responsible for tracking the status of their employees and reporting illnesses, absences and other information through the proper chain of command. More information regarding the type of information they will need to collect can be found in Annex D.
- **Employees**
  Employees with computers should immediately bookmark https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus for USDA updates and information. This Web site will be a key conduit for information before, during, and after a pandemic. For employees without computers, FSIS will provide necessary information through user notices, the Wednesday Newsline, and the Beacon. Supervisors will print such information for employees without computer access. FSIS is ensuring that employees with special needs and personnel with disabilities are included and considered in its planning process.
- **Bargaining Units**
  As part of its pandemic planning efforts, FSIS will notify the exclusive representatives of the bargaining unit employees in FSIS (National Joint Council of Food Inspection Locals –AFGE, AFL-CIO) and follow all statutory requirements when implementing of the *FSIS Human Pandemic Operations Plan*.
- **FSIS Contractors**

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

USDA has recommended that FSIS ensure that their non-Federal service providers receive pandemic planning information and that contractors who provide support that is integral to the delivery of essential services presents plans outlining how they will meet their contractual obligations during a pandemic.

FSIS requires contractors who provide support deemed as integral to the delivery of essential services to be prepared to meet their contractual obligations during a pandemic, as specified in the contract. CORs for contracts deemed to be essential are responsible for informing the designated CO of this determination. If a program office determines that it does have essential contractors, the COTR and the CO will meet with these contractors to inform them of FSIS expectations in the event of a human pandemic and to require that they self-certify to their pandemic preparedness.

2.0 FSIS HUMAN PANDEMIC PLANNING ACTION ITEMS

This section is structured by FSIS program area, each with four subsections. Each subsection addresses specific actions that program areas will take (1) when there is no ongoing pandemic; (2) when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations; (3) when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting operations; and (4) when a pandemic wave appears to be lessening. The USDA Pandemic Officer, through the Food Safety Pandemic Action Officer, will be informed of all actions taken by FSIS in response to a human pandemic.

All FSIS Program Areas

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:

- Maintain a current understanding of all Agency issuances and guidelines related to the management of a significant incident relating to a human pandemic.
- Be aware of what authorities are transferred to successors in the FSIS COOP plan.
- Develop social distancing plans.
- Maintain and update an order of succession that is three (3) deep for positions critical to maintaining the essential functions listed in Annex A and verify that those listed have been cross-trained to carry out those actions.
- Ensure that there are Time and Attendance Reporting personnel ("Timekeepers") and designated backups who can import and submit Time and Attendance Reports of employees who are not using WebTA.
- Update any records that are needed to sustain operations and ensure that those records can be accessed electronically from remote locations or are available in hard copies. These documents have been previously identified as part of the FSIS Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). A list of those records and where they are located (hard copy, internet, intranet, server, etc.) is presented in Annex M of the *FSIS Supplement to the USDA HQ COOP Plan*.
- Work with FSIS and USDA OCIO to identify ways to work around technical issues regarding proprietary computer applications that cannot be accessed by a simple internet connection.
- Take an inventory of supplies and equipment needed to set up employees to work in home offices and address computer and connectivity issues for individuals.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

  - Establish a plan for tasks that are normally performed by employees that are not telework ready (e.g. no internet connectivity or they have sick family member or minors in the house that they are caring for).
- Ensure that work activities are carried out in accordance with USDA Civil Rights policies.
- Carry out preparation activities outlined in the FSIS All Hazards Response Plan (AHRP), in addition to actions called for in this plan.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:

- Carry out pandemic awareness activities and prepare to implement specific actions called for in this plan if FSIS operations are impacted.
- Ensure availability of equipment and items necessary for employees to carry out their inspection activities. This list is also to include any main vendors that FSIS uses as well as a list of secondary vendors for those items if possible.
- Ensure that mission essential employees are notified of their designation and of the requirement to work in a pandemic. Essential employees must be able to serve during emergencies without regard to declarations of liberal leave or government closures. The letter will specify what the employees' responsibilities will be if they are asked to serve.
- Test ability of personnel to log-on to the FSIS computer system remotely and access vital records, including any databases and systems they will need to use if they will be teleworking as part of social distancing procedures.
- Ensure that all preparation and response activities are carried out in accordance with FSIS Civil Rights policies.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:

- Implement the actions outlined in the Social Distancing Plan found in Annex D, as appropriate.
- Implement telework, as directed by the Department, to protect the health and safety of employees who are staying home and those that remain in the office.
- Implement FSIS Employee Tracking Procedures, which are outlined in Annex D of this plan.
- Activate and track Delegations of Authority and Orders of Succession as needed.
- Initiate and maintain daily contact with other geographical sites that serve as back-ups for identified essential services.
- Follow Department guidance on dismissal and closing procedures.
- Follow regulations concerning employees stationed or traveling overseas as outlined in Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSRs).
- Periodically review staffing of pandemic emergency operations to ensure that responding personnel are rotated appropriately to allow for time with their families and attending to personal matters.
- Verify that communications have occurred, and continue to occur, with personnel throughout the human pandemic event.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

- Carry out the response activities outlined in the FSIS AHRP, in addition to actions called for in this plan.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:
- Assess impact on operations from previous pandemic wave and report information to the EMC using the FSIS Incident Management System (FIMS).
- Assess personnel loss and initiate expedited recruitment actions for personnel to fill vacancies within the Agency.
- Carry out the recovery activities outlined in the FSIS AHRP for the specific program area.

Office of the Administrator (OA)

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:
- Coordinate USDA-level pandemic planning activities.
- Meet with FSIS program areas, as requested, to assist in their preparation of preparedness plans.
- Develop human pandemic readiness exercises, as needed.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:
- Designate FSIS representatives to the USDA Multi Agency Coordination (MAC) Group.
- Coordinate USDA-level pandemic response teams.
- Meet with FSIS program areas, as requested, to answer any questions or concerns they have regarding the ongoing pandemic.
- Report to the USDA Office of Homeland Security (OHS) on status of facilities, ongoing activities and status of employees as needed.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:
- Enter an Incident Report (IR) in FSIS Incident Management System (FIMS) and activate the FSIS EMC.
- The FSIS Pandemic Liaison Officer (PLO) will serve as Incident Commander and coordinate the implementation of the *FSIS Human Pandemic Operations Plan* with the EMC.
- Coordinate the collection, compiling, and reporting of employee information submitted by program areas through the FSIS Employee Tracking Procedures, outlined in Annex D.
- Report to the USDA Office of Homeland Security (OHS) on status of facilities, ongoing activities and status of employees as needed.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:
- Revise response procedures based on lessons learned and prepare for the next wave.
- Report to the USDA Office of Homeland Security (OHS) on status of facilities, ongoing activities and status of employees as needed.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:
- Prepare a roster of essential skills needed for continued OCFO operations.
- Ensure that official records kept by OCFO can be accessed in electronic form and from locations other than the principal duty location.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:
- Ensure program areas and State Inspection Programs have enough availability for at least (three) 3 months.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:
- Use phone, email, and skype, or other electronic communications to ensure that OCFO responsibilities, traditionally conducted face-to-face are still provided.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:
Continue the use of available telecommunications systems to ensure that OCFO responsibilities are maintained.

Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:
- Notify OCIO and/or USDA contractors that a plan will be required for ensuring essential coverage of help desk functions throughout a human pandemic.
- Disseminate step-by-step instructions to employees on how to access Outlook email and the FSIS shared drives remotely

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:
- No additional actions required.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:
- Find solutions for computer and connectivity issues for individuals deemed critical, but without the capacity or permission to work from a remote location.
- Monitor the impact of telework on internal network and telecommunications systems and respond as necessary.
- Monitor the number of FSIS employees who access the FSIS network each day, and assist OHR in responding to OPM/ Departmental OHRM data calls regarding telework if requested.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:
- No additional actions required.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Office of Field Operations (OFO)

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:

- Utilize emergency communication mechanisms to ensure the regulated industry has current information related to establishment operations and available inspection resources during a human pandemic.
- Develop and maintain staffing contingency plans for facilities and district offices.
- Develop a list of appropriate U.S. agencies and agency contacts capable of providing the information or actions needed to coordinate IID activities with applicable U.S. law enforcement and border control agencies.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:

- Communicate with the regulated industry to ensure expedient sharing of information related to establishments' operations and available inspection resources.
- Discuss resource management priorities with the regulated industries to maximize the continued delivery of statutory inspection services.
- Begin working with other program areas in co-located offices support such shared offices remaining open during a pandemic.
- Process the voluntary suspension or temporary withdrawal of meat, poultry or egg products inspection at official establishments who voluntarily relinquish their Grant of Inspection, or from those that could not meet regulatory requirements because of personnel shortages.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:

- Assess FSIS' initial deployment strategy and re-deploy inspection personnel as appropriate to maximize inspection services to the regulated industry.
- Headquarters will work closely with District Offices to ensure adequate inspection, verification of food safety aspects and food defense at meat and poultry slaughter, processing and pasteurized egg products facilities according to regulatory requirements to produce safe, wholesome and properly labeled products.
- Maintain to the greatest extent possible, veterinary functions by any or all of the following measures as deemed appropriate by the EMC:
    - Use of all available FSIS relief veterinarians including those serving as Frontline Supervisors;
    - Temporarily expanding FSIS veterinary assignments to include additional establishments to ensure appropriate disposition of animal diseases are rendered;
    - Deployment of non-frontline FSIS veterinarians to field veterinary positions;
    - Use of retired veterinarians from a database managed by OM; and
    - Use of veterinarians from other agencies from a database to be created by USDA. These non-FSIS veterinarians will receive a Quick Immersion Training that is presently under development by FSIS.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

- Communicate needs with respect to veterinary personnel resources to the USDA MAC Group through the EMC for possible deployment of veterinary resources across the entire department during a human pandemic.
- In the event that a human pandemic wave causes a temporary, but significant, reduction in the inspection resources deployable to active official establishments, OFO will prioritize inspection at establishments based on local conditions and available resources. This prioritization will occur on a daily basis after consultation with local field personnel and establishment representatives.
- If an established port of entry or import facility becomes non-operational due to a high level of absenteeism, OFO will work with industry to review the schedule of incoming shipments of imported meat, poultry, and processed egg products and implement contingencies that may include identifying an alternate port of entry.
- Continue to send Time and Attendance Reports, Travel Vouchers, Travel Authorizations, Miscellaneous Payments – invoice payments, and Form 5110, Reimbursable Services Rendered to the Financial Services Center in Urbandale, IA at the Financial Management Division (FMD) as long as mail, telephone or other electronic communications continue.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:

- No additional actions required.

Office of International Coordination (OIC)

- Ensure communication mechanisms are in place to track impact of pandemics on FSIS international office operations.
- Monitor State Department Web site and notifications to determine whether FSIS' international offices are impacted by the ongoing pandemic wave.
- Take necessary action, such as requiring internationally-located FSIS personnel return to the United States as appropriate.
- Ensure program areas are of aware of any potential impacts on international travel as a result of pandemic wave.
- Monitor any potential impacts of pandemic on the international visitors' program.
- Monitor State Department Web site and notifications to determine whether FSIS' international offices can be reopened and ensure efficient return of any relocated international staff to their duty location once it is deemed safe to do so.
- Continue to monitor any potential impacts of pandemic on the international visitors' program and FSIS foreign travel.

Office of Investigation, Enforcement & Audit (OIEA)

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:

- Develop and maintain staffing contingency plans for Regional and Sub-Regional offices.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
USDA-FSIS-20-0962-A-000014

- Begin working with other program areas in co-located offices support such shared offices remaining open during a pandemic.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:
- Maintain to the greatest extent possible, emergency response capabilities by any or all measures as deemed appropriate by the EMC.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:
- No additional actions required.

Office of Management (OM)

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:
- Identify any personnel policies that would need to be waived, modified, or expanded during a pandemic to ensure that FSIS has the available personnel resources to deliver its essential functions and confirm that they are ready for immediate implementation.
- Prepare a roster of essential skills needed for OM's continued operations.
- Participate on the USDA National Capital Region Facility Pandemic Planning Coordination Team and ensure that any guidance as it pertains to maintaining the ability of facilities to support the workforce in the event of a human pandemic is implemented.
- Ensure that official records kept by HRO can be accessed in electronic form and from locations other than the principal duty location.
- Ensure that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) contractor has plans in place to meet their contractual obligations during a human pandemic.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:
- Prepare an emergency recruitment notice for certain positions that would be posted either in a specific region or nationwide during a pandemic at key locations to assist in the expedited back-filling of critical personnel.
- Prepare to leverage use of FSIS' direct hire authority if there is need during a human pandemic.
- Ensure that FSIS policies on hiring, leave, and pay flexibilities are synchronized with OPM and Departmental guidance.
- Confirm the readiness of FSIS program areas to implement FSIS' plan to temporarily hire supplemental inspection personnel.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:
- Ensure that available HR flexibilities are used properly during a pandemic emergency to ensure that FSIS' essential functions continue.
- Use all available telecommunications systems to ensure that HR responsibilities, traditionally conducted face-to-face are still provided.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
USDA-FSIS-20-0962-A-000015

- Minimize the need for original documentation wherever possible to reduce illness transmission opportunities.
- Abide by the Department of Transportation (DOT) guidance regarding the transit subsidy program, and for providing subsidies in a human pandemic.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:
- Continue to work with program areas to complete expedited recruitment actions for personnel to fill vacancies within the Agency.

Office of Employee Experience and Development (OEED)

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:
- Develop and update as needed, quick immersion training workbooks on Poultry Inspection, Livestock Inspection, Inspection of ready-to-eat and non-ready-to-eat products produced under a HACCP system, and inspection of raw products produced under a HACCP system that can prepare non-OFO personnel and even non-FSIS personnel for possible cross utilization during a human pandemic.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:
- Ensure that quick immersion training workbooks have been distributed to the FSIS OFO District offices.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:
- Work with OFO District Offices to ensure they have necessary training materials.
- Adjust training schedule as needed to protect the health and safety of FSIS employees.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:
- No additional actions required.

Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education (OPACE)

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:
- Ensure readiness of FSIS' communication mechanisms detailed in the FSIS Human Pandemic communications plan found in Annex E.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:
- Implement the FSIS Human Pandemic communications plan found in Annex E in accordance with USDA Office of Communications (OC) guidance.
- Support coordination of meat, poultry and processed egg product safety messaging between USDA OC and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:

- Continue implementation of FSIS' communication strategy in cooperation with the Department. This plan is found in Annex E.
- Communicate continually with the USDA Office of Communications (OC), Office of Congressional Relations (OCR) and the Office of the Executive Secretariat (OES).
- Support coordination of meat, poultry and processed egg product safety messaging between USDA OC and DHHS CDC.
- Ensure that employee- and service-related information is available on the FSIS Web site, shared through GovDelivery, and Constituent Update messages.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:

- Continue implementation of FSIS' communication strategy found in Annex E.
- Support coordination of meat, poultry and processed egg product safety messaging between USDA OC and DHHS CDC.

Office of Public Health Science (OPHS)

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:

- Develop plans detailing how OPHS will prioritize sample analyses in the event of human capital shortages during a human pandemic.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:

- Verify accuracy of the previously prepared plan outlining prioritization of sample analyses in the event of human capital shortages during a human pandemic.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:

- In coordination with OFO, prioritize sampling to ensure continuation of mission critical testing.
- Adjust program area priorities and operations based on the level of absenteeism. A detailed plan for continuity of business is in place and is available for review through the office of the Executive Associate for Laboratory Services (EALS). For other OPHS activities, services and functions will be prioritized and adjusted according to their mission critical status and available human capital resources.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:

- No additional actions required.

Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD)

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:

- Assess if FSIS Notices or Directives need to be developed or updated, in anticipation of a human pandemic event, and ensure such documents are ready to be issued if an event occurs.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
USDA-FSIS-20-0962-A-000017

- Update the OPPD Staff Expertise Cross Reference Table, which outlines the redundancies in abilities between OPPD staff members.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:
- Verify the OPPD Staff Expertise Cross Reference Table, which outlines the redundancies in abilities between OPPD staff members.
- Shift priority to developing emergency regulations, new policies, and guidance as necessary in response to the human pandemic.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:
- Develop new policy (e.g., Federal Register notices, Constituent Updates), instructions to field personnel (FSIS directives and notices) and guidance to industry as necessary.
- Encourage customers to use the web-based askFSIS system to alleviate wait times on phone lines.
- Encourage industry to use the web-based Label Submission and Approval System to submit only emergency requests for label approval (i.e., temporary approvals).
- Encourage establishments to delay submitting applications for waivers from regulations and requests to use new technologies or new ingredients until the pandemic ends to mitigate potential time burden on staff.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:
- Notify industry stakeholders that they can submit labels; questions; and requests for waivers, or use of new ingredients or technology as usual.

Office of Planning, Analysis and Risk Management (OPARM)

Actions to be taken while there is no ongoing pandemic:
- Continue functions to ensure that the Nation's commercial supply of meat including Siluriformes, poultry, and processed egg products is safe. Functions include: sample scheduling; Public Health Risk Evaluation (PHRE) scheduling; ensuring PHIS alerts and reports are available for FSIS inspection personnel, state meat and poultry inspection personnel, and industry.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave that is not impacting FSIS operations:
- No additional actions required.

Actions to be taken when there is an ongoing pandemic wave impacting FSIS operations:
- Prioritize sampling to ensure continuation of mission critical testing.

Actions to be taken when the pandemic wave appears to be lessening:
No additional actions required.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

3.0 TESTS

FSIS has a test, training, and exercise (TT&E) program in place to ensure that it is prepared to function during a human pandemic that results in 30% absenteeism. The tests, trainings and exercises that FSIS plans to ensure its readiness are discussed below.

Emergency Telephonic Alert-Notification Tests

- The ability to maintain communications will be critical to FSIS during a pandemic. Communications will be necessary with all employees (essential and non-essential), with other agencies, the USDA Human Pandemic Action Officer, the media, and stakeholders. As part of its routine emergency preparedness activities, FSIS' SIPRS tests and evaluates the capabilities of the Agency's communications and information systems that support emergency preparedness activities.
- FSIS also participates in Department initiated alert-notification or call down tests as they occur.
- The Agency will utilize MIR3 and AgAWAirS as appropriate and necessary.

Employee Emergency Notification Procedures

- All FSIS program offices have developed and implemented Emergency Notification Procedures (through call-down phone trees, or automated systems) and capabilities for contacting all program personnel at headquarters and field locations. Such procedures are reviewed and revised, if necessary, to ensure that contact information is updated and that all employees can be contacted. FSIS employees are responsible for continually updating their contact information with their supervisors. These procedures are tested on a quarterly basis.

Alternate Notification-Methods Tests

Information on the operational status of FSIS and USDA is also posted on their respective Web sites. Those sites are maintained, tested, and updated regularly. FSIS has a contract in place for a conference bridge for use by the EMC. The conference bridge is tested weekly.

Ability to Work from Alternate Locations

FSIS' pandemic planning includes establishing the capability of personnel to work from alternate locations. This is a key element of FSIS' social distancing plan. This capability currently exists and is continuously being tested.

4.0 REFERENCES

General guidance and references used in the preparation of this *FSIS Human Pandemic Operations Plan* include

a. *National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza* (November 2005), Homeland Security Council
b. *Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza* (May 2006), Homeland Security Council

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

c. *National Response Framework* (January, 2008), Department of Homeland Security (http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf/)
d. *USDA 2009-H1N1 Pandemic Plan for Protection Of The Workforce And Continuity Of Essential Services (September 9, 2009), U.S. Department of Agriculture*
e. *Human Capital Planning for Pandemic Influenza, Information for Departments and Agencies* (September 12, 2006), U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)
f. FSIS Directive 5500.2, Rev 5 *Significant Incident Response* (October 18, 2011)
g. *Management of Domestic Incidents,* Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 5 (February 28, 2003)

The following are additional references specific to the essential functions and services of the FSIS:

a. Federal Meat Inspection Act (www.fsis.usda.gov)
b. Poultry Products Inspection Act (www.fsis.usda.gov)
c. Egg Products Inspection Act (www.fsis.usda.gov)
d. Code of Federal Regulations – Title 7 parts 1-209 (1998)
e. Code of Federal Regulations – Title 9 parts 200 to end (1998)
f. Code of Federal Regulations – Title 5 parts 1-699 (2006)

Additional Information about Pandemic Influenza:

a. http://www.flu.gov/

   One-stop access to U.S. Government avian and pandemic flu information, from DHHS.

b. http://www.opm.gov/pandemic/pandemic_guide/index.asp

   A guide for Federal employees from the Office of Personnel Management.

https://www.dm.usda.gov/beprepared/Covid19.htm

Additional information is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) (CDC) Hotline: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636). This line is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. TTY: 1-888-232-6348. Questions can be e-mailed to cdcinfo@cdc.gov.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Annex A - FSIS' Primary and Mission Essential Functions

USDA will employ a tiered approach to prioritizing essential functions and services during a pandemic. As the pandemic progresses and staff attrition rates impact the ability to perform all normal business functions, the lowest priority functions will not be performed. These essential function tiers are:

1. Tier I – Primary Mission Essential Functions (PMEFs)
2. Tier II – Mission Essential Functions (MEFs)
3. Tier III – Government functions identified by each Mission Area/Agency/Staff Office

The essential functions in Tier I have been approved by the White House and in Tier II have been approved by the USDA Chief of Staff.

Tier III Essential Functions were designed by Program Areas and are to be periodically examined, and redefined if required. The Essential Functions are themselves listed in order of criticality.

Tier I – USDA Primary Mission Essential Functions (PMEFs)

Ensure the safety of designated segments of U.S. food supplies and protect U.S. agricultural health.

Tier II – Mission Essential Functions (MEFs)

The following mission essential functions that must be performed in the context of a human pandemic are listed below according to FSIS Program Office. Each program area is responsible for making sure they have the necessary preparation and planning in place to ensure that these mission essential functions are not interrupted during a human pandemic.

ESA: Essential Supporting Activity
MEF: Mission Essential Function

1. ESA: Safeguarding the public health by ensuring re-inspection of imports and high-risk import inspection (OFO)
2. ESA: Ensuring that emergency hiring can be conducted, if necessary, to fully staff federal establishments - thereby protecting the public health (OM)
3. ESA: Ensuring that all FSIS employees receive appropriate pay and benefits in a timely manner (OCFO and OM)
4. ESA: Providing timely emergency notices and directives in order to ensure that FSIS is able to verify that the meat, poultry, and processed egg supply is safe, wholesome, and unadulterated (OPPD)
5. ESA: Communicating essential information to FSIS personnel and constituents in order to support the continued safety and security of meat, poultry, and processed egg products (OPACE)

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

6. MEF: Protecting the health of the consuming public by continuing inspection procedures to assure that all meat, poultry, and processed egg products are safe, wholesome, and unadulterated (OFO)
7. ESA: Providing, supporting, and maintaining essential information and reporting systems necessary to ensure that COOP procedures are tracked and inspection is directed (and results reported) - in order to protect the public health (OA, OCIO))
8. ESA: Providing, supporting, and assisting in managing emergency incidents so the Agency can continue to operate to protect the public health (OA)
9. ESA: Providing support to field operations to ensure that all product submitted for testing is analyzed and reported in a timely manner, thereby protecting the public health (OPHS)
10. ESA: Ensuring that FSIS personnel have necessary training to perform essential functions (including emergency training) (OEED)
11. ESA: Ensuring that all employees are familiar with and can use the Agency-Employee Tracking Procedures (as outlined in Annex D), so that FSIS can plan and perform essential functions in an emergency situation (FSIS)

Tier III – Government functions identified by Program Area

Office of the Administrator (OA)

I. Ensure the FSIS inspection and compliance programs for meat, poultry, and egg products continue in a manner that reduces impact on the regulated industry that is capable of operating and without jeopardizing public health.
II. Ensure the health and safety of FSIS employees.
III. Ensure implementation of the *FSIS Human Pandemic Operations Plan* and coordinate implementation with the EMC.
IV. Verify communications have occurred with FSIS personnel and continue throughout the human pandemic.
V. Coordinate sharing of human capital with other Departments/Agencies to ensure delivery of essential functions and services.
VI. Verify communications have occurred and continue throughout the human pandemic with the Under Secretary for Food Safety, FSIS program offices, the Food Safety Human Pandemic Action Officer, and the USDA Human Pandemic Coordinator.
VII. Ensure OPACE liaisons with the media, responds to inquiries, and keeps the print and electronic media informed of Agency policies and activities.
VIII. Act as the USDA liaison for federal food incident response to food and agriculture emergencies.
IX. Support the Emergency Support Function (ESF) #11 of the Department of Homeland Security's *National Response Plan*, if activated.

Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)

I. Ensure the continuation of budget and financial management in FSIS. Ensure financial reporting systems remain in place, time and attendance and payroll

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

functions continue, and obligations are paid in a timely manner. Ensure the continuation to support the PHIS export certificate process.

II. Verify communications have occurred and continue with OM personnel throughout the human pandemic.

Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)

I. Support the network and telecommunications infrastructure of FSIS, to include the priority needs of telecommuting employees, smartphones wireless communication, Outlook Email, and the Help Desk.

II. If needed, activate an alternate reporting system for uploading of inspection procedures performed in PHIS.

Office of Employee Experience and Development (OEED)

I. Communicate with OEED personnel throughout the event.

II. Provide routine and emergency training of FSIS employees.

Office of Field Operations (OFO)

I. Maintain regulatory operations in Districts and ensure inspection of FSIS regulated products continues in those establishments that are capable of operating, prioritizing inspection at establishments to fulfill statutory requirements.

II. Coordinate and ensure compliance of recall and retention activities.

III. Ensure re-inspection of imported and rejected products.

IV. Coordinate with law enforcement and border control agencies regarding the surveillance and control of targeted high-risk shipments.

V. Maintain contact with foreign inspection authorities with shared responsibility for surveillance and control of product destined for U.S. border crossings and ports of entry.

VI. Verify communications have occurred and continue with OFO personnel throughout the human pandemic.

VII. Continue the Federal/State liaison process by collaborating with the States, the FDA, and other Federal agencies on cross-jurisdictional issues.

Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit (OIEA)

I. Continue to conduct food safety and food defense surveillance activities, investigations, internal equivalence verification audits, and enforcement actions and ensure management control auditing functionality.

II. Continue liaison with internal and external work partners (APHIS, OIG, OFO, DOJ, OGC, and JTTF) to provide continuity with the Agency's mission to provide safe and properly labeled food to the consuming public. When violations of law are egregious or repetitive, forward criminal, civil, and administrative cases for administrative or criminal sanctions or other enforcement or legal action.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
USDA-FSIS-20-0962-A-000023

III. Verify communications have occurred and continue with OIEA personnel throughout the human pandemic.
IV. Coordinate and make available enforcement and review resources to Incident Command (Single incident and/or Unified command) and Multi-Agency Coordination Systems. Work closely under these structures with other governmental entities such as State Agriculture and/or Health Departments, APHIS, FDA, and other Federal agencies to control adulterated and/or misbranded food product found in commerce.
V. Provide labor and employment litigation support to all FSIS program areas, including actions to address appeals of adverse management action, complaints of discrimination, and other complaints, formal grievances, and alleged violations of law and representing Agency interests before the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA), and other third party proceedings.

Office of International Coordination (OIC)

I. Continue to manage and approve all Agency correspondence with foreign governments and stakeholders on international issues
II. Continue to coordinate within FSIS, with FAS and foreign governments, as necessary, to ensure the safety of FSIS-regulated imported and exported foods.
III. Continue to work with OFO to resolve industry issues when they arise.
IV. Continue to support international activities, such as Codex and WTO activities and meetings, to the extent that the activities continue during the pandemic event.

Office of Management (OM)

I. In collaboration with OPACE, communicate with OM personnel throughout the human pandemic and keep them informed on matters that fall within the Office of Human Resources and Administrative Services Division's respective areas of responsibility.
II. Provide continuity of human resources support to FSIS, including operational staffing and classification services (including special needs positions), providing compensation and leave advisories, particularly in the area of sick leave, benefits counseling, workers' compensation, and maintaining official records.
III. Provide labor and employee relations support to all FSIS program areas, including notification and/or bargaining obligations to the National Joint Council of Food Inspection Locals, AFGE regarding changes to conditions of employment, processing disciplinary/ adverse actions, workplace violence prevention program issues, and third party (EEOC, MSPB, FLRA, grievance arbitration) proceedings processing.
IV. Provide FSIS with administrative management services, including property management, acquisition/contracting, supplies, equipment, space, fleet, printing/distribution, records, mail, FEDEX, environmental, and occupational safety and health.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education (OPACE)

I. Ensure continuous communication with the USDA Office of Communications, Office of Congressional Relations, and the Office of the Executive Secretariat.
II. Ensure information on FSIS policies and activities is continuously updated and communicated to internal groups (FSIS employees) and external groups (media, Congress, industry, public, and Federal, State, and local partners), in coordination with OC. Ensure inquiries and information dissemination is handled efficiently and is consistent with FSIS and Department policies.
III. Verify communications have occurred and continue with OPACE personnel throughout the human pandemic.
IV. Ensure FSIS' Web site, social media and intranet are operational and accessible for all constituencies.
V. Ensure information communicated to internal and external audiences is continually updated.

Office of Planning, Analysis and Risk Management (OPARM)

I. Verify communications have occurred and continue with OPARM personnel throughout the human pandemic.
II. Support functions ranging from sample scheduling; Public Health Risk Evaluation (PHRE) scheduling; ensuring PHIS alerts and reports are available for FSIS inspection personnel, state meat and poultry inspection personnel, and industry.

Office of Public Health Science (OPHS)

I. Ensure laboratory functions continue in the face of human capital shortages or lab site closures associated with the human pandemic. In concert with OFO, prioritize sampling to ensure continuation of mission-critical testing.
II. Respond to food borne illness reports and ensure Consumer Complaint Monitoring System (CCMS) is operational and responsive
III. Verify communications have occurred and continue with OPHS personnel throughout the human pandemic.
IV. Provide scientific expertise and advice in the areas of microbiology, human health, risk assessment, Zoonotic disease, and toxicology.
V. Activate the FSIS Health Hazard Evaluation Board (HHEB) as needed according to Directive 8091.1.
VI. Respond to the intentional or unintentional introduction of foreign animal diseases, Zoonotic pathogens, or chemical agents into foods.

Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD)

I. Provide policy direction and interpretation for the Agency, including serving as liaison with Office of General Counsel, regarding FSIS policy concerns that may emerge in the course of a human pandemic.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

II. Verify communications have occurred and continue with OPPD personnel throughout the human pandemic.
III. Develop new policy (e.g., FSIS Notices) for inspection personnel and guidance to industry as necessary in response to a human pandemic.
IV. Provide continuous technical assistance, information and guidance to industry including small and very small plants, and State meat and poultry inspection programs.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Annex B - Social Distancing Plan

This Social Distancing Plan outlines infection control measures, techniques, practices, and strategies that FSIS and its employees will implement during a human pandemic. In order to prevent the spread of the pandemic disease, FSIS will minimize the duration, frequency, and level of person-to-person contact or social interaction as much as possible. This minimization will include physical distancing or the application of specific barriers between individuals. For example, social distancing may include increased use of Telework, placing employees on shifts, closing offices or buildings, and canceling of large gatherings.

Social distancing is a key strategy in FSIS' planning to maintain a healthy work environment and to maintaining the Agency's ability to perform its mission.

1. SOCIAL DISTANCING FOR FACILITY OPERATIONS

This section describes social distancing actions to be taken by USDA department personnel and by FSIS personnel responsible for facility operations in the event of human pandemic. Social distancing is a key principle in operational planning for facilities during a human pandemic.

Operations in FSIS Washington DC Facilities

As described in this section, FSIS social distancing preparedness applies to those facilities in Washington DC that house FSIS personnel. The Headquarters Complex consists of:

- Whitten Building
- South Building
- George Washington Carver Center/Riverdale
- Riverdale Building
- Patriots Plaza 3

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has designated a department Local Human Pandemic Coordinator for the Headquarters Complex and the NCR. This position is currently held by the USDA Director of Operations. The execution of operational and social distancing plans for facility operations (only) in the NCR will be undertaken at the direction of the USDA Director of Operations or a designee.

FSIS Human Pandemic Facility Managers. FSIS has designated Human Pandemic Facility Managers for all FSIS facilities. The list is maintained by the Chief Operating Officer. As FSIS facilities in Washington DC are in the National Capital Region, they will follow operational and social distancing procedures for facility operations per USDA guidance. As stated in the USDA plan, actions taken in the Headquarters Complex in the event of a human pandemic will be communicated to all Human Pandemic Facility Managers, including FSIS'.

FSIS' Human Pandemic Facility Managers responsibilities include:

- Identifying places within FSIS leased facilities where posters may be displayed.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

- Posting information as it becomes available from USDA or building management
- Complying with USDA specific information published on https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus .

The FSIS Washington DC Human Pandemic Facility Managers also serve on the USDA NCR Facilities Coordination Group, which has been established to:

1) Facilitate the flow of information between facilities in the NCR;
2) Identify and resolve problems associated with maintaining facilities so they can support operations;
3) Share lessons learned;
4) Facilitate programs to educate personnel on health, safety and social distancing techniques; and
5) Report on status of facilities as required.

The USDA Facilities Coordination Group currently meets monthly.

Operations in FSIS District/Regional/Field Facilities

Local Facility Managers. In general, the Local Facility Manager is the most senior FSIS person who deals with building (i.e., facility) issues for that location. FSIS Local Facility Manager(s) will closely coordinate with the FSIS EMC.

If a building is leased by the General Services Administration (GSA) and/or is managed by a private building management company, the FSIS Local Facility Manager will work with personnel from these organizations to ensure that FSIS occupants' needs and health and safety are attended to.

The FSIS Local Facility Manager(s) will follow operational and social distancing procedures as outlined in FSIS' *Human Pandemic Operations Plan*. Additionally, the FSIS Local Facilities Managers will support social distancing techniques and assure that the facilities provide a healthy workplace for FSIS employees.

FSIS Local Facility Managers, will:

- Keep the FSIS EMC informed of operational issues related to human pandemic preparedness, including instructions and/or actions imposed by lead tenants in GSA or other entity leased spaces.
- Identify places within the leased facility Agency-occupied areas where posters may be displayed. They will post information as it becomes available from GSA or a leased facilities' building management.
- Post information as it becomes available from USDA or building management.
- For FSIS-leased field facilities, identify facility functions or services that are vulnerable to disruption by high absenteeism, such as cafeterias or other food services.
- For facilities that are in a complex of buildings, determine whether functions and services can be transferred between buildings to provide greater separation of personnel and/or consolidation of equipment and supplies for more efficient managing and securing of assets.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

- Determine which facilities' functions and services are critical and must be done.
- Determine which functions and services can be put aside.
- Develop a listing of emergency services, including names, addresses, and phone numbers.
- Ensure that identified supplies and equipment required to meet a human pandemic situation are stockpiled.
- In conjunction with the Departmental facility operations staff and FSIS Employee Health and Safety personnel, establish protocols for sanitizing work areas.

If instructed by the Department, FSIS Local Facility Managers will:

- Implement social distancing guidance, including educating employees/visitors in social distancing (don't shake hands, keep distance, don't share cell phones, office phones, pens, etc.)
- Assist in providing support for employees working from home or teleworking.
- In conjunction with Departmental facility operations staff and FSIS Employee Health and Safety personnel ensure that identified supplies and equipment required to meet a human pandemic situation are stockpiled.
- Provide Facility Status reports to the FSIS Emergency Management Council.
- Comply with the FSIS Human Pandemic Operations Plan and, as discussed below, for GSA-leased facilities, GSA's *Pandemic Flu Committee Standard Operating Procedures* regarding building closures.
- Notify FSIS' OM ASD of any building closures.

GSA-Leased Facilities Field Offices. For those FSIS field facilities leased from GSA, the Local Facility Managers will follow GSA guidance with regards to facility operations in the event of a human pandemic. A directory of all FSIS sites leased from GSA is included as Attachment 1 to this Annex.

Other Federal Agency Leased Facilities Field Offices. For those FSIS facilities leased from other federal agencies, the FSIS Local Facility Managers will consult with the FSIS Significant Incident and Preparedness Response Staff (SIPRS) and the OM ASD regarding facility operations in the event of a human pandemic.

Office Space Within Regulated Facilities. For office space provided to FSIS by regulated facilities, the FSIS Inspector In Charge (IIC) will work with their next level supervisor, and with plant management to identify activities to support social distancing techniques and assure that the office space provides a healthy workplace for FSIS employees.

FSIS International Offices.
Local Facility Managers. For FSIS's international offices, located in Mexico City, Mexico and Beijing, China, the Local Facility Manager is the most senior FSIS person for that location. FSIS Local Facility Manager(s) will closely coordinate with the International Coordination Executive (ICE), or their designee if the ICE is not available. If nobody from OIC is available, the Local Facility Manager will coordinate with the FSIS EMC.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
USDA-FSIS-20-0962-A-000029

The FSIS Local Facility Manager will work with the local Foreign Agricultural Service and State Department personnel for updates on the local pandemic situation and to ensure that FSIS occupants' needs and health and safety are attended to.

The FSIS Local Facility Manager(s) will follow operational and social distancing procedures as detailed by the relevant Mission guidelines and instructions. Additionally, as appropriate, the FSIS Local Facilities Managers will support social distancing techniques and assure that the facilities provide a healthy workplace for FSIS employees.

FSIS Local Facility Managers, will:

- Keep the ICE, informed of operational issues related to human pandemic preparedness.
- Work with ICE, FSIS OA and Head of Mission to determine whether they should return to the United States.
- Follow instructions and/or actions from the Head of Mission.
- Determine which functions and services can be put aside.
- Develop a listing of emergency services, including names, addresses, and phone numbers.

If instructed by the Department, FSIS Local Facility Managers will:

- At the direction of the FSIS EMC implement social distancing guidance, including educating employees/visitors in social distancing (don't shake hands, keep distance, don't share cell phones, office phones, pens, etc.)
- Assist in providing support for employees working from home or teleworking.
- Provide Facility Status reports to the ICE.
- Comply with the relevant Mission-specific and FSIS Human Pandemic Operations Plan.
- Notify ICE of any building closures.

2.0 EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND SAFETY

In coordination with the Department, FSIS will commence an intensive information campaign with employees to ensure that they are fully informed of the health and safety issues related to the pandemic. The information will be designed to reassure employees that FSIS is concerned for their welfare and that the Agency will begin introducing social distancing techniques as appropriate to safeguard their health.

FSIS employees will be encouraged to take common sense steps to minimize the spread of the flu virus. Employees with symptoms of the pandemic disease should not report to work, and those who become ill at work should go home immediately. Supervisors should strongly encourage employees who are sick to take sick leave and go home.

As discussed in Section 1.6 of the FSIS Human Pandemic Operations Plan, in accordance with 9 CFR 416.5(c) and 9 CFR 590.560(c), FSIS in-plant inspection personnel, if ill with pandemic disease (or other illnesses), should be excluded from any work activities

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

which could create unsanitary conditions in the establishment whereby product could be contaminated with filth (e.g. bodily discharges from coughing and sneezing).

FSIS also has employees who are stationed overseas. FSIS is obligated to follow regulations concerning employees as outlined in Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSRs). These regulations cover everything from evacuation orders to shelter in place protocols to coordinating medical assistance. In the event of widespread outbreaks of human pandemic overseas, the U.S. State Department is the authority on all affairs concerning Federal employees stationed overseas.

2.1 Minimizing Contact in the Office

While in the workplace, there are measures and practices that employees can apply to prevent the spread of illness and minimize person-to-person contact. Listed below are procedures that FSIS will employ to minimize contact between employees:

- Employees should avoid face-to-face meetings. Instead, teleconferencing or videoconferencing is encouraged. If meetings are needed, they should be limited to an area with adequate ventilation, the ability to sit at least 6 feet apart, and the smallest number of staff necessary. In the event of a human pandemic, FSIS staff will be encouraged to participate in conference calls involving multiple staff members from the individual employees' desks (i.e., each person using their own phone) rather than conducting them in a conference room in a group setting.
- Employees should avoid, as much as possible, spending time in communal spaces such as lunch or break rooms and cafeterias. They will also be encouraged to stagger lunch and work breaks.
- Employees should conduct routine communication among staff without entering each other's work spaces (e.g., e-mail, telephones, Skype, or other online messaging/video systems)
- If warranted, or if directed by State or Local Public Health Departments or by USDA Departmental instructions, FSIS will close offices and/or buildings and will cancel large gatherings.

FSIS recognizes that a significant portion of the Agency's workload requires presence on-site (e.g., in regulated food establishments), the use of equipment only found in the government facility, and/or requires face-to-face contact.

2.2 Hand Hygiene and Cough Etiquette

Two of the most effective tools for prevention of the spread of a pandemic disease are good hand hygiene and proper cough etiquette. Reminders about those practices, which include hand washing and cough etiquette, will be posted in restrooms, break areas, and throughout the work environment. Posters and handouts can be found at www.flu.gov. Employees should follow CDC recommendations available at www.cdc.gov.

Hand Hygiene: Employees are encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol for at least 20 seconds:

- after using the restroom;

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

- before and after eating;
- after coughing, sneezing, and using tissues;
- after using shared equipment (telephones, computer keyboards, fax machines, pens); and
- after shaking hands (During a pandemic, other forms of personal greetings should be substituted for handshakes.).
- FSIS employees will be encouraged to review proper handwashing techniques at: https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html

Workplace Hygiene:

- Employees are encouraged to avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Wash your hands before preparing or eating food.

Cough Etiquette:

- Employees are encouraged to cover their mouths when coughing (if they are able) either by coughing into their inner elbow/upper sleeve, or into a disposable tissue; dispose of tissue into a no-touch trash receptable with a lid.
- As part of its communications efforts (see Annex E), FSIS employees will be encouraged to view the online CDC video on proper cough etiquette "*Cover Your Coughs and Sneezes*" The video can be found on www.coughsafe.com/media.htmlYouTube.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLXzw6j9JVw.
- The Charge Card Service Center has approved use of the card to purchase hand sanitizer, wipes and tissues for the office/workplace in common areas. Individual use of the items listed above (in a private workspace) is considered personal use and is not authorized. Masks and sprayers are considered personal use and are not authorized.

2.4 Use of Personal Protective Equipment. FSIS will follow CDC and Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines and, as referenced below, the USDA policy pertaining to the use of personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, etc.) and antiviral medication. The FSIS Environmental, Health and Safety Branch (OM Office of Chief Human Capital Officer) is serving as a resource to the Agency on occupational health and safety issues related to human pandemic planning.

2.5 Masks and Respirators. In general, the use of masks and respirators for pandemic disease prevention is recommended only in the healthcare setting.[2] Masks and respirators will not be provided by FSIS or USDA.

[2] CDC has prepared interim recommendations on surgical mask and respirator use to facilitate planning for use in **health care settings** during an influenza pandemic: *Interim Guidance on Planning for the Use of Surgical Masks and Respirators in Health Care Settings During an Influenza Pandemic,* October 2006.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

2.6 Antiviral Drugs. FSIS will not provide employees antiviral medication for either treatment or prevention of pandemic disease. In the event of a pandemic, antiviral drug stocks in hospitals, physician offices, and health departments will likely be limited, and the distribution of additional doses from the Strategic National Stockpile will be under the control of DHHS. Given that side effects and drug interactions can result from these medications and that improper use of them may contribute to virus resistance, FSIS recommends that decisions about the use of these medications be made by individuals and their physicians or health professionals.

FSIS will follow DHHS and Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines and any USDA policy[3] issued pertaining to the use of antiviral medication.

2.7 Employee Preparedness. If an employee is ill or caring for family members at home they should be prepared with enough food and supplies to last at least 3 days but possibly up to 2 weeks, especially if they are not able to leave the house or if those items are not available where they live. Recommended items to have on hand include: a gallon of water per person per day, a thermometer, non-perishable foods (i.e. canned beans, macaroni) a first aid kit, prescription medicines, infant formula and diapers, food and extra water for pet(s), and personal hygiene items. As part of its communications efforts (see Annex E), FSIS will direct employees to www.ready.gov for preparedness information.

4.0 ALTERNATIVE WORK PLACE ARRANGEMENTS (AWA) TELEWORK

Each program office within FSIS is should plan for, as appropriate, possible work-at-home scenarios, and evaluating the potential of shift work for its staff so that the Agency's essential functions and support services can continue and the Agency can best protect the health of its employees.

3.1 Who Can Telework?

FSIS will follow Department guidance on telework and changes to work locations. This information will be provided by the FSIS Pandemic Coordinator.

Managers and supervisors have the authority to require employees to telework during an emergency even if no formal agreement is in place. During a human pandemic situation, it is essential that the Agency continues to carry out its mission, and in that context, employees who are not eligible to telework under normal circumstances, may be able to telework– if certain measures are in place.

For employees whose job functions are not normally conducive to telework, it is important that performance measures are established and in place, as well as a tracking/monitoring system (standard operating procedures) for ensuring that productive work is being accomplished while teleworking under emergency situations.

[3] No written policy on the use of antivirals has been issued by USDA as of the date of this plan.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
USDA-FSIS-20-0962-A-000033

ANNEX C - HIRING FLEXIBILITIES AND PAY OPTIONS

Most of these authorities are presently available to USDA managers and are flexibilities that could be used during all seven stages of pandemic preparedness, response and recovery. Mission Area/Agency/Staff Office Human Pandemic Action Officers will be notified should authority levels be modified for use during the pandemic.

Authorities requiring approval from the Director, Office of Human Capital Management, the Assistant Secretary for Administration, the Secretary of Agriculture, or the Office of Personnel Management, will be pre-positioned by the USDA Pandemic Coordinator for expedited approval.

ITEM	STATUS/COMMENTS
Excused Absence (Extended Leave)	The Secretary of Agriculture has authority to grant extended administrative leave.
Emergency Leave Transfer Program	The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) can approve the establishment of Department-wide programs to solicit donations for future distribution to affected employees.
Overtime Pay	Agencies have authority to pay overtime. Departmental Administration's Office of Human Capital Management has authority to waive the bi-weekly maximum pay limitation.
Hazardous Duty Pay/Environmental Differential	Agencies have authority to determine if hazardous duty pay for general schedule employees and environmental differential pay for prevailing rate (wage grade) employees is warranted due to exposure to hazards, physical hardships, or working conditions of an unusually severe nature.
Emergency Critical Hiring	Agencies may make 30-day appointments in the excepted service to fill a critical hiring need. These appointments may be extended for an additional 30 days. CTAP, RPL and ICTAP requirements do not apply to these appointments.
Direct-Hire Authority	Agencies may use current OPM direct hire authority to make competitive service, career-conditional, term, or temporary appointments, as appropriate. In all cases, agencies must adhere to the public notice requirements in 5 U.S.C. 3327 and 3330 and all ICTAP requirements.
Temporary Employment Firms	Agencies may contract with private sector temporary employment firms for 120 days to meet emergency staffing needs. Contracts extensions beyond 120 days are subject to displaced employee procedures.
120 Day or Less Competitive Appointments	Agencies may make competitive appointments for 120 days or less without clearing CTAP and ICTAP. However, use of this program may identify one or more well-qualified displaced Federal employees who are available for immediate employment.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Re-Employment Listing (RPL)	Agencies have authority to select current and former employees from the RPL for temporary, term, or permanent competitive service appointments.
Telework	Agencies may authorize employees to telework from an alternative worksite (home, satellite office, Telework Center) one or more days a week. Requirement for telework agreement can be waived. Agencies can compel employees who have previously opted out to telework in emergency/pandemic situations, per OPM guidance.
Contract Personnel	Agencies must schedule a National Agency Check Inquiries (NACI) no later than 14 calendar days after an individual begins work under the contract, but only if the duties are designated as low-risk, non-sensitive from a national security standpoint.
Re-employing Annuitants (with salary offset)	Agencies have this authority.

Note: In the above chart, Agencies refers to USDA Mission Areas, Staff Offices, and Agencies.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Annex D - FSIS Employee and Regulated Facilities Tracking Procedures

1.0 FSIS Employee Tracking Procedures

The FSIS Pandemic Coordinator may implement the FSIS Employee Tracking Procedures. This direction will be provided to FSIS executives.

Collecting this information enables leaders to re-deploy resources and personnel to ensure that mission essential functions are carried out.

The Agency's current Employee Tracking System to manage absences from the workplace due to a human pandemic is based on current FSIS procedures for tracking absences and lessons learned during hurricane and response activities.

Actions to be taken when absenteeism begins to impact operations:

- An Incident Report concerning the pandemic will be entered into FIMS.
- At the appropriate time, the FSIS EMC will be activated.
- FSIS will begin immediate implementation of its Employee Tracking Procedures when the EMC deemed appropriate because of increased level of absenteeism.
- Once notified, EMC Duty Officer (DO) will call the EMC together for a briefing. At this briefing, the DO will notify the program areas of the Department's request that FSIS begin tracking employee absenteeism related to human pandemic. At this meeting, SIPRS will also briefly explain that FSIS needs to collect the following information about employee's status using the Employee Absenteeism Automated Tracking Form in FIMS
- EMC members will help their program areas collect the necessary information using their program areas own procedures. Once this information is collected, the appropriate program area representatives will complete an Employee Absenteeism Automated Tracking Form in the IR created for this event using FIMS. Depending on directions from the Department, this information may be needed on a bi-weekly, weekly, or daily basis.
- The EMC Duty Officer will assemble the data found in FIMS from the various program areas into one report. This report will provide the foundation for updates on employee status that will be provided to the USDA Food Safety Human Pandemic Action Officer, USDA OPSCENTER, and FSIS' EMC. The combined report will be attached to the IR.

Actions To Be Taken When The Pandemic Appears To Be Lessening:

- This process will stand down when the FSIS Pandemic Coordinator deems the level of absenteeism to be at near or at the pre-pandemic levels and stop tracking employee absenteeism due to symptoms associated with the pandemic disease.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

- The process will be reviewed, and any lessons learned will be included in the After Action Report that SIPRS will assemble after the pandemic lessens.

2. REPORTING RESPONSIBILITES—EMPLOYEE DATA

2.1 SIPRS Reporting Responsibilities

SIPRS personnel including the EMC Duty Officer will be responsible for compiling employee tracking information received from FSIS program areas, generating reports, and providing updates as requested on employee status to FSIS EMC and to USDA

2.2 Employees' Reporting Responsibilities

Under FSIS Directive 4630.2, *Leave,* FSIS employees are currently required to report to their supervisors if they will be absent from duty. That directive specifies when, how, and whom the employee needs to notify if they are unable to report to work.

2.3 Supervisors and Managers Reporting Responsibilities

In the event of a human pandemic, the USDA has asked that FSIS supervisors and managers:

- Gather as much contact information about their employees as possible (e.g. office, home, cell, pager, personal email, etc.) and ensure that the next higher level of management has this information also.
- Notify their employees to keep contact information about their supervisor's work and home numbers in a prominent place where their family members can find it in order to report employee illness related to a pandemic when the employee is unable.
- Initiate a follow-up for any unscheduled employee absence.
- Supervisor should maintain, update and communicate to staff an order of succession that is three (3) deep to cover the responsibility of employee tracking if the supervisor becomes ill.

- FSIS supervisors and managers should be prepared to obtain the following types of information about the employees under their responsibility: The questions may ask for data to be reported by state, because this is how the USDA Office of Homeland Security wants the information to be reported to them.
    - Number of employees that work on their staff broken down by state;
    - Number of employees that work on their staff that are in the office working broken down by state;
    - Number of employees that work on their staff that are absent for any reason broken down by state. This includes sick leave, annual leave, their SDO, and any other leave; and/or
    - Number of employees that work on their staff that they are unable to account for broken down by state.

2.4 FSIS Program Office Reporting

Information collected by supervisors and managers must be rolled up and added to the IR in FIMS.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT
USDA-FSIS-20-0962-A-000037

- FSIS Program Offices will maintain a tally of the following information. The questions ask for data to be reported by state, because this is how the USDA Office of Homeland Security wants the information to be reported to them:
    - Number of employees that normally work in their program area broken down by state;
    - Number of employees from their program area that are in the office working broken down by state;
    - Number of employees from their program area that are absent for any reason broken down by state. This includes sick leave, annual leave and any other leave; and/or
    - Number of employees from their program area that you are unable to account for broken down by state.

Once this information is collected, the appropriate program area's representative will fill out the Automated Employee Absenteeism Tracking Form in the IR for this event in FIMS. Depending on directions from the Department, this information may be needed on a bi-weekly, weekly, or daily basis.

3. REPORTING RESPONSIBILITES—ESTABLISHMENT STATUS

As per FSIS Directive *5500.2 Revision 5 – Significant Incident Response*, FSIS personnel are to collect information about the operational status of official establishments, as well as facilities that handle FSIS-regulated products (e.g., warehouses), during a significant incident. This would apply to facilities located in an area affected by a human pandemic.

In the event of a human pandemic, SIPRS will notify the appropriate FSIS EMC Representative that information about the operational status of official establishments or facilities under their purview is needed. The EMC Representative will then notify the appropriate personnel within their program, to complete FSIS Form 5500-8, *Impact of Non-Routine Incidents on Establishments, Warehouses and Import Houses*

SIPRS will compile the facility data and forward it to FSIS EMC leadership and FSIS' Human Pandemic Liaison and the Department.

4. REPORTING WORKFORCE DATA TO OPM

FSIS will follow reporting guidance set out by the Department and OPM, coordinated through SIPRS.

OPM will notify agencies when its reporting requirements need to be met. OPM VIII-C-1, Attachment A (illustrated here as Attachment 1) shows information that will be collected from payroll providers. OPM VIII-D-1, Attachment B shows information that will be collected from agencies likely through their Chief Human Capital Officer. These forms and instructions for completing them are in OPM-VIII-B-1, B-2 and OPM-VIII-D-1, D-2 in *Human Capital Planning for Pandemic Influenza-Information for Departments and Agencies* (http://www.opm.gov/pandemic/OPM-Pandemic_AllIssuances.pdf).

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Annex E - FSIS PANDEMIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

This Pandemic Communications Plan outlines communication strategies and measures that FSIS and its employees will implement during a human pandemic. Timely, accurate, and effective dissemination of information is critical to FSIS' ability to maintain its essential functions and protect employee health and safety in the event of a human pandemic.

OPACE will ensure that effective communications occur both vertically (down to employees and up through supervisory channels) and laterally between district, and regional offices and with other Federal agencies, state agencies and industry representatives.

The USDA Office of Communications (OC) is the lead agency for communicating on pandemic issues. As such, OPACE will work in concert with USDA OC to provide coordinated messages during a pandemic response.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN WHEN THERE IS AN ONGOING PANDEMIC WAVE NOT IMPACTING OPERATIONS

- Identify employees who do not have at-home e-mail service, so they can be reached by additional methods (e.g., telephone broadcast messages on a voice mail system).
- Provide employees with information on how to contact FSIS in an emergency.
- Establish and develop communication strategies with other USDA agencies and international partners in order to exchange essential and consistent information.
- Establish communication strategies with the USDA Food Safety Pandemic Action Officer in order to exchange pertinent information.
- Establish personnel and resource contingency plans to manage increased media and congressional inquiries.
- Advise all FSIS employees on the proper protocol regarding media requests.
- Set-up infrastructure for regularly scheduled employee briefings. Mixed modes of communication (conference call, recorded message, Web site information) should be established to reach the largest number of FSIS employees.
- Develop talking points and other material for AskUSDA, AskFSIS, and Meat and Poultry Hotline staff.

Communicating to HQ Employees

- Communicate proactively with Headquarters employees.
- Familiarize supervisors in Washington, D.C. locations with the FSIS Human Pandemic Communication Plan.
- Encourage FSIS Program Offices to test their Emergency Notification Procedures for contacting employees.
- Prepare basic communication resources (e.g., posters, press releases, talking points, Q & As, fact sheets, B-roll footage, live announcer copy, hotline response material, graphics and brochures) in accordance with OC, OPM, and CDC guidance. Messages should include information to address rumors, infection control measures, travel advisories, messages to minimize anxiety and fear. Pre-clear the messages and store them on secure servers. Update information as necessary.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

- Establish expedited review process for approving pandemic – related messages and materials during a pandemic emergency.
- Identify and provide talking points for trained communication specialists and media spokespersons.
- The FSIS Web site has been linked to https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus. FSIS personnel will also be directed to www.flu.gov and www.cdc.gov for additional information.
- Email an "all FSIS" communication within 24 hours of event.
- As soon as possible, email a letter from the FSIS Administrator to all FSIS employees. For those without email, supervisors should use previously established emergency communication methods.
- Develop articles for employees in *The Beacon* and *FSIS Wednesday Newsline.*
- Conduct special briefings for Bargaining Unit and employee organizations.

Communicating with Non-HQ Field Personnel

- Coordinate communication between OPACE, OM, OFO, OEED, OA, OPHS, and OIEA.
- Develop protocols for conducting daily conference calls between Headquarters, District Offices and Regions.
- In coordination with OFO, review protocols for front-line supervisors to disseminate information to personnel.
- Pre-clear information that may be posted in *FSIS Wednesday Newsline,* FSIS' Web site and employee intranet as mediums to reach field employees.

Communications with State and Industry

- Review established procedures for expediting publishing information in *FSIS Constituent Update.*
- Establish procedures for regularly scheduled briefings.
- Use *FSIS Constituent Update* to reach state and industry.
- Develop targeted messages for industry and state inspection personnel.
- Hold initial industry/consumer stakeholder briefing.
- Hold regularly scheduled industry/consumer stakeholder briefings (frequency to be determined).

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN WHEN THERE IS AN ONGOING PANDEMIC THAT BEGINS TO IMPACT OPERATIONS:

- Implement communication strategies with other USDA agencies and international partners in order to exchange essential and consistent information.
- Inform employees that they remain subject to normal employee standards of conduct during the period of the emergency.
- Emphasize safety awareness and the requirement to follow certain safety procedures for the situation at-hand.
- Publicize Q&As and OPM-issued fact sheets on human resources information for employees.
- Utilize all available means of communication to keep employees informed.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

Communicating to HQ Employees

- Encourage employees to read Notices and Directives establishing policies regarding issues such as telecommuting, and social distancing.
- Encourage employees to access the Department of Homeland Security Web site (www.ready.gov) for templates to develop a Family Communications Plan.
- Identify and provide information on the Employee Assistance Program.
- Program Offices will implement their respective Emergency Notification systems for personnel accountability.
- Program Offices will implement programs for notifying cross-trained staff and contractors that may need to be deployed.
- Review and implement the use of prepared basic communication resources (e.g., posters, press releases, talking points, Q&As, fact sheets, B-roll footage, live announcer copy, hotline response material, graphics and brochures) in accordance with OC and OPM guidance. Messages should include information to address rumors, infection control measures, travel advisories, messages to minimize anxiety and fear. Pre-clear messages and store them on secure servers.
- Provide talking points for trained communication specialists and media spokespersons.
- Establish talking points for Ask USDA and Meat and Poultry Hotline staff to respond to phone questions. Build out messages on Ask USDA and the Meat and Poultry Hotlines' interactive voice response system (IVR) so callers can listen to pre-recorded messages if they call when the contact centers are closed.
- Implement regular communications with employee using various methods (e.g., conference call, user notice, video, social media, and Web site information).
- Publish information in employee publications.

Communicating with Field Personnel

- Implement procedures for conducting town hall meetings or consultations during shift changes.
- Implement protocols for front-line supervisors to disseminate information to personnel.
- Implement work policies regarding mission critical personnel.
- Implement reporting protocols for operational FSIS field facilities and forms for facility staffing status, facility status (e.g., utilities and telecommunication systems.
- Update and release pre-cleared information that may be posted in the facility or placed in mass mailers.
- Publish information in employee publications.
- Maintain open communications with field personnel.
- Keep the National Joint Council (NJC) informed of the status of the emergency.

Communications with State and Industry

- Update and release pre-cleared information.
- Update and release pre-cleared briefing packages targeted to state inspection systems and industry and place them on secure servers.
- Maintain regularly scheduled meetings with state and industry representatives.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN WHEN THE PANDEMIC WAVE APPEARS TO BE LESSENING:

- Continue to develop and test communications and maintain daily contact with other geographical sites.
- Post regular updates to Agency Web sites (Internet and Intranet) in a timely manner and check these updates against the Departmental guidance.
- Supervisors will continue to communicate with employees who do not have personal e-mail service through previously established protocols.

Communicating with Headquarters (HQ) Employees

- Ensure Program Offices review and use Emergency Notification Procedures for updating and testing notification rosters, contact lists, and personnel databases.
- Utilize FSIS' Incident Management System (FIMS) to notify FSIS management and display activities and response progress to the senior management.
- Utilize AgAWAirs and MIR3 for communicating with staff.
- Continue providing updated talking points for Department and Agency spokespersons.
- Continue to provide information on the Employee Assistance Program.
- Send updates through All-Users Announcements – by email, these can be targeted strictly to headquarters employees.

Communications with State and Industry

- Provide regular updates through the *FSIS Constituent Update.*
- Provide conference calls on an as-needed basis.
- For state-inspection personnel, updates will be provided through *FSIS Wednesday Newsline,* and All-Users Announcements – by email.

AMERICAN OVERSIGHT