

FOOD SAFETY:





More Disclosure and Data Needed to Clarify Impact of Changes to Poultry and Hog Inspections

GAO-13-775: Published: Aug 22, 2013. Publicly Released: Sep 4, 2013.

HIGHLIGHTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

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Recommendations for Executive Action

1. **Recommendation:** The Secretary of Agriculture should direct the Administrator of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) to clearly disclose to the public limitations in the information--including the cost-benefit analysis--the agency relied on for the rulemaking to modernize poultry slaughter inspections.

Agency Affected: Department of Agriculture

2. **Recommendation:** As FSIS continues its evaluation of its pilot project for young hogs, the Secretary of Agriculture should direct the Administrator of the FSIS to collect and analyze the information necessary to determine whether the pilot project is meeting its purpose.


Agency Affected: Department of Agriculture

Status: Closed - Implemented

Comments: In response to GAO's recommendation, FSIS generally addressed the limitations that GAO identified in the agency's proposed rule to modernize poultry slaughter inspections, including the cost-benefits analysis. For example, in its final August 2014 rule, the agency clarified that most of the cost estimates were based on data collected from 12 young chicken establishments that participated in the pilot project in 2001. In addition, the agency removed the proposal for an increase of line speed at young chicken establishments, eliminating GAO's concerns about the calculations of cost savings surrounding this proposal. In September 2015, we met with FSIS officials and they clarified how the agency addressed other limitations that we identified in the proposed rule. These actions fulfill the intent of the recommendation. Should FSIS move forward with other proposed rules to modernize slaughter inspections, it will be important for the agency to be transparent about any data limitations used in the development of these proposals.


Status: Closed - Implemented

Comments: In November 2014, FSIS completed its final evaluation report of the five young hog establishments in the pilot project and concluded that the food safety outcomes at these establishments were comparable to those not in the pilot project. Compared to its 2011 draft report, FSIS collected additional years of data on the performance of those establishments in the pilot project. In addition, the agency analyzed new data on inspection activities, comparing the results from those in the pilot project to other establishments. The steps FSIS has taken generally fulfill the intent of the recommendation.

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