

Notices

Federal Register

Vol. 63, No. 33

Thursday, February 19, 1998

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. 98-001N]

Notice of Request for Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and the Office of Management and Budget regulations, this notice announces the Food Safety and Inspection Service's (FSIS) intention to request an extension of a currently approved information collection package regarding the regulatory requirements of FSIS's "Pathogen Reduction; Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems," final rule.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received on or before April 20, 1998.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Lee Puricelli, Paperwork Specialist; (202) 720-0346.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Pathogen Reduction; Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems.

OMB Number: 0583-0103.

Expiration Date of Approval: April 30, 1997.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: FSIS has been delegated the authority to exercise the functions of the Secretary as provided in the Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*) and the Poultry Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 451 *et seq.*). These statutes mandate that FSIS protect the public by ensuring that meat and poultry products are safe, wholesome, unadulterated, and properly labeled and packaged.

FSIS is requesting an extension of the information collection package addressing meat and poultry paperwork and recordkeeping requirements related to FSIS's final rule "Pathogen Reduction; Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems" (61 FR 38806, July 25, 1996). In the final rule, FSIS established requirements applicable to meat and poultry establishments designed to reduce the occurrence and numbers of pathogenic microorganisms on meat and poultry products, reduce the incidence of foodborne illness associated with the consumption of those products and provide a new framework for modernization of the current system of meat and poultry inspection.

The regulations require that each establishment develop and implement written sanitation standard operating procedures (Sanitation SOP's); require regular microbial testing by slaughter establishments to verify the adequacy of the establishments' process controls for the prevention and removal of fecal contamination and associated bacteria; and require that all meat and poultry establishments develop and implement a system of preventive controls, known as HACCP, designed to improve the safety of their products.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Sanitation

Establishments must develop and maintain an SOP for sanitation that will be used by inspection personnel in performing monitoring verification tasks. The establishment must detail in a written plan how they will meet the basic sanitation requirements. The SOP's specify the cleaning and sanitizing procedures for all equipment and facilities involved in the production of every product.

FSIS does not review or approve the plans. However, plans must be on file and available to FSIS program employees upon request. Based on current regulatory standards, inspectors review the plans and if an establishment's sanitation activities are determined to be insufficient, then inspectors may suggest modifications.

Each official establishment maintains daily records sufficient to document the implementation and monitoring of the Sanitation SOP's. In most cases, inspectors review the records once a day.

Microbiological Testing

As part of *E. coli* verification testing, each slaughter establishment must develop written procedures outlining specimen collection and handling. The slaughter establishments are responsible for entering the results into a statistical process control chart. The data and chart must be available for review by the Inspector-in-Charge, upon request.

HACCP

Establishments must develop written HACCP plans that include:

Identification of the processing steps which present hazards; identification and description of the critical control point (CCP) for each identified hazard; specification of the critical limit which may not be exceeded at the CCP, and if appropriate a target limit; description of the monitoring procedure or device to be used; description of the corrective action to be taken if the limit is exceeded; description of the records which will be generated and maintained regarding this CCP; and description of the establishment verification activities and the frequency at which they are to be conducted. Critical limits which are currently a part of FSIS regulations or other requirements must be addressed.

FSIS does not review or approve the plans. However, plans must be on file and available to FSIS program employees upon request. Inspectors will review the plans and if an establishment's HACCP operations are determined to be insufficient by inspectors, then they may suggest modifications.

Establishments keep records for monitoring activities during slaughter and processing, corrective actions, verification check results, and related activities that contain the identity of the product, the product code or slaughter production lot, and the date the record was made. The information is recorded at the time that it is observed, and the record is signed by the operator or observer.

Lastly, HACCP records generated by the processor are retained on site for at least one year for slaughter and refrigerated products and two years for shelf-stable products. Off-site storage of records is permitted after six months, if such records can be retrieved and provided, on-site, within 24 hours of an FSIS employee's request. Records must be available to FSIS program employees

upon request for verification of the HACCP system. However, it is the Agency's intent to generate its own records of its verification tasks and results rather than duplicate the records of the establishment.

The paperwork requirements of these regulations, records and plans, represent an alternative to the previous process of inspection. The industry's documentation of its processes, first in a plan and thereafter in a continuous record of process performance, is a more effective food safety approach than the less systematic generation of information by plant employees and inspectors. It gives inspectors a much broader picture of production than they can generate on their own and gives them time to perform higher priority tasks. At the same time, it gives the managers a better view of their own process and more opportunity to adjust it to prevent safety defects. As a result, managers and inspectors will use their time more effectively. Moreover, any increased paperwork burden will be offset by a reduction in the number of face-to-face contacts between management and the inspectors.

Estimate of Burden: The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average .1126685 hours per response.

Respondents: Meat and poultry establishments.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 7,374.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 9513.7803.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 7,904,222 hours.

(Due to rounding, the total annual burden hours may not equal the product of the annual number of responses multiplied by the average reporting burden per response.)

Copies of this information collection assessment and comments can be obtained from Lee Puricelli, Paperwork Specialist, Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA, 300 12th Street SW, Room 109, Washington, DC 20250-3700, (202) 720-0346.

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of FSIS's functions, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of FSIS' 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 the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through use of appropriate automated,

electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques, or other forms of information technology.

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.

Dated: February 12, 1998.

Thomas J. Billy,

Administrator.

[FR Doc. 98-4158 Filed 2-18-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-DM-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Foreign Agricultural Service

Notice of FY 1998 Emerging Markets Program and Solicitation of Private Sector Proposals

AGENCY: Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of FY 1998 emerging markets program and solicitation of private sector proposals.

SUMMARY: The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) invites proposals for using technical assistance to promote the export of, and improve the market access for, U.S. agricultural products to emerging markets in fiscal year (FY) 1998 under the Emerging Markets Program (the Program). The Program is authorized by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, as amended (the Act). Proposals will be considered under this announcement from any private agricultural or agribusiness organization, with certain restrictions as indicated below. Program funds available for FY 1998 under this notice are approximately \$5 million. All agricultural products except tobacco are eligible for consideration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: It is strongly recommended that any organization considering applying to the Program for FY 1998 funding assistance obtain a copy of the 1998 Program Guidelines. The Guidelines contain additional information, including details of project budgets and certain funding limitations that must be taken into account in the preparation of proposals. Requests for Program Guidelines and additional information may be obtained from and applications submitted to: Emerging Markets Office, Foreign Agricultural Service, Room 6506 South Building, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250-1032, Fax: (202) 690-4369. The Guidelines are also available on the FAS Home Page on the Internet: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/excredits/em-markets/em-markets.html>.

Program Definitions

The purpose of Program is to assist U.S. organizations, public and private, to improve market access, development and promotion of U.S. agricultural products in low to middle income countries that offer promise of emerging market opportunities in the near- to medium-term. This is to be accomplished by providing U.S. technical assistance through projects and activities in those emerging markets.

The Act defines an emerging market as any country that the Secretary of Agriculture determines:

- (1) Is taking steps toward a market-oriented economy through the food, agriculture, or rural business sectors of the economy of the country; and
 - (2) has the potential to provide a significant market for United States agricultural commodities or products of United States agricultural commodities.
- Because funds are limited and the range of potential emerging market countries is world wide, priority is given to proposals which focus on those countries with (1) per capita income less than \$8,355 (the food aid per capital income cut-off figure of OECD's Development Assistance Committee); and (2) population greater than 1 million.

Priorities and Determining Factors

The underlying premise of the Emerging Markets Program is that there are distinctive characteristics of emerging agricultural markets that necessitate or benefit significantly from U.S. governmental assistance before the private sector moves to develop these markets through normal corporate or trade promotional activities. The emphasis is on market access opportunities, with funding provided for successful activities on a project-by-project basis. The Program complements the efforts of other FAS marketing programs. Once a market access issue has been addressed by this Program, further market development activities may be considered under other programs such as GSM-102 or GSM-103 credit guarantee programs, the Market Access Program (MAP), or the Foreign Market Development Program (FMD). Ineligible activities include in-store promotions, restaurant promotions, advertising, and branded promotions.

For countries deemed "emerging markets," the following criteria will be used to determine the suitability of projects for funding by the Emerging Markets Program:

1. Low U.S. market share and significant market potential.