

FSIS RESPONSE TO THE ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS

March 1, 2017

Jeanne Blankenship, MS, RDN
Pepin Andrew Tuma, Esq.
The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

120 South Riverside Plaza, Ste. 2000
Chicago, IL 60606-6995

1120 Connecticut Ave NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms. Blankenship and Mr. Tuma,

Thank you for your comments regarding *the Notice of Request for a New Information Collection: In-Home Food Safety Behaviors and Consumer Education: Annual Observational Study FSIS- (2016-0036)*. In your letter, you indicated that you were in support of the information collection and identified the following six items that we should consider:

- Information collected include information on thermometers available personally to the consumer, including the accuracy of the thermometers. We note that using faulty equipment or equipment that has not been calibrated may give a false sense of security.
- Information on “thermometer literacy” be collected.
- Observed behaviors of the consumers include selection of appropriate thermometers, calibration of thermometers, cleaning and sanitation of thermometers, protective storage of thermometers, and appropriate insertion and reading of thermometers.
- Demographics of participants be determined so that they include households inclusive of vulnerable populations.
- Consumers be educated on the use of thermometers to improve safety and the culinary quality of food. We note that cooking to visual endpoints is unpredictable for both.
- Technologies, such as Skype or other interactive technologies, be used to collect information from geographically dispersed participants.

Because the study is being conducted in test kitchens, we will not be able to collect information on thermometers personally available to consumers and their accuracy. However, as part of the observation study, we will be able to collect information on thermometer literacy, as well as most of the items noted in the third bullet, including whether participants used a food thermometer to check for doneness and, if so, whether they calibrated the thermometer, cleaned and sanitized the thermometer after use, and appropriately inserted and read the thermometer.

Regarding selection of participants, the study is designed to employ convenience sampling with quotas to help ensure that study participants reflect the demographic characteristics of the U.S. population in terms of race, ethnicity, age, education, and household size. As such, we most likely will include participants from vulnerable populations (e.g., older adults, parents of young children, immunocompromised persons, etc.), but we will not target such individuals specifically.

With regard to the fourth bullet, as part of the observation study, participants in the treatment group will receive food safety education on thermometer usage to assess the effectiveness of FSIS educational materials on increasing food thermometer usage. Additionally, all 400 participants will receive a food thermometer for participation in the study. The results of this research will also be used to inform the development of future educational outreach about thermometer usage for the public.

Finally, although a wonderful suggestion, at this time, we are unable to use technologies, such as Skype, to collect information from geographically dispersed participants. The study will be conducted in test kitchens located at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, NC.

Thank you for your interest and support of this study. Through its outreach efforts, FSIS works to increase consumers' adherence to recommended food safety practices, including food thermometer usage to check the doneness of meat and poultry. This study is part of an ongoing effort by FSIS to evaluate the effectiveness of its outreach efforts.