

Group III: Scientific/Technical assistance: Availability, need, and application

In recent years, there has been an increase in the need for technical assistance, research, and supporting documentation needed to validate processes and be in compliance with the HACCP rule, the *Listeria* rule and other FSIS regulatory requirements. Often, the information available is not directly applicable to specific plants or plant processes. In addition, it can be difficult to search out answers and to find the expertise needed. We want to find out the extent of these concerns and how best to address them.

1. What kinds of technical assistance do small plant operators need?

Availability of scientific/technical assistance:

2. How do you know where to find the scientific/technical assistance and information you need?
3. Where do small plant operators go for technical assistance? Who do they contact?
 - Do you make use of the FSIS Policy Development Division of the Office of Policy, Program and Employee Development? (This was formerly known as the Technical Service Center (TSC).)
 - Does the TSC provide you with the information or assistance you need?
 - Have you used the TSC? Describe your experience with the TSC.
 - Do you make use of IKEs (Interactive Knowledge Exchanges)?
4. Review web site resources with computer. Are you aware of these? Do you use them? Why or why not?
 - The FSIS website as a source of technical information: can you find the information you need? If not, what was the information that you needed, but could not find?
 - Small Plant News, newsletter
 - Ask FSIS
 - University of Wisconsin site, Ohio State University site, other university/extension sites
5. Tell us what you know and what you think about the FSIS Small plant Contact/Coordinator program?
6. Is there a university/extension food science or animal science department you can call on for help in your state?
 - What kinds of services do these programs provide?
 - What recommendations do you have to improve these services?
7. Are there consultants known to you who can provide scientific/technical assistance?
 - Have you used these services?
 - If so, what type of services do these individuals provide?
 - What recommendations do you have to improve these services?
8. Can you get help from industry organizations (ie. AAMP, AMI)?
 - What services do they provide?
 - What recommendations do you have to improve these services?
9. Are there regional disparities in the availability of technical assistance?

New technologies information and research

10. Are there some areas where new technologies might be needed in order to improve the safety of meat and poultry products?
11. Are there some suggested research needs for technologies needed to improve the safety of meat and poultry products?

12. Who is doing research in this area?
13. Where is funding coming from? What funding needs exist?

Specific Assistance with Critical Control Point determination, verification and validation

14. Where can small plant operators go for help in determining Critical Control Points?
 15. For what types of products is there a need for more CCP and validation documentation?
 16. Is there a need for more statistical assistance regarding testing and validation of testing methods?
 17. Often plant operators are urged to refer to scientific journal articles for research that validates a process or procedure they want to use in their plant.
 - Is this a realistic option?
 - Why or why not?
 18. How can the information in scientific journals be made to be more useful to the plant operator who needs to justify process, CCP and validation procedures?
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19. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the availability, delivery and use of scientific/technical assistance?