

**Driving the Fox from the Henhouse  
Improving Oversight of Food Safety at the FDA and USDA**

**Preliminary Methodology and Response Report  
July 29, 2010**

Prepared for the  
Union of Concerned Scientists

Prepared by  
JM Larson and SM Nusser  
Survey Research Services  
Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology  
Iowa State University

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

AMES, IOWA 50011-1210

**A Survey of Food Safety Scientists and Inspectors  
Employed by the Food and Drug Administration  
and by the United States Department of Agriculture**

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# A Survey of Food Safety Scientists and Inspectors Employed by the Food and Drug Administration and by the United States Department of Agriculture

## I. SURVEY DESIGN AND ADMINISTRATION

### Background.

The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC to promote the production and application of scientific research within U.S. federal agencies. During the past several years, the Scientific Integrity Unit of the UCS has conducted mail surveys of scientists employed by the Federal Drug Administration and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as a survey of climate scientists employed by a variety of agencies. In 2007-2008, Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology (CSSM) collaborated with the UCS on a survey of scientists employed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In 2009, UCS again contracted with CSSM to collaborate on a survey of food safety scientists and inspectors employed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), and the USDA Agriculture Research Service (ARS). CSSM's responsibilities were to consult in project development, to implement the data collection process as a neutral third party, and to assist in data analysis. This report describes the project staff, the procedures followed for project development and data collection, and the final survey outcomes.

### Project Staff.

The primary UCS representatives involved in this project are Francesca Grifo, Director of the UCS Scientific Integrity Program, and Tim Donaghy, Analyst with the UCS Scientific Integrity Program. CSSM staff members involved in the Survey of EPA Scientists are listed in the table below.

**Table 1. Iowa State University Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology Project Staff.**

Name	Title	Project Responsibilities
Janice Larson	Survey Manager	Project Management
Sarah Nusser, PhD	Professor of Statistics, CSSM Director	Sampling and Data Analysis Consultant
Russell Hoffman	Systems Support Specialist	Survey Programming
Allison Tyler	Data Collection Supervisor	Data Collection Implementation
Jody Fox	Quality Assurance Supervisor	Data Collection Monitoring
Glenda Ashley	Secretarial Support	Key Entry
Stephanie Zimmer	Graduate Research Assistant	Analysis Programming
Dianne Anderson	Assistant Director, CSSM	CSSM Administration Liaison

## **Sample Design.**

The sample for this project was compiled in three groups by UCS staff by using public records available online. To develop the FDA and ARS samples, the UCS staff referenced agency web sites and identified potentially eligible individuals through job titles and descriptions, authorship of scientific articles and reports, and other specific scientific references. Both postal mail and email addresses were included for each individual in the FDA sample as well as job and organization types. Although efforts were made to obtain a complete sample of FDA and ARS food safety scientists, it was acknowledged that the list would likely contain some people inappropriately and omit others due to the manner in which it was compiled.

The ARS is involved in a broad range of research topics, and the selection of ARS scientists who have focused on food safety issues resulted in a list of 253 individuals. The decision was made to include all 253 of the listed ARS employees in the project sample and split the remaining sample equally between FDA and FSIS employees. The project was budgeted for a sample of 6000, with a goal of 1000 to 1200 completed surveys.

There were 5012 individuals included in the original FDA listing provided by UCS staff. Their job groups included Science (n = 1221), Investigation (n = 2468), Management (n = 119), Support (n = 820), and Generic (n = 383). The Support group included positions such as clerical staff and computer support, and all 820 were removed. All 1221 people in the Science group were included. A simple random sample of 1653 people was drawn from the remaining groups. The total sample selected from the FDA list included 2874 people.

Available online information for FSIS employees was minimal, including only names and email addresses. There was no realistic method of identifying job types or classifications, so there was no way to identify which individuals might be eligible or ineligible for the survey. The FSIS list provided by UCS included 8079 employees. Initially CSSM staff drew a simple random sample of 2873 from that list. However, UCS staff later learned that agency email addresses were infrequently used by many of the FSIS inspectors, which could decrease response rates more than previously anticipated. As a result, a new simple random sample of 5000 FSIS employees was drawn and the budget was amended accordingly.

The total selected sample size was 8127. CSSM cleaned and prepared the sample for data collection. Five records were removed because they were not people (e.g., “Quota Advisor” and “Beltsville District Travel”) and the remaining 8122 records constituted the final sample.

## **Survey Design.**

The survey was developed and provided by UCS staff. The definition of “scientist” or “scientific work” from an eligibility perspective was of necessity somewhat vague, so it was acknowledged that sampled individuals contacted for the study might interpret the survey’s application to themselves differently.

The survey was designed for online administered, since email addresses were available for everyone in the sample and most people employed in a scientific field would likely be comfortable with computers and Web applications. Assigned usernames and passwords would be required to access the survey online, and both the survey and data submitted would be stored on a secure server at Iowa State University.

An advance letter printed on Iowa State University letterhead with the UCS logo added would be sent to the FDA sample, since postal addresses were available. The letter would assure sampled scientists and inspectors of the legitimacy of the project and serve as a tangible reminder to complete the survey. All other contacts would be via e-mail. The FSIS and ARS samples would of necessity receive all survey notifications and reminders by email.

USC staff made every effort to obtain permission and cooperation from high level administrators in the FDA and FSIS. Numerous meetings and telephone conversations were held as UCS staff described the survey and its purposes. Applicable agency administrators were asked to notify their staff that the survey was legitimate and that employees were allowed to complete it on their own time. Response to these requests, however, was mixed. While agency administrators appreciated being apprised of the survey, follow-up notification of their staff was inconsistent.

## **II. SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION AND PROCEDURES**

### **Survey Development and Programming.**

The Food Safety Survey was developed by UCS staff in consultation with CSSM. Many of the questions were similar to those used by the UCS in previous surveys, with revisions primarily relating to Food Safety application and respondent eligibility. The first two questions were designed to verify involvement in food safety issues and in scientific work. Respondents not involved in either food safety or scientific work would be classified as ineligible for the survey. The survey (Appendix A) consisted of approximately 67 items. CSSM staff submitted a project application with copies of the final survey document and proposed correspondence to the Iowa State University Institutional Review Board, and project approval was received on February 22, 2010.

The online survey was programmed in January and February of 2010 by CSSM staff using Snap software. The instrument was tested by both CSSM and UCS staff and revisions were implemented as needed.

The layout of the web instrument was designed using TDM (Tailored Design Method) protocols for maximizing respondent comprehension and ease of navigation with online forms. Many of the questions were constructed in a table format, and a minimal amount of scrolling was required to view some questions.

In late February and early March, revisions were made to the survey and the decision was made to increase the sample size of the FSIS group. The final version of the survey was available in mid-March. However, the increase in sample size required a revision to the contract as well as the submission of a Modification to the Institutional Review Board. The contract was finalized and the Modification was approved on March 22, 2010.

### **Site Security.**

CSSM online surveys are deployed on one web server and survey response data is stored on another server. This maximizes the security of both sample and survey response data by maintaining them independently. Both servers are housed in a secured, climate-controlled Iowa State University facility with 24-hour security and technical staff.

Access to Internet survey sites at Iowa State University is restricted through the requirement of digital authenticated authorization. For this survey, each person in the sample was assigned a unique username and password to be entered at the survey homepage in order to gain access to the survey itself. The username served as a Case ID, and a combination of the two made survey access by unauthorized persons highly unlikely. Instructions on the survey homepage and in the advance letter and e-mails provided a name, toll-free telephone number, and e-mail address for CSSM project staff who would be available to assist with any difficulties encountered in accessing the survey as well as to answer questions about the survey itself.

### **Data Collection Procedure.**

The UCS list of food safety scientists and inspectors was provided to CSSM and evaluated. The sample was drawn as described above, and the final sample included 4995 FSIS employees, 2874 FDA employees, and 253 ARS employees, for a total sample size of 8122.

While the FDA sample contained names, location/division, and contact information, the FSIS and ARS samples included names and email addresses only. Each member of the FDA sample was sent a letter printed on CSSM letterhead with the UCS logo in the lower right corner. The letter (Appendix B) explained the purpose of the survey, the confidential and voluntary nature of the survey, and procedures for completing it. It

included the survey web site and a unique user name and password to use to access the survey. Contact information was provided for both CSSM and UCS staff, and recipients were encouraged to contact project staff if they had questions or felt they had been contacted in error.

Two weeks later email invitations with the same information were sent to the same FDA individuals. The e-mail contained a link to the survey web site. At the same time, identical email invitations were sent to the FSIS and ARS samples. Follow-up emails (Appendix C, D, and E) were sent approximately 7 to 10 days apart to remind employees of the opportunity to complete the survey. The final follow-up email was sent to FDA employees only, because it referenced an email that had recently been disseminated by an agency administrator. The letter and email contact schedule appears in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Contact Schedule.**

<b>Contact Type</b>	<b>Date</b>
Letter sent (US Mail, FDA only)	Friday, March 26
E-Mail notification	Monday, April 5
E-Mail reminder 1	Thursday, April 15
E-Mail reminder 2	Thursday, April 22
E-Mail reminder 3 (FDA only)	Tuesday, May 11

Approximately 498 emails bounced back to CSSM as undeliverable. Files listing the bounced email addresses were sent to UCS for review and returned to CSSM with updated information. Emails were resent to cases with corrected or verified addresses. If emails to the corrected or verified addresses also bounced back as undeliverable, the cases removed from the contact list. There were also 128 individuals who were no longer included in the online agency databases. These were classified as ineligible, since apparently they were no longer employed by the agencies.

CSSM staff received and responded to about 250 emails and 25 telephone calls from individuals with questions or concerns. Many requested additional information about the survey or felt that the survey did not apply to them. Respondents who were not employed as scientists or in a science-related capacity were classified as ineligible and eliminated from future contacts.

Numerous respondents indicated that they could not complete the survey until they received permission from a supervisor or department administrator. A notice of survey legitimacy granting permission to participate was disseminated to FSIS employees on April 5 by FSIS User Information under the authorization of FSIS Administrator Al Almanza. Subsequently, FSIS employees who emailed or called CSSM to question the survey validity were referred to this email. ARS employees were also referred to this email, since both FSIS and ARS are USDA agencies. The text of the FSIS notice appears below.

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**From:** FSIS User Information  
**To:** All Users  
**Sent:** Mon Apr 05 21:33:48 2010  
**Subject:** Alert: Email Survey Sent from Iowa State University to FSIS Users

FSIS users have recently received an email from the Iowa State University in collaboration with the Union of Concerned Scientists requesting they participate in a survey. The FSIS Security Operations Center (SOC) has confirmed that the survey is legitimate; however, no "All User" notification was sent to support the validity of this survey, causing broad (and reasonable) concern as to whether or not this was a phishing attempt. The survey is not affiliated with FSIS, and users can complete it on their own time.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer appreciates the vigilance of the field and headquarters employees who raised the issue to the FSIS and USDA SOC's this afternoon. It is through their actions that we were able to identify, triage and provide guidance to our workforce.

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UCS staff continued efforts to obtain similar cooperation from FDA administrators. On April 14, CSSM staff learned that the following email had been sent to a number of FDA directors with an attached copy of the CSSM notification letter containing the user name and password for a specific member of the sample.

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**From:** Berger, Michele M  
**Sent:** Friday, April 02, 2010 10:01 AM  
**To:** ORA HQ Office Directors; ORA RFDDs; ORA DDs; ORA Lab Directors  
**Subject:** \*\*\*\*\*Unsanctioned Survey\*\*\*\*\* PLEASE  
READ\*\*\*\*\*\_

Hi, we have been informed that several employees have received the attached survey from the Iowa State University. The University of Iowa study is not something that FDA is sanctioning. The University was notified that FDA could not endorse this survey nor provide them a list of FDA employees. We are asking you to inform your employees if they receive this survey it is optional if they want to complete it.

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Several respondents who replied to CSSM email notices cited the "unsanctioned survey" email as an indication that they should not complete the survey. In addition, it required the removal from the sample of the case whose letter was attached to the email. UCS staff continued to request assistance from FDA administrators, and on May 7 the following email notice was distributed to FDA employees by Russell Abbot, Deputy Commissioner for Administration at the FDA:



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FDA employees have recently received an email from the Iowa State University in collaboration with the Union of Concerned Scientists requesting they participate in a survey. The FDA Office of Administration has confirmed that the survey is legitimate and not a phishing attempt. The survey is not affiliated with the FDA and users can complete it on their own time.

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CSSM sent one final email notice to FDA employees on May 11, referencing the May 7 memo and encouraging employees to complete the survey now that agency permission was documented.

Throughout the data collection period, respondents were allowed to access their survey as often as they wished using their assigned usernames and passwords until their surveys were completed. Once a survey was completed, it could no longer be accessed by the respondent.

The data collection period closed on May 20, 2010. Partially completed surveys were output from the online survey on May 21, 2010. The resulting data file includes both complete and partial surveys. It was edited and cleaned in SAS using frequencies and cross tabulations. The final data delivery consisted of an Excel data file, frequency file, open text file, and coding manual.

### **III. SURVEY PROCESS OUTCOMES AND RESPONSE RATES**

Final results are itemized in Table 3 below. There were 211 individuals classified as ineligible. Most of them were not employed by the FDA/FSIS/ARS in food safety in a scientific capacity. Some (41) contacted CSSM research staff to explain the situation and some (40) completed the first two questions of the online survey, responding that they had no involvement in either food safety or scientific work. The largest share (128) was comprised of people who were no longer included in the online agency databases and were classified as ineligible since apparently they were no longer employed by the agencies. In addition, one case was actually not a person but an email address for a department. Another case was classified ineligible because her advance letter was attached to an FDA email memo that was distributed to an unknown number of people. This results in an eligible sample of 7913.

There was no response at all from 6114 cases in the sample. Approximately 100 of these cases never received email notification because all email messages bounced as undeliverable and no alternative information was available. Although it is possible that these individuals are no longer employed by the FDA/FSIS/ARS and would therefore be ineligible, UCS and CSSM staff were unable to verify that information and therefore those cases are considered part of the overall survey non-response. One individual was

deployed to Iraq and so was unable to respond. This is also considered part of overall survey non-response. Active refusals were received from 86 individuals, who either emailed or called on the telephone to refuse.

Partially completed surveys were received from 118 employees. Completed surveys, defined as completed through questions 39 or 40, were received from 1592 employees. The total number of surveys in the data set is 1710.

When adjusted for eligibility, 1710 eligible responses were received from the eligible sample of 7911, for a response rate of 21.62%. The response rate is calculated as the ratio of completed surveys to the total eligible sample.

**Table 3. Final Dispositions and Response Rates.**

	<b>FDA</b>		<b>FSIS</b>		<b>ARS</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total Sample</b>	2874		4995		253		8122	
Ineligible	144		66		1		211	
<b>Total Eligible Sample</b>	2730		4929		252		7911	
Refusals	49		35		2		86	
Unable to respond	0		0		1		1	
Non-Response	2155		3795		164		6114	
Partial surveys	44		67		7		118	
Complete surveys	482		1032		78		1592	
<b>Total Surveys</b>	<b>526</b>		<b>1099</b>		<b>85</b>		<b>1710</b>	
<b>Response Rates</b>	<b>19.27%</b>		<b>22.30%</b>		<b>33.73%</b>		<b>21.62%</b>	

## **IV. SURVEY ANALYSIS**

## APPENDIX A. Survey

### Iowa State University Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology

## Survey of Food Safety Scientists and Inspectors

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the Survey of Food Safety Scientists and Inspectors. This survey is being distributed to randomly selected individuals working for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). The purpose of this survey is to better understand the role of science and the contributions of scientists and inspectors within the food safety arena of the FDA and the FSIS.

**Confidentiality** of the information you provide is assured. Your responses will be combined with responses from other participants and reported in summary form only. Contact information will be used only during the data collection period and will be kept strictly confidential by the researchers at Iowa State University. Any connection between your identity and your survey responses will be destroyed after data collection is completed and before survey results are made public. If you are concerned about confidentiality issues within your workplace, you are encouraged to complete this survey on a non-work computer and delete your e-mail notification after you have finished.

**Permission** to conduct this survey with FDA and FSIS scientists and inspectors has been received from the administration at both agencies. There is no risk to your computer from completing this survey.

- Please complete this survey on your personal time.
- Use the User name and Password that appear in the letter and/or e-mail that you received from Iowa State University to enter the survey.
- Click on the **Continue** button at the bottom of each screen to proceed. You may have to scroll down to see the Continue button on some screens.

After beginning the survey, you may exit and complete the remaining items later if you like, but you must **use your assigned survey user name and password each time to re-enter**.

Click on the Start button to start the survey.

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If you have any difficulties with this form, please contact Allison Tyler, [at Tyler@iastate.edu](mailto:at Tyler@iastate.edu), phone 877-578-8848 (toll-free).

# Survey of Food Safety Scientists and Inspectors

## Job Duties.

1. Approximately what percentage of your job duties are related to food safety?

None // 1-25% // 26-50% // 51-75% // 76-100%

2. Approximately what percentage of your job duties involves science?

(Note: Scientific work may include, but is not limited to, basic research, laboratory testing, data collection, risk assessment, veterinary medicine, economic analysis, science policy and other topics.)

None // 1-25% // 26-50% // 51-75% // 76-100%

[IF NONE, Q9, 12, 13, 14-17, and 28-32 ARE SKIPPED.]

[IF Q1 AND Q2 ARE BOTH NONE, GO TO CLOSE]

3. Which one of the following categories best describes your work at the FSIS/FDA?

Medical and Public Health

Veterinary Medical Science

Biological Science

Chemistry

Epidemiology

Food Science

Nutrition

Science Policy

Other Science

Food Safety Inspection

Consumer Safety Inspection

Administrative and Office Support

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mission.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

4. The FSIS/FDA has sufficient resources to effectively perform its mission of [FILL].

[FSIS: "ensuring that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged."]

[FDA: "protecting the public health by assuring the safety, efficacy, and security of . . . our nation's food supply."]

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree

5. The FSIS/FDA is acting effectively to protect the public from food borne illnesses.

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree

6. The FSIS/FDA is moving in the right direction.

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree

### **Management.**

7. FSIS/FDA leadership stands behind agency employees or managers who make decisions that may be controversial.

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree

8. My direct supervisor stands behind scientists or inspectors who put forth positions that may be controversial.

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree // Does Not Apply

9. The FSIS/FDA offers opportunity for advancement based on scientific expertise, not just on administrative and supervisory expertise.

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree

### **Professionalism & Candor.**

10. I am provided appropriate time and resources to keep up with advances in my profession. (This could include attending conferences, trainings, and participation in scientific or professional societies.)

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree

11. Currently I can openly express any concerns about the mission-driven work of my agency without fear of retaliation.

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree

12. Currently I am allowed to publish work in peer-reviewed scientific journals regardless of the level of controversy on the topic.

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree // Does Not Apply

13. Currently I am allowed to speak to the public and the news media about my scientific research findings, regardless of the level of controversy on the topic.

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree // Does Not Apply

### **Science.**

Please indicate how often you feel each of the following statements is true.

14. FSIS/FDA collects the scientific and monitoring information needed to effectively meet its mission.

Always // Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Don't Know

15. FSIS/FDA scientific documents and reports make use of the best judgment of its scientific staff.

Always // Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Don't Know

16. FSIS/FDA determinations and actions are consistent with the scientific findings contained in agency documents and reports.

Always // Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Don't Know

17. Expert advice from scientific advisory committees is heeded and incorporated into regulatory decisions.

Always // Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Don't Know

### **Job Satisfaction and Morale.**

18. How would you rate your personal job satisfaction at FSIS/FDA?

Excellent // Good // Fair // Poor // Extremely Poor

19. How would you rate morale within your center/office/service?

Excellent // Good // Fair // Poor // Extremely Poor



**Outside Influence.**

20. In making policy or regulatory decisions that impact food safety, many factors may be considered by agency decision makers. On the scale below, please indicate how much weight you think each of the following factors has in the FSIS/FDA's final decisions.

	<b>No Weight</b>	<b>Little Weight</b>	<b>Some Weight</b>	<b>Much Weight</b>	<b>A Lot of Weight</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Public Health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Political Interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consumer Interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[These four factors are randomized on the survey.]

21. In your opinion, how appropriate is the level of consideration of these factors at your agency?

	<b>Too Low</b>	<b>About Right</b>	<b>Too High</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Public Health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Political Interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consumer Interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[These four factors are randomized on the survey.]

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

22. Public health has been harmed by agency practices that defer to business interests.

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree

23. The presence of top FSIS/FDA decision makers who come from the food or agriculture industry inappropriately influences the decisions made by the agency.

Strongly Agree // Agree // Undecided // Disagree // Strongly Disagree

For the following questions, please indicate how often you have personally experienced each type of situation, both over the past year and during the 5 year period prior to that.

24. Instances where the public health has been harmed by businesses withholding food safety information from agency investigators.

How often have you experienced this in the past year?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

How often did you experience this in the previous 5 years?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

25. Situations where **corporate interests** have forced the withdrawal or significant modification of a FSIS/FDA policy or action designed to protect consumers or public health.

How often have you experienced this in the past year?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

How often did you experience this in the previous 5 years?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

26. Situations where **non-governmental interests (such as advocacy groups)** have forced the withdrawal or significant modification of a FSIS/FDA policy or action designed to protect consumers or public health.

How often have you experienced this in the past year?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

How often did you experience this in the previous 5 years?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

27. Situations where members of Congress have forced the withdrawal or significant modification of a FSIS/FDA policy or action designed to protect consumers or public health.

How often have you experienced this in the past year?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

How often did you experience this in the previous 5 years?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

## Political Interference in Science.

For the following questions, please indicate how often you have personally experienced each type of situation, both over the past year and during the five year period prior to that.

28. Requests from FSIS/FDA decision makers to inappropriately exclude or alter technical information or conclusions in a FSIS/FDA scientific document.

How often have you experienced this in the past year?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

How often did you experience this in the previous 5 years?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

29. Requests from FSIS/FDA decision makers to provide incomplete, inaccurate or misleading information to the public, regulated industry, media, or elected/senior government officials.

How often have you experienced this in the past year?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

How often did you experience this in the previous 5 years?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

30. Selective or incomplete use of data to justify a specific regulatory outcome.

How often have you experienced this in the past year?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

How often did you experience this in the previous 5 years?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

31. Changes or edits during review that change the meaning of scientific findings that occur without a meaningful opportunity to correct them.

How often have you experienced this in the past year?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

How often did you experience this in the previous 5 years?

Frequently // Occasionally // Seldom // Never // Does Not Apply

Several forms of political interference in science are listed below. Some of these were addressed in the questions you have just completed. Please refer to the list below when answering the following question.

- Inappropriate influence in scientific decisions by political appointees from your or other agencies
- Inappropriate influence by commercial, non-governmental, or advocacy interests.
- Direction to provide incomplete, inaccurate or misleading information to the public.
- Direction to exclude or alter technical information in an agency scientific document.
- Selective or incomplete use of data to justify a specific regulatory outcome.
- Pressure to ignore impacts of a regulation on specific populations.
- Changes or edits during review that change the meaning of scientific findings.
- Disappearance or unusual delay in the release of scientific information.
- New or unusual administrative requirements that impair scientific work.
- Statements by agency officials that misrepresent scientists' findings.
- Requests to consider data or use methods that are not scientifically credible.
- Situations in which scientists have actively objected to pressure to change findings.

32. How many activities or situations like those listed above have you personally experienced during the **past year**?

None // 1-5 // 6-10 // 11-20 // More than 20

33. If you compare the past year to the 5-year period prior to it, would you say activities or situations like those listed above are occurring:

Less often than before // About the same as before // More often than before // Don't Know

### Safety of Specific Foods.

34. How confident are you that the FSIS/FDA adequately protects the consumer from food borne illness from the following foods?

[FSIS Version]

	<b>Completely Confident</b>	<b>Mostly Confident</b>	<b>Somewhat Confident</b>	<b>Not at All Confident</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Imported Foods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meat and poultry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[FDA Version]

	<b>Completely Confident</b>	<b>Mostly Confident</b>	<b>Somewhat Confident</b>	<b>Not at All Confident</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Imported Foods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eggs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seafood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fruits and Vegetables	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Processed Foods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Proposed Policy Changes.

If properly implemented and funded, how do you think the following proposed reforms would impact food safety in this country?

	<b>Greatly Worsen</b>	<b>Worsen</b>	<b>No Significant Change</b>	<b>Improve</b>	<b>Greatly Improve</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
35. Consolidation of all government food safety activities into a new Food Safety Administration.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. Requiring each food production facility to conduct a science-based hazard analysis and implement preventive controls.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37. Increasing the frequency of food safety inspections conducted by the FDA.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38. Establishing a comprehensive electronic system to trace food products through the production and distribution system.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. Establishing strong whistleblower protections for private or public employees who report problems affecting the food supply.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Your Background.

40. What is your major field of training?

Chemistry  
Biological & Life Sciences  
Environmental Science  
Physical Sciences  
Engineering  
Mathematics & Statistics  
Economics  
Medical Science  
Public Health  
Toxicology  
Veterinary Science  
Public Policy  
Non-Science fields  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

41. What is your current grade level?

GS-9 or lower  
GS-10  
GS-11  
GS-12  
GS-13  
GS-14  
GS-15  
PHS Commissioned Corps  
SES  
Title 42  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

42. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Bachelor's Degree  
Master's Degree  
PhD  
JD  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

43. How long have you been working at the FSIS/FDA?

Less than 1 year  
1-5 years  
6-10 years  
11-15 years  
More than 15 years

44. Have you ever worked for a food producer, processor, distributor, or food trade organization?

Yes

No [IF NO, GO TO Q46]

45. IF Q44 = YES, ASK: How many years did you work for a food producer, processor, distributor, or food trade organization?

Less than 1 year

1-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

More than 15 years

46. How do you think the safety of our nation's food supply and the integrity of the scientific work produced by FSIS/FDA could best be improved?

OPEN-ENDED

47. Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

OPEN-ENDED

Thank you very much for your participation.

**Iowa State University  
Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology**

**Survey of Food Safety Scientists and Inspectors**

Thank you for your participation. Your responses have been recorded.

If you have any questions about the survey procedures and methodology, please contact the Iowa State University Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology at (877) 578-8848 (toll-free).

If you have questions about survey results please contact Francesca T. Grifo. Contact information appears below: All personal communications with UCS are completely confidential.

Francesca T. Grifo  
Senior Scientist  
Director, Scientific Integrity Program  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
1707 H Street NW, Suite 600  
Washington, DC 20006  
Tel (202) 331-5446  
Fax (202) 223-6162

To view results of previous surveys conducted with scientists at other federal agencies, go to [www.ucsusa.org/scientific\\_integrity](http://www.ucsusa.org/scientific_integrity)

ISU Logo

UCS Logo





## APPENDIX B. Initial Letter/E-Mail

[DATE]

Dear [Name],

Researchers at Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology (CSSM), together with the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), are conducting a web survey with 8000 scientists and safety inspectors working for the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the US Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), and selected other agencies. With your help, we hope to better understand the role of science and government oversight in protecting the safety of our nation's food supply. The survey is part of a broad effort to examine how public agencies conduct and use science in decision-making in order to better serve the American public.

You have been selected to represent your agency in this important research by completing a brief online survey. Permission to conduct this survey has been received from top administrators at both agencies. Those of you at FSIS should have received an email last week from FSIS User Information, authorized by FSIS Administrator Al Almanza, advising that the survey is legitimate and that users may complete it on their own time. We are currently working with administrators at FDA to obtain similar assurance for FDA personnel.

Please complete this survey on your personal time, within the next two weeks. It should take about 10 minutes. Specific logins and passwords have been assigned to each selected participant to ensure that only FDA, FSIS and ARS employees have access to the survey.

To complete the survey, go to the following URL and enter the Login ID and Password provided below. (They are case sensitive.) We will also send you an email with a link included.

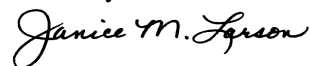
Go to: [website url]  
Login ID: [id number]  
Password: [password]

CSSM maintains strict security procedures to ensure the anonymity of survey respondents. Any connection between your personal information and your survey responses will be kept completely confidential by CSSM and will be destroyed before survey results are provided to the UCS or made public. If you have concerns about confidentiality in your workplace, you may complete the survey on a non-work computer and, after you are finished, delete any e-mail notifications you receive.

Your participation in this project is voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions you choose. However, your participation is extremely important since a high response rate is essential to high quality data. Results will be made available online (see the back of this page) and may also be provided to the media, Congress, executive branch officials, and members of academia.

Thank you in advance for your important and highly valued contribution to this research. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 877-578-8848 (toll-free) or [jmlarson@iastate.edu](mailto:jmlarson@iastate.edu).

Sincerely,



Janice Larson, Survey Director  
Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology  
Iowa State University



Union of Concerned Scientists  
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

*(See other side for additional participant information)*

## **Survey of Food Safety Scientists and Safety Inspectors Additional Participant Information**

The Survey of Food Safety Scientists and Safety Inspectors is sponsored by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), which has produced recent surveys of science professionals within several other federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Fish & Wildlife Service, and an earlier survey of the entire FDA.

To view the results of this survey or previous UCS surveys, see [www.ucsusa.org/surveys](http://www.ucsusa.org/surveys). If you have questions about the goals or results of this survey, contact Dr. Francesca T. Grifo, Senior Scientist and Director of the Scientific Integrity Program at UCS, at 202-331-5446 or [fgrifo@ucsusa.org](mailto:fgrifo@ucsusa.org).

**Participation in this survey is voluntary.** There is no penalty for not completing the survey. However, accurate survey results depend upon participation by a good cross-section of respondents. Permission to conduct this survey with FDA and FSIS scientists and safety inspectors has been received from top administrators at both agencies.

**Confidentiality** of the information you provide is assured. Your responses will be combined with responses from other participants and reported in summary form only. Contact information will be used only during the data collection period and will be kept strictly confidential by the researchers at Iowa State University. Any connection between your identity and your survey responses will be destroyed after data collection is completed and before survey results are provided to the UCS or made public. If you are concerned about confidentiality issues within your workplace, you are encouraged to complete the survey on a non-work computer and delete your e-mail notification after you have finished.

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your responses for quality assurance and data analysis. These responses may contain private information but will not be associated with your name.

There is no risk to your computer by completing this survey. The survey link is secure and maintained by Iowa State University technical research personnel.

**The Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology at Iowa State University** has a strong reputation for conducting high quality research on a variety of topics. For more information see [www.cssm.iastate.edu](http://www.cssm.iastate.edu).

If you have questions about the rights of research subjects, contact the Iowa State University IRB Administrator or Director at 515-294-4566, [IRB@iastate.edu](mailto:IRB@iastate.edu)

## APPENDIX C. E-mail Reminder 1

Dear [NAME],

Iowa State University, together with the Union of Concerned Scientists, is conducting an online survey focusing on food safety issues. This survey is being conducted with scientists and safety inspectors who work for a variety of federal agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration, the Food Safety and Inspection Service, and the Agricultural Research Service. Recently you were contacted about this study and, as of today, we have not received any information from you.

Please complete this short, 10 minute survey on your personal time within the next week. You may use a home or personal computer or, consistent with your agency's limited use policy, you may use your work computer provided you do so on your own time.

To complete the survey, go to the following URL and login using the Login ID and password provided below. (The password is case sensitive.) Unique logins and passwords have been assigned to ensure confidentiality and to limit survey access.

Go To: [www.survey.cssm.iastate.edu/ucs](http://www.survey.cssm.iastate.edu/ucs)

Login ID: [FILL]

Password: [FILL]

This survey was not initiated by the agencies being contacted, however they are not opposed to the survey and have assured us that their personnel are welcome to complete the survey if they choose. Those of you at FSIS should have received an email last week from FSIS User Information, authorized by FSIS Administrator Al Almanza, advising that the survey is legitimate and that users may complete it on their own time. We are currently working with administrators at FDA to obtain similar assurance for FDA personnel.

This survey is part of a broad effort to examine how public agencies conduct and use science in decision-making in order to better serve the American public. It addresses issues such as administrative and financial support for scientific research, the publication or application of research results, and the work environment for scientists and engineers. In order to obtain fair and balanced results, we want to hear from a representative cross-section of individuals. With your help, we hope to better understand the role of science and government oversight in protecting the safety of our nation's food supply.

Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology (CSSM) has been contracted to administer this survey to ensure that it is conducted in a scientific and neutral manner. CSSM maintains strict security procedures to ensure the anonymity of survey respondents. Any connection between your personal information and your survey responses will be kept completely confidential by CSSM and will be destroyed before survey results are made public.

Your participation in this project is voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions you choose. However, your participation is extremely important since a high response rate is essential to high quality data.

This research is sponsored by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). To view the results of this survey or previous UCS surveys, see [www.ucsusa.org/surveys](http://www.ucsusa.org/surveys). If you have questions about the results or goals of this survey, contact Francesca T. Grifo, Director of the Scientific Integrity Program at UCS, (202) 331-5446 or [fgrifo@ucsusa.org](mailto:fgrifo@ucsusa.org).

If you have any questions or you feel you have received this message in error, please contact me at 877-578-8848 (toll-free) or [tyler@iastate.edu](mailto:tyler@iastate.edu).

Thank you in advance for your contribution to this important study.

Sincerely,

Allison Tyler, Project Manager  
Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology  
Iowa State University

## APPENDIX D. E-Mail Reminder 2

Dear [NAME],

Recently you were contacted about a food safety research study being conducted with scientists and safety inspectors working for several federal agencies, including the FDA, FSIS, and ARS. The study consists of a Web survey coordinated by Iowa State University and the Union of Concerned Scientists.

As of today, we have not received any information from you. We invite you to participate in this survey, even if scientific or technical work comprises only a small part of your job.

Please complete this short, 10 minute survey on your personal time, within the next week if possible. You may use a home or personal computer or, consistent with your agency's limited use policy, you may use your work computer provided you do so on your own time.

Unique logins and passwords have been assigned to ensure confidentiality and to limit survey access. To complete the survey, go to the following URL and enter the Login ID and password provided below.

Go to: [www.survey.cssm.iastate.edu/ucs](http://www.survey.cssm.iastate.edu/ucs)

Login ID: [FILL]

Password: [FILL]

This survey is part of a broad effort to examine how public agencies conduct and use science in decision-making in order to effectively serve the American public. With your help, we hope to better understand the role of science and government oversight in protecting the safety of our nation's food supply.

The FDA, FSIS, and ARS did not initiate this survey, however they are not opposed to it and have assured us that their personnel are welcome to complete the survey if they choose. Those of you at FSIS should have received an email the first week of April from FSIS User Information, authorized by FSIS Administrator Al Almanza, advising that the survey is legitimate and that users may complete it on their own time. We are currently working with administrators at FDA to obtain similar assurance for FDA personnel.

Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology (CSSM) has been contracted to administer this survey to ensure that it is conducted in a scientific and neutral manner. CSSM maintains strict security procedures to ensure the anonymity of survey respondents. Any connection between your personal information and your survey responses will be kept completely confidential by CSSM and will be destroyed before survey results are made public.

Your participation in this project is voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions you choose. However, your participation is extremely important since a high response rate is essential to high quality data.

This research is sponsored by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). To view the results of this survey or previous UCS surveys, see [www.ucsusa.org/surveys](http://www.ucsusa.org/surveys). If you have questions about the results or goals of this survey, contact Francesca T. Grifo, Director of the Scientific Integrity Program at UCS, (202) 331-5446 or [fgrifo@ucsusa.org](mailto:fgrifo@ucsusa.org).

If you have any questions or you feel you have received this message in error, please contact me at 877-578-8848 (toll-free) or [atyler@iastate.edu](mailto:atyler@iastate.edu).

Thank you very much for your participation in this important research.

Sincerely,

Allison Tyler, Project Manager  
Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology  
Iowa State University

### APPENDIX E. E-Mail Reminder 3 (USDA only)

Dear [NAME],

We would like to remind you of the opportunity to share your experiences and opinions by completing a short online survey being conducted with scientists and safety inspectors working for the FDA, FSIS, and ARS.

The general purpose of this survey is to obtain an accurate understanding of the role of science and government oversight in protecting the safety of our nation's food supply. It addresses issues such as administrative and financial support for scientific research, the publication or application of research results, and the work environment for scientists and engineers.

In order to obtain fair and balanced results, we want to hear from a representative cross-section of individuals. Your response is important to get an accurate and undistorted understanding of scientific research and its application in food safety issues.

Please complete this short, 10 minute survey on your personal time today. You may use a home or personal computer or, consistent with your agency's limited use policy, you may use your work computer, provided you do so on your own time.

Unique logins and passwords have been assigned to ensure confidentiality and to limit survey access. To complete the survey, go to the following URL and enter the Login ID and Password provided below. (The password is case sensitive.)

Go to: [www.survey.cssm.iastate.edu/ucs](http://www.survey.cssm.iastate.edu/ucs)

Login ID:

Password

This survey is coordinated by Iowa State University and the Union of Concerned Scientists. Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology (CSSM) has been contracted to administer the survey to ensure that it is conducted in a scientific and neutral manner. CSSM maintains strict security procedures to ensure the anonymity of survey respondents. Any connection between your personal information and your survey responses will be kept completely confidential by CSSM and will be destroyed before survey results are made public.

Your participation in this project is voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions you choose. However, your participation is extremely important since a high response rate is essential to high quality data.

This research is sponsored by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). To view the results of this survey or previous UCS surveys, see [www.ucsusa.org/surveys](http://www.ucsusa.org/surveys). If you have questions about the results or goals of this survey, contact Francesca T. Grifo, Director of the Scientific Integrity Program at UCS, (202) 331-5446 or [fgrifo@ucsusa.org](mailto:fgrifo@ucsusa.org).

If you have any questions or you feel you have received this message in error, please contact me at 877-578-8848 (toll-free) or [atyler@iastate.edu](mailto:atyler@iastate.edu).

Thank you very much for your participation in this important research.

Sincerely,

Allison Tyler, Project Manager  
Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology  
Iowa State University

## APPENDIX F. Email Reminder 3 (FDA only)

Dear «First\_Name» «Last\_Name»,

As you know, a brief online Food Safety Survey is being conducted with scientists and inspectors working for the FDA, FSIS, and ARS. Many of you working for the FDA have expressed understandable concerns regarding the legitimacy of this survey as well as a reluctance to complete the survey without written permission from FDA administration.

Last Friday you should have received the following message authorized by Russell Abbot, Deputy Commissioner for Administration with the FDA:

“FDA employees have recently received an email from Iowa State University in collaboration with the Union of Concerned Scientists requesting they participate in a survey. The FDA Office of Administration has confirmed that the survey is legitimate and not a phishing attempt. The survey is not affiliated with the FDA and users can complete it on their own time.”

We appreciate the acknowledgement of the FDA Office of Administration and want to provide you with one last opportunity to complete the Food Safety Survey. The general purpose of this survey is to obtain an accurate understanding of the role of science and government oversight in protecting the safety of our nation’s food supply. It addresses issues such as administrative and financial support for scientific research, the publication or application of research results, and the work environment for scientists and engineers.

We do not want to hear only from people with complaints. In order to obtain fair and balanced results, we want to hear from a representative cross-section of individuals. Your response is important to provide an accurate and undistorted understanding of scientific research and its application in food safety issues.

Please complete this short, 10 minute survey on your personal time by May 17. You may use a home or personal computer or, consistent with your agency’s limited use policy, you may use your work computer provided you do so on your own time.

Unique logins and passwords have been assigned to ensure confidentiality and to limit survey access. To complete the survey, go to the following URL and enter the Login ID and Password provided below. (The password is case sensitive.)

Go to: [www.survey.cssm.iastate.edu/ucs](http://www.survey.cssm.iastate.edu/ucs)

Login ID: «CaseID»

Password: «Password»

This survey is coordinated by Iowa State University and the Union of Concerned Scientists. Iowa State University’s Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology (CSSM) has been contracted to administer the survey to ensure that it is conducted in a scientific and neutral manner. CSSM maintains strict security procedures to ensure the anonymity of survey respondents. Any connection between your personal information and your survey responses will be kept completely confidential by CSSM and will be destroyed before survey results are made public.

Your participation in this project is voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions you choose. This research is sponsored by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). To view the results of this survey or previous UCS surveys, see [www.ucsusa.org/surveys](http://www.ucsusa.org/surveys) . If you have questions about the results or goals of this



survey, contact Francesca T. Grifo, Director of the Scientific Integrity Program at UCS, (202) 331-5446 or [fgrifo@ucsusa.org](mailto:fgrifo@ucsusa.org).

If you have any questions or you feel you have received this message in error, please contact me at 877-578-8848 (toll-free) or [atyler@iastate.edu](mailto:atyler@iastate.edu).

This is the last notice you will receive relating to the Food Safety Survey. Thank you very much for your patience and your cooperation with this important research.

Sincerely,

Allison Tyler, Project Manager  
Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology  
Iowa State University