

# SMA InfoMeat

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Edited by Phyllis Zimmerman

## Harkin Pushes for Food Safety Commission

Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, recently announced he would be adding legislation in the 2007 Farm Bill that will mandate a "Presidential Commission in Food Safety." This commission would be tasked with examining where gaps and weaknesses exist in food safety regulations. Harkin included a presidential commission on food safety in the 2002 Farm Bill, but that provision was never implemented by USDA. "The recent spike in recalls involving meat products should serve as a warning about our meat and poultry food safety system and the oversight of domestic processing. We all want USDA and FDA, the two primary agencies charged with regulating food, to have stronger authority to do a more effective job at keeping our food safe," Harkin said. A panel announced by the Bush Administration this year will be reviewing regulations of imported foods, but Harkin said that it's not enough to ensure the safety of the food supply across the nation, calling for an examination of the safety of both domestic and imported food. Last week, he introduced "The Fresh Produce Safety Act of 2007" to give the FDA the authority to make its current voluntary guidelines on produce mandatory. Several reports by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and other organizations have already given Congress unequivocal recommendations to improve the nation's food safety system. A Food Safety Commission, in Harkin's view, can only add to the overwhelming evidence that USDA, FDA and Congress all must act urgently to ensure the safety of our food supply.

## Conference on Import Safety Held at TAMU

In response to warnings about hazardous imports such as toys with lead paint and contaminated pet food, President Bush issued a directive to a recently created commission of high-level administration officials to ensure the safety of imported goods and products. The Interagency Working Group on Import Safety was given a tight timeline, according to Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Andrew von Eschenbach, to focus on prevention, intervention and response, and to complete its report by November. Last Thursday, von Eschenbach joined fellow state and federal officials and academic and industry food safety experts at Texas A&M University to brainstorm possible solutions. Hosted by Texas A&M Agriculture's Center for Food Safety, panels of experts talked about global process control, verification activities and supply chain management. Though much of the discussion was technical, panel recommendations for the day were summarized by Dr. Kerri Harris, director of the Center for Food Safety and one of the organizers of the event. They were: 1) No single entity has sole responsibility for making sure imported food is safe. Cooperation between all entities, including governmental agencies, industry and academia is essential to regain public trust. 2) All decisions must be based on the best available science. 3) Current technology for traceback and communication has to be applied and new technology developed. 4) A push for a major education and training component has to be applied in the U.S. and internationally. 5) Data sharing between industry and government would be very beneficial. Texas A&M Vice Chancellor and Dean for Agriculture and Life Sciences Elsa Murano pointed to data-sharing as an area where universities could get involved. University scientists could compile mass amounts of data that could be used for studying trends without identifying individual companies. "Texas A&M is a leader in food safety research, and we're very honored to be host of this important conference," said Murano. She said she's hopeful that the university will work with the government and industry to be part of the solution, whether by creating a data bank or counseling regulatory agencies about concerns.

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## USDA Creates “Grass Fed” Marketing Standard

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is establishing a voluntary standard for a grass (forage) fed livestock marketing claim. The standard incorporates the revisions made as a result of comments received from an earlier proposed standard. A number of livestock producers make claims associated with production practices in order to distinguish their products in the marketplace. With the establishment of this voluntary standard, livestock producers may request that a grass (forage) fed claim be verified by USDA. Verification of this claim will be accomplished through an audit of the production process in accordance with procedures that are contained in Part 62 of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and the meat sold from these approved programs can carry a claim verified by USDA. AMS obtained input from a number of individual experts in government, industry, and academia while drafting this standard and the corresponding thresholds for compliance. This standard will go into effect November 15, 2007. For more information on the grass-fed standard, contact Martin E. O'Connor, Chief, Standards, Analysis, and Technology Branch, Livestock and Seed Program, AMS, USDA at 202-720-4486 or e-mail [Martin.OConnor@usda.gov](mailto:Martin.OConnor@usda.gov).

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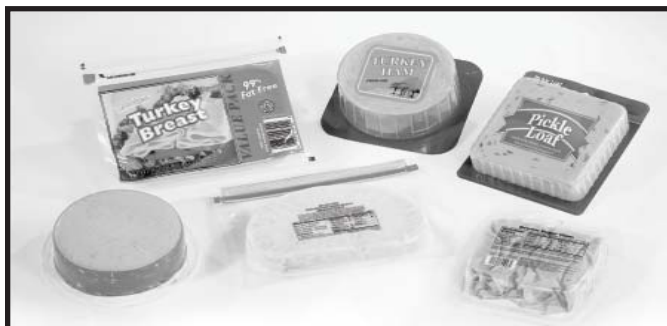
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## Russia Delists 30 U.S. Plants

On October 18, Russia imposed a ban on pork and poultry imports from 30 U.S. processing plants and storage facilities, effective November 1, 2007. The decertification followed a series of inspections conducted by Russian officials last summer. Facilities certified to export poultry and owned by the following companies now are included on the ineligible list, according to the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS): Americold Logistics; Choctaw Maid Farms; Millard Refrigerated Service; Mountaire Farms; Nordic; Peco Foods; Sanderson Farms; Simmons Foods; Stanford Refrigerated Warehouses; Sylvest Farms; and Tyson Foods. Facilities owned by pork processors Albert Lea Select Foods; Amity Packing Co.; Fulton Market; Hormel Foods Corp.; Quality Pork Processors; Rupari Food Service; Sioux-Preme Pork Products; and Swift & Co. are also on the list. Russia is the top export market for U.S. chicken and a major importer of U.S. pork. In August the country purchased 211.2 million lbs. or 40% of all U.S. chicken exports that month, according to Reuters News. U.S. pork and pork variety meat exports to Russia reached a new record in 2006, up 105% in volume from 2005 to 82,677 metric tons and 127% in value to \$164 million. USDA has the authority to approve the facilities for Russia once the problems are identified and fixed. (*Bryan Salvage, meatpoultry.com, 10/19/07*)

**Register Now for the *Listeria* Control Workshop!**

SMA and AAMP are co-sponsoring NAMP's International *Listeria monocytogenes* Control Workshop for small businesses, scheduled for Thursday, November 8, 2007, at the Embassy Suites Dallas – DFW International Airport North. The one-day workshop is specifically designed for small to medium sized meat plants that produce Ready-to-Eat products. Registration information is available on our website or you may email [phyllis@southwestmeat.org](mailto:phyllis@southwestmeat.org). **Sign up today!**

**FSIS to Host Outreach Seminars for Small, Very Small Plants**

FSIS will host a six-part series of outreach seminars designed to assist small and very small plant owners and operators. The seminars will begin in November and run through April 2008. Using teleconference and web-based presentations, seminars will be held twice each day, 10–11 AM ET and 6–7 PM ET. Dates and topics are:

- November 6 - This seminar will cover FSIS policies related to the removal of specific risk materials (SRMs) in beef slaughter and processing operations. It will focus on changes in the final rule, which became effective October 1, compared with the interim rule that plants had been operating under since 2004.
- December 5 - This seminar will review FSIS guidelines for generic *E. coli* testing for process control verification in cattle, swine and poultry establishments. Sampling issues and how to achieve statistical process control in small and very small establishments will also be discussed.
- January 23 - This seminar will provide descriptions of new food safety technologies that small and very small plants can use to control pathogens such as *E. coli* and *Salmonella* in meat and poultry slaughter operations. The focus will be on strategies that are novel, low-cost, practical and easy-to-implement.
- February 20 - Representatives from the FSIS Labeling and Program Delivery Division will discuss the requirements of generic labeling of meat/poultry products and information that is allowed and not allowed on generic labels.
- March 12 - This seminar will provide descriptions of new food safety technologies that small and very small plants can use to control pathogens such as *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat (RTE) meat and poultry products. The focus will be on strategies that are novel, low-cost, practical and easy-to-implement.
- April 16 - This seminar will emphasize methods that small and very small meat, poultry and egg products establishments can implement to ensure effective sanitation and safer products for consumers.

Online registration forms will be available at [www.fsis.usda.gov/News\\_&\\_Events/Outreach\\_Sessions\\_SVS\\_Plants/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Outreach_Sessions_SVS_Plants/index.asp). Registrants will receive a call-in number and a web link for the PowerPoint slides.



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If you haven't already done so, please take a few moments to review your directory listing and submit any changes. Current information will make SMA's 2008 edition as accurate and useful as possible for the upcoming year!

## SMA, NMA Team Up for *E. coli* Workshop

SMA is teaming up with the National Meat Association (NMA) to host a one day workshop focusing on *E. coli* O157:H7 and the recently announced actions by FSIS. The workshop will be held Wednesday, November 14, 2007 in Kansas City, Missouri. Several excellent presenters will discuss the latest FSIS regulatory requirements and policies, FSIS testing programs, validated interventions, supporting documentation and industry best practices. There will also be a Q&A session. Speakers will include Dr. Barbara Masters and Dennis Johnson, of the Washington D.C.- based law firm, Olsson Frank and Weeda, P.C. and Dr. Kerri Harris, Director of Texas A&M University's Center for Food Safety. The registration form is available on page 5, or you may contact the SMA office. Hotel arrangements are still being finalized and details will be available soon. We encourage all members, especially those that produce or purchase raw beef, to attend this valuable workshop.

### Briefly . . .

Cattle Back Verification for Age to Cease in 2008: USDA announced October 18 that cattle eligible for export verification programs (e.g., Japan, which requires age verification) can no longer be back verified as of January 1, 2008. Back verification is a method used by the industry to verify age of cattle after the cattle have left the ranch of origin. The immediate implication is that all cattle that have left the ranch of origin, those on grass or on the way to the feedyard, must be age verified by January 1, 2008, or the cattle will not be eligible for EV programs requiring age verification. Long term, this means cattle must be age verified before they leave the ranch of origin or the cattle will not be eligible for age verification premiums.

FSNS Expands with New Location in Georgia: Food Safety Net Services, Ltd. recently announced its newest addition, a full service laboratory in Atlanta, Georgia. The state-of-the-art facility officially opened on October 15, 2007 to expand services to their valued clients. FSNS is a network of ISO-accredited laboratory and consulting services working to improve the effectiveness of food safety and quality programs for food processors and food industry professionals by providing microbiological and chemical analyses of foods, beverages, pharmaceuticals and environmental samples, as well as industry research, consulting, and education in the food safety arena. For more information about FSNS facilities, please visit their website at [www.food-safetynet.com](http://www.food-safetynet.com) or call 888-525-9788.



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Kansas City, Missouri



## E.coli O157:H7 Reassessment Workshop

### PRELIMINARY AGENDA

#### EXPERT SPEAKERS:

**Dennis Johnson** ~ Olsson, Frank & Weeda  
**Dr. Kerri Harris** ~ Int'l HACCP Alliance  
**Barbara Masters** ~ Olsson, Frank & Weeda  
**Ken Mastracchio** ~ NMA

- 7:45am Registration
- 8:00am Welcome & Introduction
- 8:10am Review
  - FSIS Regulatory Requirement*
  - FSIS Policies*
  - Testing Programs*
- 9:45am Best Practices
  - Validated Interventions*
  - Supporting Documentation*
  - Industry Testing-N-60 (Combos/Carcasses)*
  - COA's*
  - Imported Products*
  - Product Lotting*
  - Audits*
- 11:30am Lunch
- 12:15pm FSIS Checklist
- 1:45pm Questions & Answers
- 3:00pm Conclude

#### DATE & LOCATION:

Wednesday, November 14, 2007  
Kansas City, Missouri  
Exact location will be announced with seminar confirmation.

#### REGISTRATION INFO:

Minimum of 18 participants required in order for seminar to go as scheduled. Confirmation will be faxed two weeks prior to seminar start date. Registration fee includes lunch.

**Register early, space is limited to 30 participants!**

### REGISTER TODAY - mail or fax to: 510-763-6186

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