

# FNS Role in Food Safety and Food Security

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# Food Safety at FNS

- Food safety is a major concern in FNS feeding programs
- Created a new Food Safety Unit within the Food Distribution Division

# New Food Safety Unit

- Oversees:
  - Commodity Hold & Recall Procedures
  - Interaction with other agencies: FSIS, FDA, AMS, FSA, and CDC
  - Follow-up of food safety issues related to Commodity Complaints through the Hotline
  - Follow-up of food safety issues raised by FNS Regional Offices or States
  - Food safety education
  - Public health issues

# Commodity Hold & Recall

- Involves FSIS for meat, poultry, and egg products
- Involves FDA for all other foods, including shell eggs
- Calls on appropriate procurement agency (AMS or FSA) when problems arise
- Requires close communication and collaboration when a crisis appears
- All regulatory and purchasing agencies, as well as FNS, are on 24/7 notification

# Commodity Hold & Recall

- FNS is committed to notifying states within 24-hours of a recall
- Employed the Hold & Recall procedure 4 times in the last 18 months:
  - Pilgrim's Pride
  - GFI ground beef
  - Catfish nuggets
  - Frozen, cooked diced chicken

# Interaction with Other Agencies

- FSIS, FDA, AMS, FSA, and CDC all play a part in food safety
- Recalls can be triggered by a number of different causes
- Sometimes FNS announces its own recall based on complaints and independent of regulatory agencies

# Holds and Recalls

- FNS required to notify all affected parties within 24 hours of announced recall
- FNS must work with AMS or FSA to determine quantities & distribution points
- FNS notifies Regional Offices and States
- States notify School Foodservice Authorities

# Holdings and Recalls

- Notification goes out, but information must come back
- Notice could be faster
- Need a Rapid Alert System
  - Provide two-way communication
  - Announce the recall
  - Convey confirmation that product has been sequestered, and information on how much in storage, how much destroyed

# Rapid Alert System

- More discussion of the Rapid Alert System that is part of ECOS (Electronic Commodity Ordering System) at end of this session

# Commodity Complaints

- Food Safety Unit (FSU) coordinates with FNS Commodity Complaint Hotline
- When issues are of food safety/public health concern, FSU:
  - Shares data on meat, poultry, and egg products with FSIS
  - Shares data on all other foods with FDA
  - Coordinates follow-up investigations with either (sometimes both) regulatory agencies and FNS Regional Offices
  - Maintains records of investigation outcome

# Summary of FSU Activities

- Administer Hold & Recall Procedures
- Follow-up on illnesses
- Interface with other government agencies
- Provide food safety information and guidance to Regional Offices and States
- Develop database to track food-safety incidents in FNS feeding programs

# Summary of FSU Activities

- Develop Rapid Alert System for food emergency notification to SFAs
- Conduct vulnerability assessments of foods in NSLP and other feeding programs
- Focal point for all food-related issues in Homeland Security
- Coordinate with Commodity Complaint Hotline
- Manage food safety education projects

