



# Chairman Robert Aderholt

*Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies*  
*House Committee on Appropriations*

## **FY 2016 Budget Hearing - Food Safety and Inspection Service February 26, 2015 Opening Statement As Prepared**

---

Good morning. I want to welcome to the Subcommittee today's witnesses Mr. Al Almanza, Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety with the Food Safety and Inspection Service, and Mr. Michael Young, USDA's Budget Director.

Today we will focus on the fiscal year 2016 budget request of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), which totals approximately \$1 billion. USDA's FSIS works to ensure that our nation's supply of meat, poultry and processed eggs are safe, wholesome, and correctly packaged and labeled. In Fiscal Year 2014, FSIS conducted 6.8 million food safety and food defense procedures and nearly 180,000 humane handling verification procedures. FSIS is comprised of more than 9,200 employees and regulates more than 6,400 establishments across the United States. Approximately 80 percent of the FSIS budget is for personnel salaries and benefits.

One of my goals this year is to ensure the agencies and programs within our jurisdiction are properly managed, which leads to efficient use of taxpayer dollars and transparent decision making. This past August FSIS published a final rule to modernize the poultry inspection system. Secretary Vilsack has been a strong supporter of this regulation as it is projected to improve food safety through a reduction in food borne illnesses, and I look forward to an update on this system.

In May of last year FSIS sent a final rule to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to establish an inspection program for domestic catfish. During last year's hearing we were told that the final rule would be published no later than December 2014. Yet, the rule remains at OMB. The 2008 and 2014 farm bills require USDA to establish this program, and I want to emphasize that I hope this final rule will be published soon.

Another goal for the Subcommittee is to target our limited resources to the most important programs and functions. No one questions the valuable work carried out by FSIS personnel every day. Mr. Almanza, you started as an inspector, so you have seen first-hand the importance of the work that FSIS performs. FSIS inspectors are on the frontline to protect public health and maintain the safe food supply that we as consumers often take for granted. I appreciate the work of all FSIS employees who strive to keep safe meat, poultry, and egg products available for consumers.

My third goal is to promote U.S. agriculture and the bounty of this great nation. America is a world leader in agriculture, and we are blessed with the safest food supply in the world. There is a long history of support in Congress for meat and poultry inspection, which plays a unique role at USDA. That is why I question the President's proposal merging the duties of FSIS with the Food and Drug Administration under the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

HHS is a large, cumbersome agency with a myriad of responsibilities, and I fear food safety would not be one of their top priorities.

Again, I want to thank our witnesses for being here, and I look forward to today's hearing.

###