

# Notices

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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. FSIS-2019-0026]

#### Notice of Request for a New Information Collection: Focus Group Research to Inform Consumer Food Safety Education and Outreach

**AGENCY:** Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is announcing its intention to conduct focus groups with consumers to provide information to inform consumer education outreach efforts related to disseminating information to consumers about recalls and outbreaks and the labeling of meat and poultry products. This is a new information collection with an estimated burden of 411 hours.

**DATES:** Submit comments on or before February 10, 2020.

**ADDRESSES:** FSIS invites interested persons to submit comments on this **Federal Register** notice. Comments may be submitted by one of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* This website provides commenters the ability to type short comments directly into the comment field on the web page or to attach a file for lengthier comments. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the on-line instructions at that site for submitting comments.

- *Mail, including CD-ROMs, etc.:* Send to Docket Clerk, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Mailstop 3758, Room 6065, Washington, DC 20250-3700.

- *Hand- or Courier-Delivered submittals:* Deliver to 1400

Independence Avenue SW, Room 6065, Washington, DC 20250-3700.

**Instructions:** All items submitted by mail or electronic mail must include the Agency name and docket number FSIS-2019-0026. Comments received in response to this docket will be made available for public inspection and posted without change, including any personal information, to <http://www.regulations.gov>.

**Docket:** For access to background documents or comments received, call (202)720-5627 to schedule a time to visit the FSIS Docket Room at 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 6065, Washington, DC 20250-3700.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Gina Kouba, Office of Policy and Program Development, Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 6065, South Building, Washington, DC 20250-3700; (202) 720-5627.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

**Title:** Focus Group Research to Inform Consumer Food Safety Education and Outreach Efforts.

**OMB Control Number:** 0583-XXXX.

**Type of Request:** Request for a new information collection.

**Abstract:** FSIS has been delegated the authority to exercise the functions of the Secretary (7 CFR 2.18, 2.53), as specified in the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) (21 U.S.C. 601, *et seq.*). This statute mandates that FSIS protect the public by verifying that meat products are safe, wholesome, unadulterated, and properly labeled and packaged.

FSIS's Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education (OPACE) develops consumer education programs concerning the safe handling, preparation, and storage of meat, poultry, and processed egg products to improve consumer food handling behaviors and minimize the incidence of foodborne illness. OPACE shares its food safety messages through the *Food Safe Families* campaign (a cooperative effort of USDA, the Food and Drug Administration [FDA], and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC]); social media; Ask USDA (an online database of frequently asked food safety questions); the FSIS website; *FoodSafety.gov* (the cross-federal website operated by FSIS, FDA, and CDC used to promote safe food handling to consumers); the Meat and Poultry Hotline; and various publications,

media releases, blogs and events. These messages are focused on the four core food safety behaviors: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.

To collect information to inform OPACE's consumer education and outreach efforts, FSIS is requesting approval for a new information collection to conduct consumer focus groups. Focus group research is particularly useful in studies such as this one, because the research is exploratory in nature. This is a new information collection with an estimated burden of 411 hours.

FSIS plans to conduct two sets of focus groups on different topics: (1) Consumer understanding and response to FSIS Recall Notices and Public Health Alerts and (2) consumer understanding and use of manufacturer cooking instructions on ready-to-eat (RTE) and not-ready-to-eat (NRTE) meat and poultry products. FSIS has contracted with RTI International to conduct the two sets of focus groups. The focus group research will address Objective 1.2.3 of the FSIS Fiscal Years 2017-2021 Strategic Plan (<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/317d14d6-1759-448e-941a-de3cbff289e5/Strategic-Plan-2017-2021.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>), which is to "increase public awareness of recalls, foodborne illness, and safe food handling practices."

For the first focus group topic, consumer understanding and response to USDA Recall Notices and Public Health Alerts, the findings will help FSIS learn how consumers understand and respond to FSIS recall notices and public health alerts and provide information to inform possible modifications to USDA's procedures for communicating information to consumers on recalls and outbreaks. RTI International will conduct two focus groups in each of four locations for a total of eight groups. To increase the homogeneity of the groups, the groups will be segmented by education level (four groups with a high school education or less and four groups with some college or a college degree) and age (four groups with people aged 18-35 years and four groups with people aged 36 and older).

For the second focus group topic, consumer understanding and use of manufacturer cooking instructions on RTE and NRTE meat and poultry

products, the findings will help FSIS better understand how consumers use manufacturer cooking instructions to prepare RTE and NRTE meat and poultry products. FSIS can use this information to assess whether revisions to FSIS-mandated labeling features are needed to ensure that consumers safely handle and prepare RTE and NRTE meat and poultry products. RTI International will conduct two focus groups in each of four locations for a total of eight groups. To increase the homogeneity of the groups, the groups will be segmented by education level (four groups with a high school education or less and four groups with some college or a college degree) and age (four groups with people aged 18–35 years and four groups with people aged 36 and older).

For each set of focus groups, a local market research company in each location will recruit potential participants from their databases and

other sources. They will also provide the facilities for hosting the focus group discussions. Using convenience sampling, a nonprobability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility instead of random selection, the market research companies will recruit potential participants who meet the eligibility criteria as defined by the screening questionnaires.

An experienced moderator will conduct the focus group discussions and use a facilitator guide, which will serve as an outline and provide structure for the focus group discussions. Each focus group discussion will be professionally recorded (audio and video) by the local market research companies. The audio-recordings will be professionally transcribed. RTI International will prepare detailed summaries of each discussion and review the summaries to

identify common themes and any exceptions to these themes.

RTI International will summarize these findings in a final report to FSIS. No statistical analyses will be conducted.

*Estimate of Burden:* For the two sets of focus groups (8 groups per set for a total of 16 groups), it is expected that 1,280 individuals will complete the screening questionnaire, and it is assumed that 160 will be eligible and subsequently agree to participate in the focus group study (10 people per group). Each screening questionnaire is expected to take 8 minutes (0.133 hour). Taking part in the focus group discussion will take a total of 90 minutes (1.5 hours). The estimated annual reporting burden for the two sets of focus groups is 410.24 hours, which is the sum of the burden estimates for the screening and focus group discussion.

#### ESTIMATED ANNUAL REPORTING BURDEN FOR THE FOCUS GROUP STUDY

Study component	Estimated number of respondents	Annual frequency per response	Total annual responses	Hours per response	Total hours
Screening questionnaire .....	1,280	1	1,280	0.133 (8 min.) .....	170.66
Focus group discussion .....	160	1	160	1.5 (90 min.) .....	240
Total .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	410.66

*Respondents:* Consumers.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 1,280.

*Estimated Number of Annual Responses per Respondent:* 1.

*Estimated Total Burden on Respondents:* 411 hours.

Copies of this information of this information collection assessment can be obtained from Gina Kouba, Office of Policy and Program Development, Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 6065, South Building, Washington, DC 20250–3700; (202) 720–5627.

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's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the method 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, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques, or other forms of

information technology. Comments may be sent to both FSIS, at the addresses provided above, and the Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Washington, DC 20253.

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.

#### Additional Public Notification

Public awareness of all segments of rulemaking and policy development is important. Consequently, FSIS will announce this **Federal Register** publication on-line through the FSIS web page located at: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/federal-register>.

FSIS will also announce and provide a link to this **Federal Register** publication through the FSIS *Constituent Update*, which is used to provide information regarding FSIS policies, procedures, regulations, **Federal Register** notices, FSIS public meetings, and other types of information that could affect or would be of interest to our constituents and stakeholders. The *Constituent Update* is available on the FSIS web page. Through the web

page, FSIS can provide information to a much broader, more diverse audience. In addition, FSIS offers an email subscription service which provides automatic and customized access to selected food safety news and information. This service is available at: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/subscribe>. Options range from recalls to export information, regulations, directives, and notices. Customers can add or delete subscriptions themselves and have the option to password protect their accounts.

#### USDA Non-Discrimination Statement

No agency, officer, or employee of the USDA shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, or political beliefs, exclude from participation in, deny the benefits of, or subject to discrimination any person in the United States under any program or activity conducted by the USDA.

### *How To File a Complaint of Discrimination*

To file a complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which may be accessed online at [http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/Complain\\_combined\\_6\\_8\\_12.pdf](http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/Complain_combined_6_8_12.pdf), or write a letter signed by you or your authorized representative.

Send your completed complaint form or letter to USDA by mail, fax, or email:

**Mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–9410.

**Fax:** (202) 690–7442.

**Email:** [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.), should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720–2600 (voice and TDD).

**Carmen M. Rottenberg,**  
Administrator.

[FR Doc. 2019–26694 Filed 12–11–19; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410–DM–P**

## **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

### **Rural Utilities Service**

[Docket: USDA–2017–0002–0001]

#### **ReConnect Pilot Program**

**AGENCY:** Rural Utilities Service, Department of Agriculture.

**ACTION:** Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) and solicitation of applications for second round of the ReConnect Program.

**SUMMARY:** The Rural Utilities Service (RUS), a Rural Development agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), hereinafter referred to as the Agency, announces its general policy and application procedures for its second round of funding under the broadband pilot program. This pilot program was established pursuant to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018. The Agency is announcing the application window for this second round of funding and requesting comments on the program.

#### **DATES:**

**Applications:** Beginning on January 31, 2020, applications can be submitted through the RUS on-line application portal until 6:00 p.m. Eastern on March 16, 2020.

**Comments:** Comments due by March 16, 2020.

**ADDRESSES:** *Application Submission:* Apply at <https://reconnect.usda.gov>. Electronic applications will allow for

the expeditious review of an Applicant's proposal. As a result, all Applicants must file their application electronically at the above website.

**Comments:** For proper delivery, all feedback or comments should specify "Identifying Regulatory Reform Initiatives."

**Electronic Submission.** You may submit comments electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov> using Docket ID: USDA–2017–0002–0001. USDA strongly encourages commenters to submit comments electronically. Electronic submission of comments allows you maximum time to prepare and submit a comment and ensures timely receipt by USDA. Follow the instructions provided on that site to submit comments electronically.

**Mail, Hand delivery, or Courier.** Paper, disk, or CD–ROM submissions should be submitted to [regulations@obpa.usda.gov](mailto:regulations@obpa.usda.gov), Office of Budget and Program Analysis, USDA, Jamie L. Whitten Building, Room 101–A, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For general inquiries, contact Chad Parker, Assistant Administrator Telecommunications Program, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), email: [chad.parker@usda.gov](mailto:chad.parker@usda.gov), telephone (202) 720–9554. You may obtain additional information regarding applications at <https://reconnect.usda.gov>.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

##### **Background**

On March 23, 2018, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (the Act), which established a new broadband loan and grant pilot program, now called the Rural eConnectivity Pilot Program (ReConnect Program). The Act originally appropriated budget authority of \$600 million to be used on an expedited basis. For fiscal year (FY) 2019, Congress funded an additional \$550 million for the pilot. The ReConnect Program provides loans, grants, and loan/grant combinations to facilitate broadband deployment in rural areas. In facilitating the expansion of broadband services and infrastructure, the pilot will fuel long-term rural economic development and opportunities in rural America. One of those opportunities is precision agriculture. The use of this technology requires a robust broadband connection. The awards made under this program will bring high speed broadband to the farms which will allow them to increase productivity.

### **Applications**

Please note that the application process is designed so that an applicant must demonstrate financial and technical feasibility of the project and the entire operation of the applicant. Applicants that do not demonstrate financial or technical feasibility will not be considered for an award.

Apply at <https://reconnect.usda.gov> from January 31, 2020, until 6:00 p.m. Eastern on March 16, 2020. Electronic applications will allow for the expeditious review of an Applicant's proposal. As a result, all Applicants must file their application electronically at the above website.

### **Comments**

For the first round of funding, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) determined that it was in the public interest to move forward with developing procedures for the ReConnect Program within a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), as is common with a pilot, instead of rulemaking. Such a method would also meet the statutory mandate of expediting program delivery. Notwithstanding the lack of rulemaking, however, before USDA finalized and published the FOA, it requested informal comments from the public on a wide range of issues to be considered by the agency in the ReConnect Program. See Notice of Inquiry and Request for Comments, 83 FR 35609 (July 27, 2018). Once the FOA was published, the application windows were open between April 23, 2019 and July 12, 2019.

Thereafter, the Agency received input from applicants that participated in the first funding round on issues which included, but were not limited to: (1) The availability of data; (2) frequency of collection; (3) clarity of instructions; (4) data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported; (5) access to forms; and (6) accessibility for troubleshooting. Based on that input, the Agency made further changes to the program, which are discussed below.

Additionally, with this FOA, the agency is now requesting that the public again provide feedback on the program, as was done with the July 27th Notice of Inquiry. Specifically, the public is requested to submit comments that would inform any future rounds of ReConnect funding, if any, or comments on issues that should be addressed in any future broadband program. Additionally, and consistent with the Department's Regulatory Reform Initiatives, the public is requested to submit comments related to program