

Consumer, Labor, Farm Groups Agree To Farm Bill Provision - The Interstate Safe Meat And Poultry Inspection Act Of 2007 - Permitting Interstate Sale Of Meat And Poultry From Certain State/Federal Plants

Consumer, labor and farm groups support creating a new meat and poultry program to improve the safety of products sold in interstate commerce and to open new markets for products from smaller companies. The Act provides an incentive for state inspection programs to increase microbiological testing beyond that required by current federal practices.

The Interstate Safe Meat and Poultry Act of 2007, a new Title V of the Federal Meat and Poultry Inspection Act and Title ___ of the Poultry Products Inspection Act:

- Creates a new, optional program for companies previously operating under state inspection laws that want to sell in interstate commerce.
- Requires companies to operate under the federal meat and poultry inspection laws and provides federal oversight of operations in these plants.
- Encourages states to increase food safety testing by having USDA reimburse states for 100% of the costs for testing that exceeds the testing frequency of the federal government.
- Covers establishments with up to 25 employees.
- Directs USDA to develop a procedure for establishments that employ more than 25 employees and want to ship in interstate commerce to help those companies transition to federal inspection.
- Provides for companies in the program to use a federal mark, stamp, tag or label of inspection.
- Reimburses states for not less than 60% of the costs of operating the Title V program.
- Establishes the position of State Coordinator, a federal employee, who will provide oversight and enforcement; oversee training and inspection activities; assure that plants are in full compliance of the Federal Meat Inspection Act and this Title; and report to the Secretary of USDA on status of the plant operations.
- Establishes an inspection training division within the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) to coordinate initiatives to provide outreach, education, and training to small or very small establishments. USDA will provide funding to state agencies to provide outreach, technical assistance, education, and training to small or very small establishments.
- Requires USDA's Office of Inspector General to conduct periodic audits to assure plants operating under Title V are complying with federal requirements.
- Offers states an optional inspection tool. States will continue to maintain their current Title III cooperative agreements with USDA which require state inspection programs to be at least "equal to" federal requirements. USDA will continue their oversight of these programs, which includes an annual review of nine detailed components. States will still be required to implement any regulations, directives, and guidance issued by USDA, including all federal food safety and consumer protection requirements.