

minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

I.M. Gonzalez,

Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Research Service

Notice of Request to Extend a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Agricultural Research Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Agricultural Research Service's intent to request an extension of a currently approved information collection, the Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII) 1999-2002.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received August 11, 1999 to be assured of consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Alanna J. Moshfegh, Research Leader, Food Surveys Research Group, Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 4700 River Road, Unit 83, Riverdale, MD 20737, (301) 734-8457.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII) 1999-2002.

OMB Control Number: 0518-0023.

Expiration Date of Approval: October 31, 1999.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection, the Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII).

Abstract: USDA has been conducting nationwide food surveys since the 1930's as one means of fulfilling its responsibility to ensure the health and well-being of Americans through improved nutrition. USDA food consumption surveys measure the levels and shifts in the food and nutrient content and the nutritional adequacy of U.S. diets over time, and provide other information pertinent to understanding diets and their determinants.

The Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII) is a major component of the National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Program (NNMRRP), established by the

National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-445). The CSFII addresses the requirement of the 1990 Act for continuous monitoring of the dietary and nutritional status of the U.S. population and trends with respect to such status by obtaining information on food intakes by individuals. Another component of the NNMRRP, the Diet and Health Knowledge Survey (DHKS), is included in the CSFII. The DHKS is the first national survey designed so that data on individuals' attitudes and knowledge about nutrition and health can be linked directly to data on their food and nutrient intakes.

The primary public policy applications of USDA's food consumption survey data include evaluating the adequacy of American diets in relationship to scientific and Federal dietary recommendations and goals. Applications include monitoring the dietary status of at-risk population subgroups including children, the elderly, low-income, etc; assessing the nutritional impact of Federal food assistance programs; estimating exposure to pesticide residues, food additives, and contaminants; and monitoring and evaluating food use across the population specifically as it relates to food safety issues. Under the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996, the CSFII provides food consumption data for use in improving the accuracy and quality of EPA dietary risk assessments. Other applications include developing food fortification, enrichment, and labeling policies and assessing the nutritional impact of those policies; and assessing demand for agricultural products.

Accurate and timely food consumption data in an electronic, user-friendly format is a goal essential for meeting the information needs of these applications. The CSFII 1999-2002 interviews will use a computer-assisted telephone mode of collection. A newly developed USDA multiple-pass 24-hour recall method will be used to collect the dietary information. The sample will be drawn through a list-assisted random-digit dialing approach with the full U.S. population covered each year. Future plans include integrating the CSFII with the DHHS' National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, allowing for a significant increase in sample size and coverage of population subgroups and use of a common dietary methodology and nutrient data base.

For the past two years extensive methodologic research has been conducted to develop an improved USDA multiple-pass 24-hour recall method to collect the dietary

information by telephone. Both cognitive research and field tests have been conducted as components of this research. Activities also have been ongoing to automate the recall method and other survey questionnaires for administration by telephone. During the next year, development and testing of the computer-assisted recall method and other questionnaires will continue. The computer-assisted telephone interviews will be tested and evaluated in two nationwide pilot studies. Data collection for the main CSFII will begin January 2001.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 90 minutes per response.

Respondents: Non-institutionalized individuals of all ages residing in private households in the U.S.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 5,000 over 1 year.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 7,500 hours.

Copies of this information collection and related instructions can be obtained without charge from Lori G. Borrud, Food Surveys Research Group, Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 4700 River Road, Unit 83, Riverdale, MD 20737, (301) 734-8457.

Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to Alanna J. Moshfegh, Food Surveys Research Group, Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 4700 River Road, Unit 83, Riverdale, MD 20737, (301) 734-8457.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Signed at Beltsville, MD, May 27, 1999.

Phyllis E. Johnson,

Director, Beltsville Area, Agricultural
Research Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. 99-026N]

Australia's Meat Safety Enhancement Program (MSEP)

AGENCY: Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of equivalence decision.

SUMMARY: The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is announcing its decision that the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service's (AQIS) Meat Safety Enhancement Program (MSEP) for slaughter inspection in establishments that slaughter meat for export to the United States: (1) Meets all requirements of U.S. law for the import of product to the United States; (2) provides the same level of public health protection as U.S. domestic slaughter inspection; and, (3) is therefore equivalent. The Agency will review its equivalence decision when AQIS completes the MSEP field trials and prepares a report for FSIS review. In the interim, Australian establishments that participate in the MSEP field trials may ship product to the United States.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the MSEP document are available from the FSIS Docket Clerk, Room 102 Cotton Annex, 300 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3700. A copy may also be obtained from the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service homepage at <http://www.dpie.gov.au/aqis/homepage>.

A transcript of the public meeting is available for review by the public in the FSIS Docket Room.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

FSIS published a notice in the **Federal Register** on January 15, 1999 (64 FR 2621) announcing the availability of a document prepared by AQIS that sets forth AQIS's plan to conduct field trials of the MSEP—a new

slaughter inspection system. Australia sought the concurrence of the United States in order to continue meat exports to this country from plants that participate in a pilot test of MSEP. FSIS requested comments on the document that the public could submit in writing or at a public meeting.

Public Comments

FSIS held a public meeting on February 3, 1999, to discuss the MSEP program and hear public comments. At this meeting, AQIS presented its program and responded to concerns raised by attendees.

Most of the written comments expressed opposition to MSEP equivalence.

Those in favor pointed out that the MSEP proposal resolves issues raised in November 1997 when FSIS informed AQIS that Project 2 (an earlier version of MSEP) was not equivalent because it did not provide an adequate form or intensity of Federal oversight. Favorable comments also cited the AQIS commitment to station a Government inspector on each slaughter line at a point between carcass trimming and final rinse for 100% verification that zero-fecal and other defect requirements have been met.

Those opposed to MSEP equivalence raised various issues that are discussed in the following sections. Responses provided by AQIS are included in this discussion.

1. Several comments expressed concerns about an increase in cases of Salmonellosis reported in Australia during 1996 and 1997. These cases were said to reflect problems in the Australian domestic meat inspection system, which is similar to MSEP. AQIS responds to this issue as follows:

A Communicable Infectious Diseases report of the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care on *Salmonella* cases in Victoria showed that the main recent outbreaks were attributable to Italian-style ice cream, peanut butter, mayonnaise and processed meat products. There was no data indicating an association of cases with raw meat coming from abattoirs. Conclusions from the report indicate that 'gross errors in food handling and mishandling by consumers' were the principal contributing factors.

It was indicated that the 'high success rate in tracking the sources of outbreaks, and the associated publicity, probably led to more testing and more reporting of outbreaks which may previously have gone unreported.'

A recent baseline study conducted on Australian export beef (1996) demonstrated that the incidence of *Salmonella* on carcasses was 0.4%. Approximately 17 years ago a similar survey demonstrated that the incidence was 2.0%. The results of the 1996

baseline survey suggests that there has been a five-fold improvement in the reduction of *Salmonella* on Australian beef. The general prevalence of Salmonellosis world wide has increased, as it has in Australia, but it can be attributed to better testing and reporting in general, and in the case of Australia, to items such as peanuts, coleslaw, eggs, etc. Testing so far for *Salmonella* in the context of Pathogen Reduction/HACCP implementation in the Australian export meat plants has revealed a 0.05% positive isolation rate from beef carcasses.

FSIS notes that comments about domestic foodborne illness rates in Australia do not relate directly to MSEP equivalence or the equivalence of Australian plants certified for export to the United States. AQIS has implemented the same or equivalent Pathogen Reduction/Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) final rule microbial testing programs in all U.S.-certified Australian plants. Additionally, AQIS has collected baseline *Salmonella* data and other microbial data which indicate that the one plant presently proposed for MSEP pilot testing produces very clean product under traditional inspection. These data will be applied as performance standards during subsequent field trials while the trial plant operates under MSEP. AQIS will hold this plant responsible for attaining the same or better microbiological results under MSEP than it achieved under traditional inspection. As other Australian export plants qualify for MSEP, AQIS and FSIS will review their baseline to ensure that appropriate microbial performance standards are applied.

2. Some commenters expressed concerns about what activities constitute Government inspection under MSEP. AQIS responds as follows:

Government inspection under MSEP comprises all of the following activities and responsibilities outlined in the appropriate Australian Federal Government legislation (The Export Control Act and associated Export Meat Orders). These activities and responsibilities include: Facilities and site standards of construction, hygiene etc, fit and proper person clearance of company principals, operational process control, ante and post mortem verification and oversight, disposition and control, full time government veterinary officer oversight, 100% verification for zero fecal contamination by a government meat inspector stationed at the end of the slaughter line, microbiological verification (ESAM program), macroscopic verification (Meat Hygiene Assessment), government approved HACCP/QA system and, government certification.

FSIS notes that the AQIS proposal details qualification requirements for establishments that apply for MSEP participation and delineates activities