

Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development
The following was issued by the USDA



FSIS Proposes Interstate Commerce Shipping Regulations
For Small Plant Operations

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WASHINGTON, September 15, 2009 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) tomorrow will publish proposed regulations to implement a new voluntary cooperative program under which select State-inspected establishments will be eligible to ship meat and poultry products in interstate commerce. The new program was created in the 2008 Farm Bill to supplement the existing Federal-State cooperative inspection program to allow State-inspected plants with 25 or fewer employees to ship products across State lines. This announcement is part of the USDA's new 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' initiative, which seeks to better connect consumers with local producers to help develop local and regional food systems to spur economic opportunity.

"This new cooperative interstate shipment program will provide new economic opportunities for many small and very small meat and poultry establishments, whose markets are currently limited," said USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety Jerold Mande. "We can provide new markets for these establishments, while maintaining the integrity of the Federal mark of inspection."

Currently, 27 states operate State meat or poultry inspection programs, and FSIS verifies that the State programs are implementing requirements that are "at least equal to" those imposed under the Federal meat and poultry products inspection acts. For these programs, FSIS provides up to 50 percent of the State's operating funds and provides oversight and enforcement of the program.

Under the proposed rule, which went on display at the Office of the Federal Register Monday and will be published this Wednesday, selected establishments will receive inspection services from federally trained and/or supervised State inspection personnel who will verify that

the establishments meet all Federal food safety requirements. Meat and poultry products produced under the voluntary cooperative program will bear an official USDA mark of inspection, thereby enabling interstate shipment of the products.

State-inspected establishments that are not selected for the voluntary cooperative program, including state-inspected establishments with more than 25 employees, are only eligible to sell and ship their products within their State.

Comments must be received on or before Monday, November 16, 2009, through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov, by mail to: FSIS Docket Room, USDA, FSIS, OPPD, Docket Clearance Unit, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Stop 5272, Beltsville, MD 20705. All comments must identify FSIS and the docket number FSIS-2008-0039. Comments will be available for viewing online at www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/2009_Interim_&_Final_Rules_Index/index.asp.

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