



Chairman Robert Aderholt

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

**FY 2017 Budget Hearing
Food Safety and Inspection Service
February 24, 2016
Opening Statement As Prepared**

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 2017 budget request of the Food Safety and Inspection Service, or FSIS, which totals approximately \$1 billion. USDA's FSIS works to ensure that our nation's supply of meat, poultry, processed eggs, and catfish are safe, wholesome, and correctly packaged and labeled. In Fiscal Year 2015, FSIS conducted 6.9 million food safety and food defense procedures and more than 173,000 humane handling verification procedures. FSIS is comprised of more than 9,400 employees and regulates nearly 6,400 establishments across the United States. Approximately 80 percent of the FSIS budget is for personnel salaries and benefits. The Agency appears to have used these personnel funds in order for FSIS to reduce the front line occupation vacancy rate to a low of 4.15 percent.

One of my goals this year is to ensure the agencies within our jurisdiction are increasing their efficiency and generating effective outcomes. The work FSIS has done to modernize the poultry inspection system fits right into this goal. The new system helps frontline inspectors be more efficient and focused on vital science-based activities in their daily duties, which leads to improved food safety and fewer illnesses. The modernized inspection system has been thoroughly reviewed and analyzed, and the results show a reduction in food borne illnesses. Secretary Vilsack has been a strong supporter of this approach to poultry inspection. When he testified before this Subcommittee two weeks ago, he mentioned how modernization can also yield positive results for the pork inspection process. I look forward to discussing this in more detail today.

Another area of great interest is USDA's catfish inspection program. I am pleased that the final rule establishing the program was published on December 2nd. It took much longer than expected for the final rule to be issued, but, nevertheless, catfish inspection is now being implemented at FSIS. I look forward to getting an update on how this process is moving forward.

America is blessed with the safest food supply in the world and my goal is to keep it that way. I am certain we will discuss new standards that FSIS is implementing to prevent *salmonella* contamination in poultry and improve the agency's ability to determine the source of foodborne illnesses linked to ground beef.

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. On a personal note, my district produces and processes quite a bit of poultry. The people from my district and many other Member districts take pride in delivering a safe and nutritious product to consumers in the U.S. and across the world.

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

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