United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) eGovernment Program

FSIS Audience Analysis

September 2003

What is this document about?

USDA

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Revision History

Previous Change History

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VERSION	DATE	AUTHOR	COMMENT
0.0	09/08/2003	Jennifer Murphy	Initial Template
0.1	09/10/2003	Cristin Witcher	Document Draft
0.2	09/16/2003	Cristin Witcher	Document Revisions per Jen's Review
0.3	09/20/2003	Cristin Witcher	Updated with Endnotes
0.4	10/02/2003	Cristin Witcher	Updated with Information on Other Public Sector Users
0.5	10/17/2003	Cristin Witcher	Updated with Specific Mention of Job Seekers

1 Introduction

Document Objective and Summary

In the agency's most recent effort to serve constituents effectively, FSIS is mirroring the increased enterprise focus on eGovernment, and attempting to better communicate with the public online. This public has a diverse face, and is comprised of a significant number of constituent groups. As a government organization, FSIS is tasked with addressing the needs of each. These groups all come to the agency seeking varying types of public health information. FSIS must recognize the distinctions between groups in order to meet audience needs appropriately, and provide personalized customer service. This document focuses on identifying existing FSIS online user groups, and analyzing their traits and online intentions. This compilation of customer data will serve as a useful reference in decisions regarding eGovernment, and more specifically the agency's Web site re-design.

This document describes each composite online customer group at a high-level. Information includes audience size and identified demographics. The document outlines the types of information users seek, and the frequency of these interactions. It addresses user groups' attitudes and awareness level of FSIS. Finally, the document assesses each group's readiness to interact with the government via electronic and Internet-based applications.

This analysis highlights the following FSIS online user groups:

- Employees and Job Applicants
- Advocacy Groups
- Agricultural Producers, Processing Plants, Businesses
- General Consumers
- Children and Caregivers
- Press and Media

Educators and Academia

- Scientists, Researchers, Laboratories
- International Users
- Congress, State and Federal Government, Sister Agencies
- Healthcare Providers

Methodology

The bulk of this user information was obtained from key FSIS supervisors, managers, and staff during a series of visioning sessions and small group meetings. These individuals were selected to participate in the definition of user groups because as employees and stakeholders, they are most capable of verbalizing relevant constituent needs. In addition to input from agency stakeholders, FSIS audience information was leveraged from existing documentation. Data from this analysis was derived from the following:

- USDA Web Presence Initiative Audience Analysis
- USDA eGovernment Readiness Assessment
- ERS User Personas
- US Census Bureau

Annotations (margin notes):

What is the purpose of this document? Who is the FSIS?

What information needs clarification?

This bullet list is easy to read and comprehend. Why are they identifying user groups?

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2 Universal Findings

At the most basic level each potential user of the FSIS Web site has the same survival needs—food, water, shelter, etc. While food is such a vital part of culture and health, we in the United States generally take for granted the safety of our food supply. The responsibilities of public health agencies like FSIS are relatively transparent to the end consumers of meat, poultry, and other food products. In some ways the low level of awareness of this agency is a testament to the success of public health policies and procedures.

However, when a constituent, like a consumer, educator, or healthcare provider visits the FSIS site it is largely because that individual has some pressing need for food safety information. Given that FSIS recognition is low, a casual Internet surfer will not typically land on the agency's front page. Therefore, users intentionally in search of FSIS information and services require a site that enables them to quickly find desired content. While this content will meet distinct needs depending upon user group, the demand for fluidity and ease-of-use is common to all audiences.

Also because the majority of the population does not distinguish between the Department of Agriculture and the Food Safety and Inspection Service, FSIS needs to be purposeful in representing its identity across user groups. The re-designed Web site represents the ideal opportunity to heighten user awareness by highlighting critical information, major public health responsibilities, and agency functions. Additionally, the Web is a strong medium for projecting the desired agency image—one that instills a recognizable sense of safety, seriousness and confidence.

> FSIS defined on page five. Why do you think the author waited? Acronyms should always be identified immediately.

Lastly, though the current trend in both the private and public sectors is to transact business efficiently, online, and with automated tools, across the board users desire concise FSIS contact information. Users want to be able to create traditional connections, and ask questions of live, knowledgeable agency.

3 FSIS Employees

Audience Profile

The employee user group represents all FSIS employees including agency directors, managers and staff level personnel, field office personnel, and office support staff. This is one of the largest segments of the online user population. It is also one of the most divided.

Demographics

Individuals working in more traditional desk positions in the Department Headquarters building make up about 20% of the employee population. Inspectors and field office personnel make up

the remainder of the group. Approximately 7,000 of the 9,000+ agency employees are inspectors, veterinarians, and other members of the field office workforce.

Inspectors can be further divided into two distinct groups. The first, and larger of the two, includes those laborers who actually work on the processing plant floor. They are the unionized employees charged with the careful monitoring of plant processes and products. These individuals have almost no opportunity to access the Web. The second inspector group includes those employees who hold a degree in food science or are tenured members of the FSIS inspection staff. They are managers, veterinarians, and other field office specialists. These individuals do not belong to a union, and as a result of having been employed by FSIS for a longer period of time, are more experienced and better compensated for their work.

Interactions with FSIS, Informational Needs

FSIS inspectors desire ready access to directives, regulations, notices, and other industry news and updates. Regulations document government mandates to be imposed on the plant floor. Currently, these users do not have fingertip access to this, and other information that they need to do their jobs as effectively as possible.

These users also desire information on training, classes, and activities. Generally inspectors on the plant floor are motivated to achieve respect, success, and career development in their current roles so that they can begin to move through the defined organizational hierarchy. Therefore, training is a top priority. This user group also needs access to workplace violence prevention information, a calendar of meetings and events, backgrounders, speeches, the strategic plan, and consolidated benefits information on health care, child care, and retirement planning.

Headquarter employees desire much of the same information as inspectors but have the added benefit of being able to access the FSIS site from their individual computers throughout the day. These resources research and communicate online about their careers, responsibilities, agency services, programs, and opportunities. Though communication can sometimes be a problem within the agency, generally, these individuals have the most access to FSIS knowledge nation-wide.

With the growth of eGovernment across the Enterprise, FSIS is moving toward an automated application and hiring process. This shift opens up the employee audience group to include prospective agency employees and job applicants. These users desire concise position descriptions, compensation information, and application procedures. The Web site could be a primary means of informing and attracting the best talent to the agency. Career and application information should therefore be displayed in one logical and centralized online location.

Computer and Internet Access

The attitude of employees towards the use of the Internet to conduct services is varied. Employees staffed in the Department Headquarters enjoy the convenience and speed of conducting business online. Field employees however, are frustrated by lack of access and slow

connection speeds. These individuals often do not have e-mail addresses, Internet training, or the desire to access electronic resources. This is a significant agency challenge.

4   Advocacy Groups

Audience Profile

The advocacy group users are members of consumer groups, special interest groups, non-government associations and religious organizations. They are researching and contacting FSIS in response to a specific cause. Members of advocacy groups are often passionate activists and tend to be involved, energetic, and vocal in transactions with both the agency and the public. This group can also be largely adversarial in dealings with the agency.

Demographics

Consumers from the advocacy segment typically hold a 4-year college level degree. They tend to be well educated and passionate on specific subject areas.

What is the purpose of the demographic section? Is the information useful?

Interactions with FSIS, Informational Needs

The main priority of most advocacy and consumer groups is to protect the public health rights of the American people. Some of these users are motivated by a personal foodborne illness crisis. They seek information on regulations, directives, FOIA, recalls, press releases, plants, speeches, labeling, upcoming meetings, and new technologies. These users have interacted with FSIS previously and are comfortable with the agency's responsibilities. They are one of the few user segments that recognizes FSIS' place within USDA.

Computer and Internet Access

Most members of advocacy groups have Internet access from either home or work, and use it regularly. These users are more motivated and issue savvy than the majority of the general public. They will frequent the FSIS Web site to research regulations, policies, and general interests.

5   Agribusiness Professionals

Audience Profile

Agricultural producers are non-farm agriculture related business owners, managers and employees. They look to FSIS for guidance on regulations, policy, and legislation. Like members of advocacy groups, these users also tend to see FSIS as a bit of an adversary because of the agency's responsibility to enforce regulations and sometimes institute penalties that negatively affect business margins.

Demographics

The leadership of non-farm agriculture related businesses is a well-educated group. Additionally, according to the Bureau of Labor Studies, the agricultural industry is predominately male, with approximately 25% of the population being female. These business professionals are goal oriented and business minded.[1]

Interactions with FSIS, Informational Needs

Agribusiness professionals are primarily interested in press releases, labeling requirements, and regulatory information. However, these users come to FSIS from the perspective that they must meet with agency mandates in order to run successful businesses. These users desire licensing information for opening a new plant, as well as newsletters, and information on district offices and tech centers. They are interested in accessing the training programs available to FSIS inspection employees online. To maintain profitable businesses these individuals need access to HACCP information, state partnership information, and a concise FSIS contact list.

There is also a segment of the business user population that is interested in information on imports and exports. These domestic establishments must understand the requirements for exporting meat, poultry, and egg products to markets outside of the US.

Computer and Internet Access

Most business professionals access the Internet regularly from home or work. These users are motivated to interact with the agency, and access information from the FSIS Web site because the health of their businesses depends upon compliance with agency regulations. They will frequent the FSIS Web site to research regulations, business needs, and general interests.

6   General Consumers

Audience Profile

FSIS serves all 285 million Americans. Though food safety and public health services are often transparent to the consumer, agency functions help ensure the security of the food supply in the United States each day.

More directly, FSIS online users include citizens interested in general food safety information, as well as those that have experienced a specific problem with their food and need to contact the Meat and Poultry Hotline for next steps.

Demographics

58% of American Internet users, or 68 million adults, have visited at least one government Web site, and most have visited more than one.[2] From that statistic alone it is evident that the general public provides a large audience base for the Web sites of government agencies like FSIS.

Due to the aging of the baby boom generation the median age of the American population is the highest in history—35.3 years. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, an overwhelming majority of this population has completed a high school education with 31% holding a Bachelor's or Graduate degree. The number of families maintained by unmarried women is on the rise. The average household contains 2.59 members. The median household income is $42,257.[3]

At 13% of the overall population, the 37 million Hispanic residents of the United States represent an important minority. Roughly half are fluent in both English and Spanish, while half are Spanish dominant. About 50% of Hispanics remain concentrated in Texas, California, and New York. 54% of Hispanics live in the suburbs.[4]

Interactions with FSIS, Informational Needs

The overall lack of distinction this group makes between USDA and FSIS has been previously discussed. As a result of this low level of agency awareness, the general public typically only interacts with FSIS when searching for specific information, or seeking to fill an identified need. Some potential areas of interest include recall information, outbreak information, USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline contact information, and information about public events and meetings. These users might also desire general information about FSIS, such as a description of program areas, news, hot topics, and food safety information.

During the summer of 2003 a significant portion of the East Coast experienced a power outage. This blackout affected millions of Americans. Once power was restored these general consumers accessed the FSIS Web site to find out what to do with their perishable food items. This is a good example of desired consumer content. These users have little time to devote to extensive searching for information online. They desire easy access to practical content.

Computer and Internet Access

There is significant variation in computer and Internet access among the general public. On the whole, Internet usage continues to rise in the United States however, growth rates have slowed considerably from the mid 1990s.[5] The percentage of households nation-wide with Internet access is 42%. Of these households nearly 65% connect at speeds of 56k or less according to Nielsen / Netratings. Thirteen percent of Americans regularly connect from home via broadband.[6]

Because of the continuing prevalence of the Internet and other technologies in American society, the general public is becoming increasingly more comfortable with turning to online resources to access information and services. Further, these people tend to trust the information they receive from official websites such as FSIS.

As the Hispanic population is a growing minority group, it is important to understand specifics about their Web usage trends. Seventy eight percent of Hispanics in the United States, who use computers, have a computer at home. The average Hispanic computer user is approximately 30

years-old. These individuals spend about 55% of their online time with Spanish language resources.[7]

7 Children and Caregivers

Audience Profile

This user group includes students and children who access the FSIS Web site for food safety information. For younger Americans, conducting research on the site is often prompted by a school project or homework assignment. The youngest viewers in this group may access the site with a parent or guardian.

Demographics

According to the U.S. Census there are approximately 60 million school-aged children in the United States.[8] The level of education, and reading and cognitive abilities for this group varies by age. Again, the typical student is largely unaware of the programs and services offered by FSIS, and the benefits of these services to the American people.

Interactions with FSIS, Informational Needs

Currently, children make up one of the smaller user groups of FSIS online. However, government agencies are being increasingly encouraged to create educational and entertaining Web pages for children. Perhaps with this new emphasis, more children will come to the site and learn about food safety.

Today, students interacting with FSIS most often seek information in order to complete a homework assignment or some other assigned task. FSIS online does include games and puzzles for younger users.

Computer and Internet Access

The Internet has the potential to be a strong educational tool for children in the United States. In particular, young children with Internet access are enthusiastic about using the Web as a resource. FSIS could take advantage of this enthusiasm and provide more interactive food safety education tools to members of this user group online.

In 2001, 99% of U.S. schools had Internet access, with 85% of those leveraging broadband connections. 57% of children have Internet access both at home and at school. However, children of low-income households are less likely to have access at home, limiting their Internet use to school hours.[9]

8   Press and Media

Audience Profile

Users in this group are writers, reporters, freelance journalists, and other media professionals working for radio, television, and newspaper producers.

Demographics

This audience group is well-written and well-spoken. Their ability to intelligently deliver news and information often makes them influential to the general public. Their minimum level of education is a 4-year college degree. Media professionals are motivated, persistent, and work on a deadline. These users seek information on a need-to-know basis. While accurate research is critical to publishing strong spots and columns, these users do not want to spend a significant amount of time searching for data.[10]

> Does this demographic section meet the criteria of objectivity? How many words and phrases that express subjective value of this group can you find?

Interactions with FSIS, Informational Needs

Journalists interact with FSIS both online, and via interviews with subject matter experts and agency personnel. They use the Web to verify information, provide background, and add hard facts to stories and primary source material. Also, because FSIS is a regulatory agency many members of this audience group see it as an objective source of food safety and recall information.

Again, these users require quick access to accurate data. They are typically under a time crunch and want to spend less time searching and more time formatting facts for personal analysis. From FSIS they are interested in recall information, press releases, speeches, notices, regulations and directives, upcoming events, and high-resolution photos. The Internet provides the most efficient path to this information.

Computer and Internet Access

Almost all members of the media have desktop or laptop computers in their offices and homes. They are technically savvy, use email extensively, and go to the Internet regularly for research and personal purposes.

9   Educators, Academia

Audience Profile

This user group is comprised of individuals from a broad cross section of the education community. For example users include K-12 educators teaching a food safety curriculum in public and private schools. Also included are teaching professionals and researchers that desire focused material in a particular area of interest—perhaps public health or food science. The

group includes university-based professionals working in scientific fields such as human nutrition, food science, biology, veterinary medicine, and public health.

Moving beyond the more traditional definitions of academic users, this group also includes student teachers, or adult and teen leaders teaching in non-classroom settings such as the 4-H club, Boys and Girls Club, and YMCA. Lastly, a relatively large segment of the FSIS online visitor population is school cafeteria staff and food preparers. These individuals are concerned with providing safe school lunches to students in the United States.

Demographics

Traditional educators are driven by the pursuit of knowledge, both within the classroom as well as within their research. They desire access to information that is relevant, accurate, and on the cutting edge of their field.[11] Many of these professionals are motivated to shape, inspire, and protect this nation's young people. The majority hold a minimum of a 4-year college degree and many have, or are working toward more advanced degrees.

Interactions with FSIS, Informational Needs

The average educator that is a consumer of online food safety information accesses the site periodically to update their curriculum and teaching materials, benefit from free or low-cost teaching aides and lesson plans, research related topics for lectures, projects, and papers, or stay informed on current agency updates that could potentially impact the health of their students. These individuals also desire presentations, videos, FSIS training materials including HACCP information, and a link to information on the school lunch program.

Computer and Internet Access

The academic user group is possibly the most technically savvy of all FSIS users. The majority have a computer with a broadband or dedicated dial-up connection at home. Moreover, nearly 100% of schools, colleges, and universities have machines with high-speed networks and Internet connections.[12] These users email extensively, access the Internet daily and have computers that allow them to take advantage of advanced applications. They are comfortable, and in many cases prefer, transacting business online. The challenge therefore, is not accessing the Internet but rather locating needed, wanted, and applicable information. The group desires content that is well organized, searchable, and accessible.

10 Scientists, Researchers, Laboratories

Audience Profile

This group is comprised of scientists, researchers, and laboratories interested in food science information including new policies, technologies, and processes.

Demographics

These scientists and researchers are driven by the pursuit of discovery. They want to be able to access information that will allow them to accurately test samples, further their own studies, or test a hypothesis. These users are researching FSIS data to use in writing technical articles, support advocacy arguments and suits against the agency, and ensure compliance with defined regulations. The majority of these users have the minimum of a 4-year college level degree. Many have or are working toward more advanced graduate degrees.

Interactions with FSIS, Informational Needs

Lab personnel come to the FSIS site whenever they are in search of information regarding testing methods and processes, contracting for FSIS, industry compliance, technical data and FSIS issued notices and directives. Members of this group also desire access to any available research summaries and publications.

Computer and Internet Access

Scientists and researchers are highly educated and technically savvy. They use email extensively, and access the Internet regularly for research, and personal purposes. In fact, the Internet has become one of their primary tools in information gathering. Users read publications, subscribe to topical list servs and websites, and collaborate with peers.

11 International Users

Audience Profile

The international user group consists of businesses, and foreign governments involved with importing or exporting of meat, poultry, or egg products to the United States.

Demographics

There are currently 32 countries that export FSIS regulated products to the US. The individuals involved in maintaining these trade relationships are educated members of foreign industry and foreign government. While a significant number of these international users come from Spanish speaking countries, they do tend to have strong English speaking skills.

Interactions with FSIS, Informational Needs

Individuals involved with international industry or government are motivated to interact with FSIS for two main reasons. These users are either members of countries and agricultural production establishments that are already approved to trade with the United States, or seeking approval to become trade partners. These people specifically seek information on US import regulations, labeling requirements, customs requirements, re-inspection guidelines, equivalence requirements and equivalence audit results, and listings of countries and businesses approved for international trade. A smaller percentage of these users access the site for information on Codex Office responsibilities, activities, and upcoming meetings.

Computer and Internet Access

Individuals from foreign production establishments and foreign governments tend to have occupations in which they have frequent access to the Web and other electronic applications. These users are generally comfortable with conducting business online, especially in international interactions.

12 Congress, State and Federal Government

Audience Profile

Functional dependencies exist between FSIS, public health agencies with related missions, and local, state, and federal government organizations. While individuals from other public sector groups are secondary consumers of agency information, they must not be overlooked.

Sister public health agencies include CDC, FDA, EPA, and APHIS. Each is charged with protecting the food supply at some point along the farm to table continuum. Also part of the public sector, 28 states are responsible for inspecting local meat and poultry production plants. State inspection programs are audited by FSIS and must adopt applicable FSIS regulations and directives.

Demographics

Members of other governmental agencies and organizations tend to come to FSIS with very specific needs. Therefore, these users desire quick access to desired information. Because they tend to be comfortable with government processes, they will not hesitate to contact agency resources directly rather than spend time searching unsuccessfully.

Interactions with FSIS, Informational Needs

In order to best serve their own constituents, users from other public health agencies must understand FSIS, as well as the integration points between related agencies. They desire background information on FSIS specifically mission, responsibilities, organizational structure, and contact information.

State inspection officials seek information on regulations, inspection requirements, procedures, and training. This group's needs are similar to the needs of the FSIS federal inspection officers that are staffed in establishments nationwide. They work to ensure the safety of meat and poultry products on the state and retail level.

Computer and Internet Access

As is evident across all audience groups, Internet use is varied among governmental employees. Those individuals that work in traditional desk positions have easy access to online resources. However, state inspection employees, like field office officials, have very little opportunity to access Internet based information and services.

13 Healthcare Providers

Audience Profile

These individuals are responsible for the health of American citizens each day. As a result they need to be informed about medical conditions including the occurrence, symptoms of, and cures for foodborne illnesses.

Demographics

Healthcare professionals represent one of the smaller audiences of FSIS online. However, the information that they seek from the Web site is critical to the well-being of their patients. These users are well-educated, and are motivated to be informed on the issue of public health.

Interactions with FSIS, Informational Needs

Users from this group will access the site periodically in order to update themselves on issues related to food science and health. They are interested in general information about the diagnosis and treatment of foodborne illness, a subject in which they are not necessarily well versed. These individuals may also look to the Web to receive alerts in cases of emergencies, outbreaks, or wide-spread health incidents. They may be interested in the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline, public health service information, and lab reports.

Computer and Internet Access

Almost all healthcare professionals have access to a desktop or laptop computer in their home or office. However, their time online during the day might be limited if they are responsible for patient appointments. These users are well-educated and typically comfortable with e-mail, Internet, and other electronic applications. They use a computer for both research and personal purposes.

> The document stops abruptly. What is missing here? Overall, what changes would you make to this document?

14 Endnotes

1. USDA Web Presence Initiative Audience Analysis: eGovernment Team, September 2003.
2. www.pewinternet.org, Pew Internet and American Life Project Survey: Pew Research Center, December 2001.
3. US Census Bureau, August 2000.
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