

for the meeting, contact Ms. Jennifer Callahan of the FSIS Planning Staff at (202) 501-7138 or by FAX at (202) 501-7642. Persons requiring a sign language interpreter or other special accommodation should contact Ms. Callahan at the above numbers.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Pathogen Reduction/Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (PR/HACCP Systems) final rule was published on July 25, 1996. The rule calls for the development of a comprehensive HACCP-based farm-to-table food safety system. The rule requires implementation of HACCP systems in all meat and poultry establishments to reduce the risk of foodborne disease. In addition, the rule requires that each establishment develop and implement written sanitation standard operating procedures (SOPs), that slaughter establishments conduct regular microbial testing, and that slaughter establishments and establishments producing raw ground products meet pathogen reduction performance standards for *Salmonella*.

The sanitation SOPs and the *E. coli* process control regulations went into effect on January 27, 1997. The *Salmonella* pathogen reduction performance standards requirements will be applicable simultaneously with HACCP implementation dates. Large plants implemented HACCP systems in January 1998, and small plants will begin implementing HACCP in January 1999. The deadline for very small establishments, those with fewer than 10 employees or annual sales of less than \$2.5 million, is January 2000.

Other changes are being considered for implementation in the future. FSIS plans to test alternative modes of conducting inspection, employing new validated pathogen reduction intervention technologies, and identifying other consumer protection activities to achieve a higher degree of food safety from farm to table. The Agency also is evaluating its human resources to determine new skills its dedicated workforce will need in the future and the type of training that will be required for its employees.

The meeting is open to the public. FSIS is interested in receiving comments and recommendations from all of its stakeholders on the nature and scope of the food safety regulatory system for the future.

Done in Washington, DC, on August 4, 1998.

Thomas J. Billy,
Administrator.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. 98-029N]

Availability of Report of the Recall Policy Working Group

AGENCY: Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Meeting Notice; Request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is making available for public comment a report entitled "Improving Recalls at the Food Safety and Inspection Service." Recalls are initiated by a firm, either on its own or at the request of FSIS, to remove from commerce any meat, poultry, or egg product that there is reason to believe is adulterated or misbranded. The report, which was prepared by an FSIS Working Group, assesses the Agency's recall policy and procedures for before, during, and after a recall is initiated and provides concrete, practical recommendations for improving the Agency's recall process within FSIS' current statutory authority. FSIS also is holding a public meeting to discuss the report and the comments from the public about the Agency's recall policy.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before October 9, 1998.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on October 5 at the Doubletree Hotel Park Terrace, 1515 Rhode Island Avenue, Washington, DC 20005. A block of rooms will be held under USDA/FSIS until September 5, 1998. Please call the hotel directly at 800-222-TREE to make a reservation. To register for the meeting, contact Ms. Mary Gioglio by telephone at (202) 501-7244 or (202) 501-7138 or by FAX at (202) 501-7642. If a sign language interpreter or other special accommodation is necessary, contact Ms. Gioglio at the above numbers by September 30, 1998.

Single copies of the report of the Recall Policy Working group are available from the FSIS Docket Clerk in the FSIS Docket Room, Room 102, Cotton Annex, 300 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3700, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Persons also may request the report by writing to the above address or calling the Docket Room at (202) 720-3813 during the designated hours.

Submit one original and two copies of written comments on the report to the FSIS Docket Clerk, Docket #98-029N, at the above address. All comments

received in response to this notice will be considered part of the public record and will be available for viewing in the Docket Room between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Philip S. Derfler, Associate Deputy Administrator, Office of Policy, Program Development, and Evaluation, at (202) 720-2710 or FAX (202) 720-2025.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: During 1997, industry initiated several major Class I recalls at FSIS' request, one of which involved more than 25 million pounds of ground beef believed to be contaminated with *E. coli* 0157:H7. As a result of these recalls, concerns were raised about the Agency's policy regarding recalls, the process for identifying affected product, industry's recordkeeping practices, and public and interagency notification problems. On September 24, 1997, FSIS held a public meeting on its recall policy and procedures to determine whether changes are needed. Approximately 30 people made oral presentations at the meeting, and the Agency received a small number of written comments after the meeting.

In November 1997, FSIS created a Working Group to assess its current recall policies and practices, to consider the oral and written comments that the Agency had received, and to develop a set of recommendations on how recalls should be accomplished. The Working Group focused on three major topics: how FSIS administers recalls; how FSIS communicates with consumers, industry, and other Federal and State agencies about recalls; and how FSIS should proceed after the recalled product is removed from commerce. Based on a comprehensive review of the issues, the Working Group has determined that the Agency's recall policy and procedures are basically sound, but that improvements can be made to make them more consistent with the Pathogen Reduction/Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point approach to inspection. The Working Group has submitted its report to the FSIS Administrator.

On May 13 and 14, 1998, FSIS presented a draft of the Working Group's report to the Meat and Poultry Inspection Advisory Committee for comments and suggestions. Generally, the Committee strongly endorsed the report, although at least one Committee member dissented.

As a result of the Committee's discussion and deliberations, the Working Group has made a small number of changes to the report to clarify the group's recommendations. In

addition, FSIS is requesting comment on a number of issues that were highlighted in the Advisory Committee's discussions:

1. How can FSIS or the affected plant best communicate with the consumer when it is necessary to do so? Is the press release the most effective means? When is a press release appropriate? The Agency requests comments on these issues from communications experts, from agencies that have been involved in recalls, and from all other interested parties.

2. How can FSIS ensure that when it sends notification of a recall to State agencies that that notification is sent to the appropriate agencies and reaches the appropriate person within those agencies?

3. At what point should the Agency consider a recall to be closed? Should FSIS keep the recall open if there is an ongoing criminal investigation of the event out of which the recall arose?

4. Should the Agency issue public information on proper cooking of meat, poultry, or egg products whenever there is a recall that involves one of these types of products that has been contaminated with a pathogen, even if the Agency's public notification policy does not call for a news release about the recall?

5. What should be the role of Agency compliance officers in a recall? The Working Group's report calls for their role to be expanded. Is this appropriate?

The Agency will review the report in conjunction with the public comments that it receives, further consideration within the Agency and discussion with other agencies, as well as with the comments of the members of the Advisory Committee. Based on its review, the Agency will formulate a set of actions that it considers appropriate to take in response to the report. The Agency will submit its plans to the Secretary of Agriculture for concurrence. Once it arrives at a course of action, FSIS intends to announce its plans in the **Federal Register**.

Done at Washington, DC, on August 4, 1998.

Thomas J. Billy,
Administrator.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Foreign Agricultural Service

Special Agricultural Safeguard Measures Pursuant to the Uruguay Round Agreements Act

AGENCY: Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notification of invocation of special agricultural safeguard duty on imports of sheep meat.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to U.S. Notes 1 and 2 to Subchapter IV, Chapter 99, of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States, in conjunction with such Subchapter IV, this is notification of invocation of the applicable safeguard of one cent per kilogram on certain imports of sheep meat, commencing on the date of publication of this notice through December 31, 1998.

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 10, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cathy McKinnell, Multilateral Trade Negotiation Division, Stop 1022, Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-1022, or telephone (202) 720-6064.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: U.S. Notes 1 and 2 to Subchapter IV, Chapter 99, of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) in conjunction with such Subchapter IV set forth certain safeguard duties that may be imposed upon specified imported agricultural goods under certain conditions. These duties are measures established in accordance with Article 5 of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture, as approved pursuant to Section 101 of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act (P.L. 103-465). Within Subchapter IV, HTS Subheading 9904.02.60 sets forth an additional safeguard duty of one cent per kilogram for sheep meat, if entered during the effective period of safeguards based upon quantity announced by the Secretary of Agriculture. In conformity with Article 5 of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and Section 405 of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act, the quantity of imported sheep meat have exceeded 125 percent of the average annual imports for the preceding three years (the "trigger level"). The HTS subheading for sheep meat to which the additional duty would apply are:

0204.21.00, 0204.22.40, 0204.23.40, 0204.41.00, 0204.42.40, and 0204.43.40.

Section 405(a) of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act requires, among other things, that the President shall determine and cause to be published in

the **Federal Register** the list of special safeguard agricultural goods and the applicable trigger prices and, on an annual basis, trigger levels. Section 405(b) of that act provides, in relevant part, that if the President determines with respect to a special safeguard agricultural good that it is appropriate to impose the volume-based safeguard, then the President shall determine the amount of the duty to be imposed, the period such duty shall be in effect, and any other terms and conditions applicable to the duty.

Further to the application of such special agricultural safeguard duties, the President proclaimed on December 23, 1994 (Presidential Proclamation No. 6763) the provisions of U.S. Notes 1 and 2 to Subchapter IV, Chapter 99, of the HTS as well as the automatically applicable safeguard duties set forth in such subchapter upon satisfaction of the requisite conditions. Such U.S. Notes 1 and 2 set forth the other terms and conditions for application of any such duty.

As also provided in Presidential Proclamation 6763, the President delegated to the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to make the determinations and effect the publications described in section 405(a) of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act. The Secretary of Agriculture has further delegated this authority to the Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services (7 CFR § 2.16(a)(3)(x1ii)), who has in turn further delegated such authority to the Administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service (7 CFR § 2.43(a)(42)).

The Administrator determined that the 1998 trigger level for sheep meat is 9,335,000 kilograms (63 FR 13387, Mar. 19, 1998).

Notice

The Administrator has determined that the amount of sheep meat is imported during 1998 has exceeded the trigger level of 9,335,000 kilograms. In accordance with U.S. Notes 1 and 2, Subchapter IV, Chapter 99 of the HTS and Subheading 9904.02.60 an additional duty of one cent per kilogram shall apply from the date of publication of this notice through December 31, 1998.

As provided in U.S. Note 1, goods of Canada or Mexico imported into the United States are not subject to such duty. As provided in U.S. Note 2, this duty shall not apply to any goods en route on the basis of a contract settled