

*Operation Connect*  
**Emergency Support Function 11**  
**(Agriculture and Natural Resources)**  
**and**  
**National Biosurveillance Integration Center**  
**Tabletop Exercise/Training**

December 2, 2009

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**USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service**

Final After Action Report  
December 2009

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## I. BACKGROUND

In the event of a natural disaster, successful coordination of response actions and resources depends on effective and efficient channels of communication among the government agencies involved in emergency response and recovery. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), Office of Data Integration and Food Protection (ODIFP) is responsible for the coordination of the Agency's emergency response and recovery efforts. Additionally, ODIFP is responsible for ensuring that exercises are routinely conducted to test the effectiveness of the Agency's response plans and procedures in accordance with applicable Homeland Security Presidential Directives (HSPD), the National Response Framework (NRF), and the National Information Management System (NIMS). To that aim, on December 2, 2009, ODIFP sponsored a one day tabletop exercise, *Operation Connect*. This exercise was designed to test and train USDA FSIS personnel as well as staff from other federal partner agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), regarding the flow of information via the three major communication channels: NRF/NIMS, The National Biosurveillance Integration Center (NBIC), and USDA Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group. This report provides a high level summary of the issues identified and discussed during *Operation Connect*. (Note: Graphical representations of how these channels connect as well as detailed information on the systems are included in Appendix A – *Exercise Concept Background and Flow Chart*.)

Emergency Support Function 11 (ESF-11) specifically addresses the protection of agriculture and natural resources and is coordinated primarily by USDA. ESF-11 is divided into five primary functions:

**1. Nutrition assistance** - Includes determining nutrition assistance needs, obtaining appropriate food supplies, arranging for delivery of supplies, and authorizing disaster food stamps. This function is coordinated by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

**2. Animal and plant disease and pest response**—Includes implementing an integrated Federal, State, Tribal, and local response to an outbreak of a highly contagious or economically devastating zoonotic disease, an outbreak of a highly infective exotic plant disease, or an economically devastating plant pest infestation. Ensure that animal, veterinary, and wildlife issues in natural disasters are supported in coordination with the emergency support function that covers public health and medical services. This function is coordinated by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

**3. Assurance of the safety of the nation's supply of meat, poultry, and processed egg products**—Includes the inspection and verification of food safety aspects of slaughter and processing plants producing meat, poultry, and processed egg products, products in distribution and retail sites, and import facilities at ports of entry; laboratory analysis of meat, poultry, and processed egg product samples; control of products suspected to be adulterated; regulated plant closures; foodborne disease surveillance; and field investigations. This function is coordinated by USDA's FSIS.

**4. Protection of natural, cultural, and historic (NCH) properties** - Includes appropriate response actions to conserve, rehabilitate, recover, and restore NCH resources. This function is coordinated by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance.

**5. Providing for the safety and well-being of household pets:** Supports the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) together with ESF #6 – Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services; ESF #8; ESF #9 – Search and Rescue; and ESF #14 – Long-Term Community Recovery to ensure an integrated response that provides for the safety and well-being of household pets. The ESF #11 effort is coordinated by USDA/APHIS.

ESF-11 is activated by the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) when an emergency, such as a natural disaster, affects agriculture and natural resources. As a result, USDA Agencies APHIS, FSIS, and FNS and DOI communicate with the NRCC/Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) to coordinate emergency response actions. ESF-11 Information flows bi-directionally as it is shared among the partner agencies, the NRCC/RRCC, ESF Desks, the National Operations Center (NOC), and the USDA Operations Center.

## II. GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

The exercise was focused on the following objectives:

- Test the flow of information between FSIS to the USDA MAC Group, to the USDA Operations Center, and to the NOC.
- Test the flow of information from FSIS to ESF-11 and to the NRCC.
- Test the flow of information from FSIS to the NBIC.

## III. PARTICIPANTS

The exercise involved the participation of a total of 26 players/observers from nine agencies within USDA and DHS. A complete list of participants and their contact information is included in Appendix B.

The USDA Agencies represented include:

- Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
- Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

- Rural Development (RD)
- Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- USDA Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination (OHSEC)

The DHS Agencies represented include:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—National Operations Center (NOC)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—National Response Coordination Center (NRCC)

#### **IV. EXERCISE OVERVIEW AND STRUCTURE**

The exercise was structured around a hypothetical scenario consisting of three phases that described key events as they occurred over a period of 16 days (May 13-29, 2009). In each phase, the scenario advanced as new information regarding a flood in the Midwest was presented on the screen and read aloud by the exercise facilitator. All participants received the same information simultaneously, followed by facilitator-led, group discussions. The facilitator asked questions following the presentation of each new element of information to prompt discussion among the participants. Observations made by the participants, either in response to questions by the facilitator, or comments following observations by other participants, were noted by the support contractor team. To preserve anonymity and allow for free dialogue, the events were not captured by transcript, and no attempt was made to identify the commenter other than with respect to the participant's agency affiliation. The exercise agenda is presented in Appendix C. Participants were provided a handout defining the acronyms used throughout the day to facilitate communication and understanding. The handout is included as Appendix D to this report.

Discussion proceeded throughout each phase of the exercise. At the end of the exercise, the facilitator led a Hotwash discussion to capture the summary comments of the participants.

Summary information for each phase of the scenario is as follows:

##### **Phase 1 – Pre-Emergency Response (May 13-16, 2009)**

- **National Weather Service (NWS):** Because the current Missouri River water level is now 1.5 feet below flood stage, the NWS issues a flood watch for Jackson, Clay, Cass, and Platte counties in Northwest Missouri.

- **DHS, FEMA:** FEMA issues an Operation Order, based on the anticipation of possible record Missouri River flooding and, to ensure coordination of the Federal response to this event, activating the NRCC/RRCC on May 14, 2009 to “Level II.”
- **NWS:** A NWS forecast indicates the possibility of additional rainfall of 3-5 inches in the Midwest over the next 2 days, and it is anticipated to cause record flooding in Jackson, Clay, Cass, and Platte counties in NW Missouri.
- **DHS, FEMA:** FEMA, to ensure coordination of the Federal response to this event, activates the NRCC/RRCC from “Level II” to “Level I” and requests ESF-11 team members to report to the NRCC/RRCC.
- **Missouri Emergency Management Agency (MEMA):** Local authorities in Jackson, Clay, Cass, and Platte Counties, MO advise citizens to evacuate the area. Emergency shelters start opening for people and household pets.
- **NWS:** Flooding begins in Jackson, Clay, Cass, and Platte counties in Northwest Missouri.
- **MEMA:** Local authorities in Jackson, Clay, Cass, and Platte Counties, MO continue to advise citizens to evacuate affected low-lying areas.
- **USDA:** USDA is considering activating the MAC Group.

#### **Phase 2 – Emergency Response (May 16-20, 2009)**

- **MEMA:** Pasture and feed lots are flooded and animals begin to drown. Access to protected animal feed and water is limited. Owners and household pets are starting to arrive at emergency shelters.
- **US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE):** USACE is overwhelmed with debris removal and requests assistance from APHIS for carcass removal.
- **USDA, APHIS:** APHIS receives a mission assignment from FEMA (through the NRCC) to assist with carcass removal.
- **DHS, FEMA:** FEMA provides emergency shelters, which are already filled to maximum capacity, with Ready-to-Eat (RTE) meals.
- **USDA, FNS:** Chicken nuggets, supplied by FNS, are reheated and served at a local high school that has been converted to an emergency shelter in Jackson County, MO.
- **Missouri State and Local Public Health Agencies:** Within 45 minutes of serving chicken nuggets, 5 emergency shelter occupants (3 children and 2 elderly) present

with nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, and diarrhea. Over the next six hours 10 additional emergency shelter occupants present with the same symptoms.

- **Missouri Local Television:** Local news channel 5 in Kansas City, MO is reporting that a suspected food borne illness outbreak has occurred at an emergency shelter in Jackson County, MO.
- **NWS:** The Missouri River crests and continues to flood the low-lying areas in the four affected Missouri counties, thereby causing extensive damage to private property and the business infrastructure.
- **MEMA:** Localized power outages occur, particularly affecting the Kansas City/Jackson County area. Numerous local roads and bridges are flooded or damaged; however, damage assessments are incomplete due to flood waters.
- **Missouri State and Local Public Health Agencies:** 3 of the 15 ill emergency shelter occupants show no sign of improvement. An onsite public health nurse suspects that they require intravenous (IV) therapy and arranges their transport to a nearby hospital via air evacuation.

### **Phase 3 – Post Emergency Response (May 20-29, 2009)**

- **MEMA:** Flood waters are starting to recede.
- **DHS, FEMA:** FEMA lowers the NRCC/RRCC response level from “I to III” and ESF #11 is deactivated.
- **MEMA:** By May 23 the remaining 12 ill occupants at the emergency shelter in Jackson County, MO have begun to recover.
- **DHS, FEMA:** Water recedes to the pre-flood levels. FEMA currently has no unmet needs or shortfalls for Federal assistance and therefore, the NRCC/RRCC returns to “Normal Steady-State” operations.
- **MEMA:** Flooding is still severe in some areas and several emergency shelters remain open. Owners and household pets are returning home.
- **USDA, FSIS:** USDA Offices and FSIS facilities are fully operational. Three FSIS regulated processing facilities have requested voluntary suspensions.

## **V. ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY OBJECTIVE**

Overall, participants felt that the exercise was very informative and allowed everyone, at all levels, to talk through existing policies and current gaps in procedures. A summary of the participant evaluation forms is presented in Appendix E. Participants from USDA and DHS

described their understanding of how information was communicated via NRF/NIMS, NBIC, and USDA MAC. As stated previously, *Operation Connect* had three key objectives:

- Test the flow of information between FSIS to the USDA MAC Group, to the USDA Operations Center, and to the NOC.
- Test the flow of information from FSIS to ESF-11 and to the NRCC.
- Test the flow of information from FSIS to NBIC.

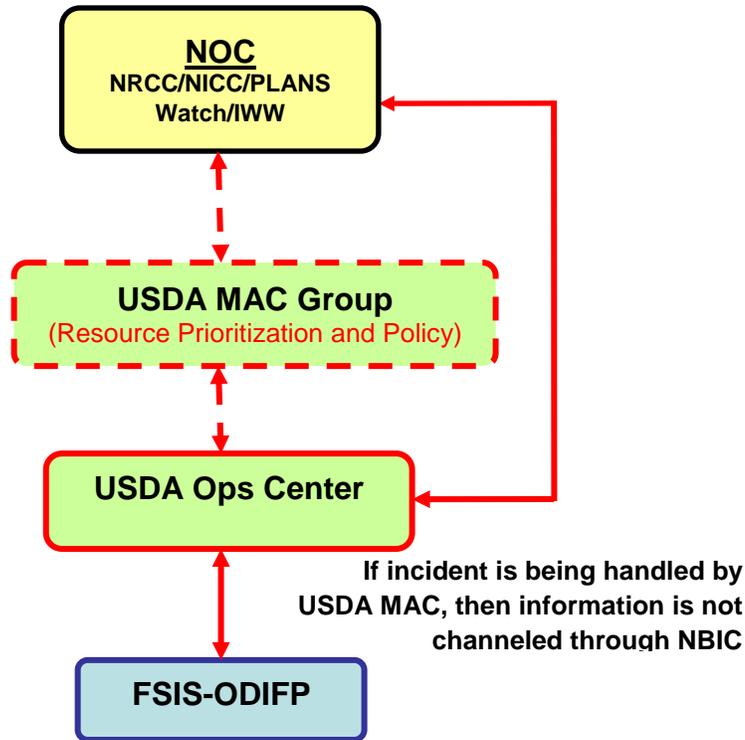
This section presents the three objectives and the group discussions concerning these objectives. This section also includes figures that graphically depict the movement of information. At the end of each discussion of the objective are a series of next steps or suggested actions based on the dialogue among participants.

### ***OBJECTIVE I***

- Test the flow of information between FSIS to the USDA, MAC Group, to the USDA Operations Center, and to the NOC.

The discussion centered on the need for enhanced communication and more transparency regarding information flow to and from the MAC Group. Exercise participants explained that the MAC Group supports unified command. (For example, the USDA stood up a MAC Group during the H1N1 epidemic in the fall of 2009.) The OHSEC Director decides when to activate the MAC Group after receiving information from the White House Disaster Readiness Group (DRG). He or she also assigns USDA staff to serve on the MAC Group. The MAC Group meets frequently to determine resource allocation and discuss policies. Information flows bi-directionally from the MAC Group to the NOC, the USDA Ops Center, and FSIS ODIFP (as well as other involved USDA Agencies). The MAC Group is deactivated when the unified command has been scaled down to a single command. Figure 1 depicts the flow of information between FSIS to the USDA MAC Group, to the USDA Ops Center, and to the NOC

**Figure 1. The Flow of Information between FSIS to the USDA MAC Group, to the USDA Operations Center, and to the NOC**



Exercise participants did not activate a MAC Group after reviewing the exercise scenario. As a result, the participating agencies reported information individually to the NOC throughout the exercise. Representatives from the NOC explained that agencies should send information to the NOC via NOC.SWO@hq.dhs.gov or NOC.SWO.restricted@hq.dhs.gov if the information was intended for limited distribution. It was noted that the USDA MAC has a direct line to the NOC. This is troubling for APHIS, the primary contact agency for ESF-11, because they would like to know what information USDA is reporting prior to it going to the NOC. Exercise participants agreed that, in theory, there would be an ESF-11 representative assigned to the MAC to mitigate this gap in communication.

### **Suggested Next Steps/Action Items for Objective I**

- Conduct an exercise that focuses on the USDA MAC Group so that USDA agencies are aware of how the MAC Group is activated and formed. An exercise would be a good opportunity to learn how information received from individual agencies is coordinated by the MAC group and sent to the NOC.
- Establish communication protocols for USDA MAC reporting to ESF-11.

- Revise the flowchart to indicate that the USDA MAC Group may or may be stood up depending on the incident.
- Develop presentation to be given to USDA Agencies on when USDA MAC is activated, how the MAC functions, and what reports are developed.

## **OBJECTIVE II**

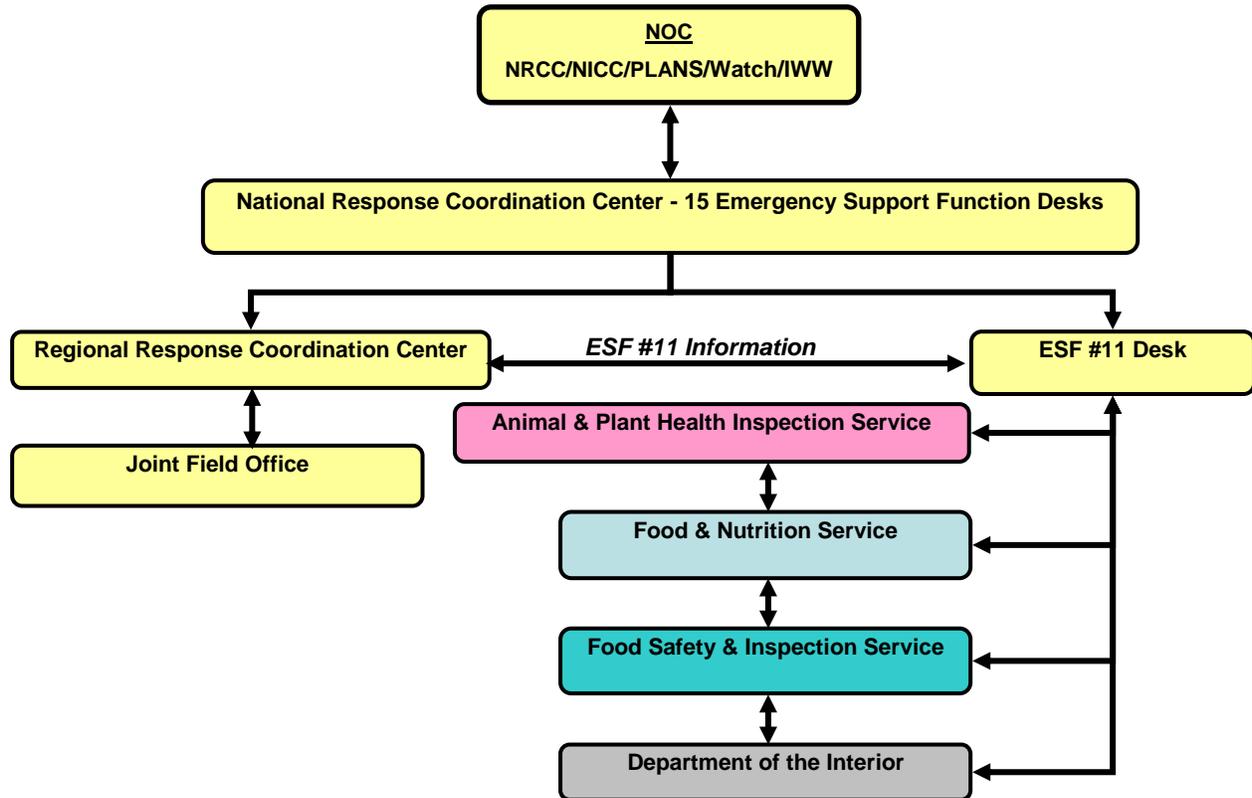
- Test the flow of information from FSIS to ESF-11 and to the National Response Coordination Center.

When FEMA learns that an emergency situation is developing, in this case a flood, it shares information with the NOC by issuing an Operations Order. This Operations Order will be either a Level II or a Level I activation. Level II activates the NRCC/RRCC and ensures coordination of the Federal response to this event. ESF-11 may be activated to have team members to report to the NRCC/RRCC. FEMA notifies every Ops center in the country when the level is changed. The FEMA Senior Leadership Group holds periodic calls to discuss what action has been taken to date and/or any unmet needs.

If FEMA upgrades the Operations Order to Level I, ESF-11 is activated and team members from FSIS, APHIS, DOI and FNS begin performing a variety of tasks. APHIS is the primary contact for ESF-11. Once the ESF-11 National Coordinator receives the Level I notification from FEMA, APHIS ESF-11 Team Leaders (Red and White Team Leaders) coordinate a staffing schedule. Figure 2 illustrates the flow of information from FSIS to ESF-11 and to the NRCC.

The FSIS ESF-11 Coordinator contacts the Financial Management and Budget Divisions and notifies FSIS personnel they may need to staff the NRCC ESF-11 desk. An Incident Report (IR) is entered into the FSIS Incident Management System (FIMS) so senior management is aware of the developing situation. The IR would include the FEMA Senior Leadership briefings. The FSIS Emergency Management Committee (EMC) Senior Executive Duty Officer (SEDO) would determine whether to alert or activate the EMC. The SEDO would also request regular updates from all the FSIS program areas to report who and what type of FSIS facilities are being impacted. He or she would then update the IR in FIMS accordingly and send an ESF-11 Situation Report to the ODIFP, Assistant Administrator and the USDA Operations Center.

**Figure 2. The Flow of Information from FSIS to ESF- 11 and to the NRCC**



FNS may be contacted about feeding procedures when emergency shelters are open in the affected area. FNS assesses the situation to determine types of commodity foods available in the affected area, the methods of food delivery to the shelters, and the number of people in need. In accordance with feeding plans created by the local emergency authorities, FNS also decides whether or not to authorize the affected state(s) to operate a Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP). FNS can authorize the issuance of emergency SNAP benefits when there is a presidential declaration for individual assistance or when grocery stores or other regular commercial food supply channels have been restored following a disaster. In order for a disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to be established, states must request that USDA allow them to issue emergency SNAP benefits in areas affected by a disaster. The D-SNAP system operates under a different set of eligibility and benefit delivery requirements than the regular SNAP. People who might not ordinarily qualify for SNAP benefits may be eligible under the disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program if they have had disaster damage to their homes, or expenses related to protecting their homes, or if they have lost income as a result of the disaster, or have no access to bank accounts or other resources.

In addition to alerting FNS, ESF representatives speak with APHIS Animal Care about the sheltering and transport of pets. They also aid in the transport of animals at zoos and other exotic animals that may be in the affected area. The decision to evacuate livestock is currently a private business decision made by the livestock owners; APHIS is not involved. APHIS currently has no authority in this process.

Exercise participants also discussed the issue of proper animal carcass disposal. Animal carcass disposal is the responsibility of USACE, but if a major foreign animal disease is involved then APHIS may assume responsibility. Often USACE will not have the resources to complete animal carcass disposal and will reach out to FEMA for assistance. APHIS or FSA receives a mission assignment from FEMA (through the NRCC) to assist with carcass removal. Exercise participants noted that it is usually cheaper if the states handle carcass disposal instead of the federal government.

Halfway through the exercise, a foodborne illness outbreak occurred at one of the emergency shelters. Exercise participants were asked how information flow would be affected by this event. FSIS participants asked the following question: “Is the organization running the shelter telling FSIS about the possibility of a foodborne illness?” If FSIS did receive information from state and local public health officials in the affected area then FSIS, Office of Public Health Science (OPHS) would be working with the local public health department to determine if the illnesses were caused by food (meat, poultry, or processed egg products) served at the emergency shelter. OPHS would collect epidemiological information and be in contact with the public health nurse to follow up about the symptoms. The hospitals where the ill are treated would use their reporting mechanisms to report the information up to state and federal public health officials. There are 15 people ill from the same emergency shelter. The FSIS, ESF-11 representative might report this information to the FSIS, EMC, but an isolated outbreak at an emergency shelter affecting 15 people is not considered a serious event by FSIS standards until the illnesses are linked to a common food source involving meat, poultry, or processed egg products. Exercise participants asked what the threshold was for an illness to be considered a “serious event.”

By May 20<sup>th</sup> in the exercise timeline, ESF-11 and FEMA are transitioning from response to recovery. The NOC enters into steady state, but continues to monitor the situation. At this point, it is clear that the food borne illness outbreak is not going to cause ESF-11 to reactivate. Instead, a separate IR for the food borne illness outbreak is entered into FIMS because there is not enough evidence that it was related to the flood. FSIS continues to report what product has been destroyed and how the flood has impacted FSIS facilities and regulated establishments.

Other USDA agencies begin to decide on appropriate recovery actions. FSA would look at the financial impacts on farmland and start to estimate compensation and restitution for affected farmers. NRCS would assess the affected areas and prepare damage status reports. RD would begin to identify recovery projects that USDA agencies can fund themselves and those projects that will need supplementary monetary assistance. RD will disseminate this information and explain how it might impact other agencies within USDA. Exercise participants noted that RD is generally concerned with long term recovery projects and its programs sometimes span 20 - 30 years.

### **Suggested Next Steps/Action Items for Objective II**

- Senior USDA official should share and explain the overall flowchart (see Appendix A) so that all federal partners are aware of the flow of information during an emergency situation.
- Identify USDA response/recovery structure
  - USDA OHSEC should prepare a presentation for all ESF-11 representatives on USDA response/recovery structure and distribute the definitions of acronyms in Appendix D.
- Improve the Mission Assignment process and approval by developing an approval flow chart for Mission Assignments and a flowchart illustrating communication of Mission Assignments within the department. (Mission assignments are developed/requested by the states and approved by FEMA). FEMA has a flow chart depicting the process. Typically, the Department wouldn't fulfill the request; it would be the agency (APHIS, RD, FSA, NRCS, FSIS, FNS or DOI). The Agency would notify the USDA Ops Center of the Mission Assignment and whether they could fulfill the request through the normal SITREP process.
- Hold discussions periodically among USDA, representatives from FEMA and the NOC to review information flow pathways critical to emergency response and recovery. Review FEMA's and APHIS' already established flowcharts.
- Prepare presentation to the FSIS EMC members on ESF # 11 and emergency response communication flow of information

### **OBJECTIVE III**

- Test the flow of information from FSIS to NBIC.

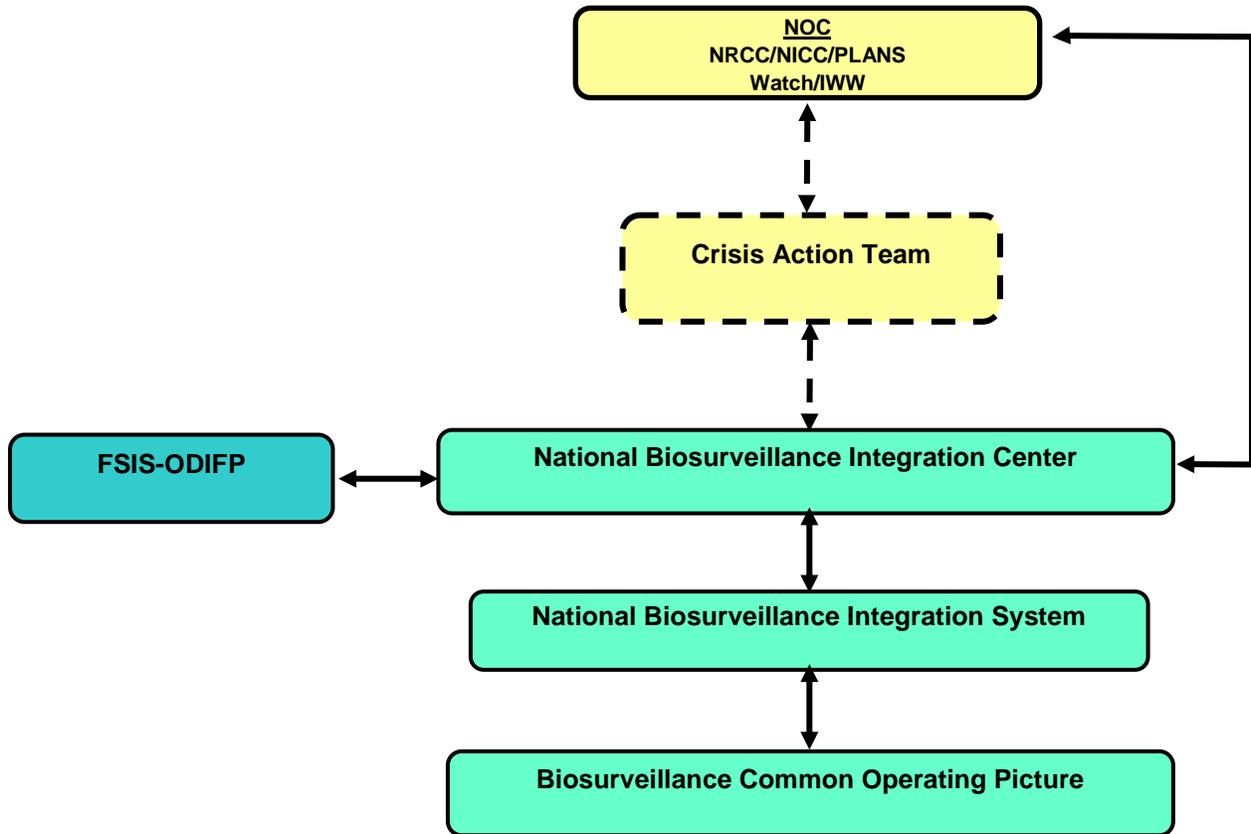
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) generally handles biological incidents. FEMA typically does not stand up during a biological incident, but the HHS Secretary could request assistance through the NOC and FEMA could coordinate the incident activities.

One of the exercise participants stated that the exercise scenario did not reflect a catastrophic event and therefore the Secretary's Crisis Action Team (CAT) was not stood up (similarly the USDA did stand up a MAC in this exercise).

Exercise participants were unclear about the NBIC's role in emergency response and recovery. The majority of participants did not report or receive information from the NBIC and had limited understanding of how this information flowed through this pathway. They agreed, though, that the information provided by the scenario concerning the foodborne outbreak would be entered

into the NBIC by FSIS, ODIFP, but the outbreak did not necessitate the activation of the CAT. Figure 3 illustrates the flow of information from FSIS to the NBIC.

**Figure 3. The Flow of Information from FSIS to the NBIC**



*FSIS is the only ESF - 11 Agency communicating with the NBIC*

**Suggested Next Steps/Action Items for Objective III**

- Define the role of the NBIC and indicate the types of events that would activate the CAT.
- Review U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit regarding NBIC.
- Hold a meeting with NBIC’s federal partners to learn how they perceive NBIC’s role in emergency response.

- Make presentation to FSIS EMC members on the MOU with NBIC, role of NBIC in emergency response, what information should be reported, and method of communicating the information.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

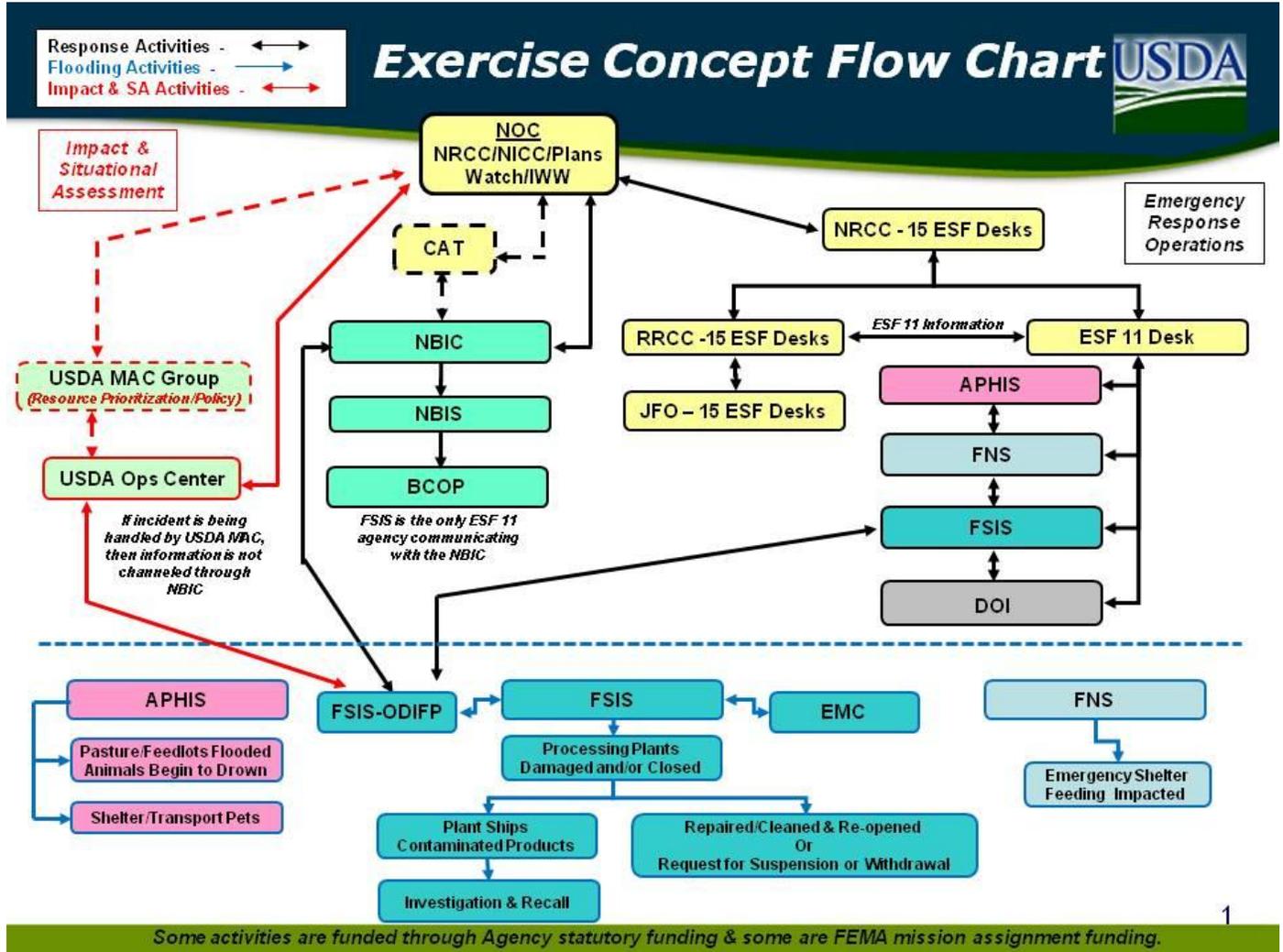
The exercise afforded staff from the USDA and DHS an opportunity to work together to identify strengths and weaknesses of information flow via multiple pathways during response activities for a natural disaster.

The exercise enabled participants to openly discuss and ask questions about USDA and DHS emergency response procedures and coordination. Several issues were identified throughout the course of the exercise and the involved agencies are currently working to update and develop plans to address these issues.

Future exercises will be valuable for further improvements in emergency response and recovery communication among FSIS and its USDA and Federal partners.

## APPENDIX A

### EXERCISE BACKGROUND AND CONCEPT FLOW CHART



*The National Response Framework (NRF)/National Information Management System (NIMS)*

The NRF and NIMS are guides to how the Nation conducts all-hazards response – from the smallest incident to the largest catastrophe. NIMS provide the template for the management of incidents, while the NRF provides the structure and mechanisms for national-level policy for incident management.

The NRF establishes a National Operations Center (NOC) that serves as the primary national hub for situational awareness and operations coordination across the Federal Government for incident management. The NOC provides the Secretary of Homeland Security and other principals with information necessary to make critical national-level incident management decisions. The National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) is a component of the NOC. The NRCC is the Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency's primary operations center responsible for national incident response and recovery as well as national resource coordination. As a 24/7 operations center, the NRCC monitors potential or developing incidents and supports the efforts of regional and field components. The NRCC brings together Emergency Support Function (ESF) Federal departments and agencies to assist in the preparations for and response to disasters and issuance of mission assignments for disaster support.

The ESFs provide the structure for coordinating Federal interagency support for a Federal response to an incident. They are mechanisms for grouping functions most frequently used to provide Federal support to States and Federal-to-Federal support, both for declared disasters and emergencies under the Stafford Act and for non-Stafford Act incidents.

The Incident Command System provides for the flexibility to assign ESF and other stakeholder resources according to their capabilities, taskings, and requirements to augment and support the other sections of the Joint Field Office (JFO)/Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) or National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) in order to respond to incidents in a more collaborative and cross-cutting manner.

While ESFs are typically assigned to a specific section at the NRCC or in the JFO/RRCC for management purposes, resources may be assigned anywhere within the Unified Coordination structure. Regardless of the section in which an ESF may reside, that entity works in conjunction with other ESF's, Federal, and volunteer entities to ensure that appropriate planning and execution of missions occur.

*The USDA Multi-Agency Center (MAC) Group:*

The USDA OHSEC Director activates the MAC Group. The decision to activate depends on the situation. If the MAC Group is activated, it would coordinate resource requests from other USDA agencies. OHSEC and USDA's Emergency Operations Center would also work with FEMA, to request resources from other Federal agencies and with State and non-governmental organizations.

*The National Biosurveillance Integration Center (NBIC)*

In addition to participating in the NRF/NIMS, ODIFP also shares information with the NBIC via the National Biosurveillance Integration System (NBIS). The NBIC is an interagency effort to fuse intelligence with multiple sources of biosurveillance information on human, animal, plant and environmental health measures to provide early warnings of possible biological attack. Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-9 dated January 30, 2004 and HSPD-10 dated April 21, 2004, directed DHS to establish NBIC to provide early detection and situational awareness of biological events of potential national consequence by acquiring, integrating, analyzing, and disseminating existing human, animal, plant, and environmental biosurveillance system data into a common operating picture (COP) that represents a comprehensive depiction of the global biosurveillance security environment (GBSE). The National Biosurveillance Group (NBSG), comprising of representatives from all member agencies, including FSIS ODIFP, integrates and analyzes all-agency/source biosurveillance information to recognize unusual biological events and provide situational awareness to the NBIC community and decision-makers through the development of a biosurveillance COP (BCOP) and targeting reporting. The BCOP augments the DHS's, NOC's COP, which provides a consistent, integrated picture of biosurveillance situational awareness throughout the country. The NBIC facilitates collaborative interagency analysis of NBIS data to ensure fully-integrated biosurveillance situational awareness and provide near-real time awareness to the Incident Management Group (IMG) and the DHS, NOC. The resulting improved information sharing and enhanced situational awareness facilitates national decision-making to enable a timely response.

**APPENDIX B-  
OPERATION CONNECT – PARTICIPANT LIST**

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## APPENDIX C

### Operation Connect

### ESF #11—Emergency Response &

### National Biosurveillance Integration Center Exercise

#### Agenda

**USDA South Building – Room S-310**

**Washington, DC**

**December 2, 2009**

8:30 AM	Registration
9:00 AM	Welcome
9:05 AM	Introductions
9:10 AM	Exercise Overview
9:30 AM	Phase I—Pre-Emergency Response
10:30 AM	Break
10:45 AM	Phase II—Emergency Response
12:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 PM	Phase II—Emergency Response ( <i>continued</i> )
1:45 PM	Break
2:00 PM	Phase III—Post Emergency Response
3:00 PM	Hotwash
3:30 PM	Adjourn

## APPENDIX D

### ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

- **APHIS- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service:** *The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is responsible for protecting and promoting U.S. agricultural health, administering the Animal Welfare Act, and carrying out wildlife damage management activities.*
- **BCOP- Biosurveillance Common Operating Picture:** *Provides early detection and situational awareness of biological events of potential national consequence by acquiring, integrating, analyzing, and disseminating existing human, animal, plant, and environmental biosurveillance system data into a common operating picture that represents a comprehensive depiction of the global biosurveillance security environment.*
- **CAT- Crisis Action Team:**
  - *The Secretary's Crisis Action Team (CAT) is a scalable incident management entity formed during an event or identified threat to conduct Strategic-level operations coordination and planning to support the Secretary in his fulfilling his HSA and HSPD-5 responsibilities. Specifically, the CAT was developed to facilitate the Secretary's ability to execute responsibilities as the principal Federal official for domestic incident management. It is important to note that the CAT membership includes interagency representatives as well as DHS components.*
  - *The CAT is a scalable entity organized into three branches: Operations, Planning, and Support. The Incident Management Officers (IMOs), who constitute the core group of the CAT Operations Branch, are always activated and serve in the National Operations Center Watch. Their primary function of the Operations Branch of the CAT is to provide the Secretary with integrated interagency reporting and situational awareness products regarding the specific event which triggered the CAT activation. The Planning Branch of the CAT is comprised of members of the IMPT and conduct strategic-level crisis action planning. Both the operations and planning branches of the CAT are also expected to provide any and all products necessary to facilitate the Secretary's ability to conduct informed dialogue with his interagency peers.*

- **DOI- Department of Interior:** *The U.S. Department of the Interior protects and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated Island Communities.*
- **D-SNAP- Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program:** *USDA-FNS can authorize the issuance of emergency SNAP benefits when there is a presidentially declared emergency or when grocery stores or other regular commercial food supply channels have been restored following a disaster. In order for a disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to be established, States must request that USDA allow them to issue emergency SNAP benefits in areas affected by a disaster. The D-SNAP system operates under a different set of eligibility and benefit delivery requirements than the regular SNAP. People who might not ordinarily qualify for SNAP benefits may be eligible under the disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program if they have had disaster damage to their homes, or expenses related to protecting their homes, or if they have lost income as a result of the disaster, or have no access to bank accounts or other resources.*
- **EMC- FSIS Emergency Management Committee:** *The EMC is comprised of senior management personnel (AA or designee) from each of the FSIS program offices. Each program office EMC representative has the authority to commit, as necessary, the resources of his or her respective program office in responding to the incident. The EMC may be alerted or activated at any time, on any day of the year, to address and manage the Agency's response to a significant incident involving potentially-adulterated or adulterated FSIS-regulated product. The EMC can also be activated if the Recall Committee is unable to reach consensus on whether the Agency should request that a company conduct a recall. In the event the incident does not result in adulteration of FSIS-regulated product, the purpose of the EMC activation would be to determine how to work with other involved agencies, to assign responsibilities for any information gathering, and to decide how best to provide the public with information about the safety of the product.*
- **Emergency Support Function:** *Used by the Federal Government and many State governments as the primary mechanism at the operational level to organize and provide assistance. ESFs align categories of resources and provide strategic objectives for their use. ESFs utilize standardized resource management concepts such as typing, inventorying, and tracking to facilitate the dispatch, deployment, and recovery of resources before, during, and after an incident.*

- **ESF 11- Emergency Support Function 11:** *Emergency Support Function (ESF) #11 – Agriculture and Natural Resources supports State, tribal, and local authorities and other Federal agency efforts to provide nutrition assistance; control and eradicate, as appropriate, any outbreak of a highly contagious or economically devastating animal/zoonotic (i.e., transmitted between animals and people) disease, or any outbreak of an economically devastating plant pest or disease; ensure the safety of the nation’s supply of meat, poultry, and processed egg products; protect natural and cultural resources and historic properties (NCH) resources; and provide for the safety and well-being of household pets during an emergency response or evacuation situation. ESF #11 is activated by the Secretary of Homeland Security for incidents requiring a coordinated Federal response and the availability of support for one or more of these roles/functions.*
- **FEMA- Federal Emergency Management Agency:** *FEMA’s mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.*
- **FNS- Food and Nutrition Service:** *USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the food and nutrition assistance programs in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. FNS provides children and needy families with better access to food and a more healthful diet through its programs and nutrition education efforts.*
- **FSA-Farm Service Agency:** *USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers farm commodity, crop insurance, credit, environmental, conservation, and emergency assistance programs for farmers and ranchers.*
- **FSIS- Food Safety and Inspection Service:** *USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the public health agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture responsible for ensuring that the nation’s commercial supply of meat, poultry, and processed egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged, as required by the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Products Inspection Act, and the Egg Products Inspection Act.*
- **JFO- Joint Field Office:** *The primary Federal incident management field structure. The JFO is a temporary Federal facility that provides a central location for the coordination of Federal, State, tribal, and local governments and private-sector and nongovernmental organizations with primary responsibility for response and recovery. The JFO structure is organized, staffed, and managed in a manner consistent with National Incident Management System principles and is led by the Unified Coordination Group. Although*

*the JFO uses an Incident Command System structure, the JFO does not manage on-scene operations. Instead, the JFO focuses on providing support to on-scene efforts and conducting broader support operations that may extend beyond the incident site.*

- **MAC Group- USDA Multiagency Coordination Group:** *Typically, administrators/executives, or their appointed representatives, who are authorized to commit agency resources and funds, are brought together and form MAC Groups. MAC Groups may also be known as multiagency committees, emergency management committees, or as otherwise defined by the system. A MAC Group can provide coordinated decision-making and resource allocation among cooperating agencies, and may establish the priorities among incidents, harmonize agency policies, and provide strategic guidance and direction to support incident management activities.*
- **MEMA- Missouri Emergency Management Agency:** *MEMA's mission is to protect the lives and property of all Missourians when major disasters threaten public safety in any city, county or region of Missouri. MEMA responds to two types of disasters - natural and manmade. Natural disasters are major snow and/or ice storms, floods, tornadoes and/or severe weather, as well as the threat of a serious earthquake along Missouri's New Madrid Fault. Manmade disasters, also known as technological emergencies, may include hazardous material incidents, nuclear power plant accidents and other radiological hazards. MEMA is also responsible for developing a State Emergency Operations Plan which coordinates the actions of Missouri State government departments and agencies in the event of any emergency requiring use of State resources and personnel.*
- **NBIC- National Biosurveillance Integration Center:**
  - *Enhance the capability of the Federal Government to:*
    - *Rapidly identify, characterize, localize, and track a biological event of national concern by integrating and analyzing data relating to human health, animal, plant, food, and environmental monitoring systems (both national and international); and*
    - *Disseminates alerts and other information to Member Agencies and, in coordination with (and where possible through) Member Agencies, to agencies of State, local, and tribal governments, as appropriate, to enhance the ability of such agencies to respond to a biological event of national concern; and*

- *Oversee development and operation of the National Biosurveillance Integration System.*
- **NBIS- National Biosurveillance Integration System:** *Launched in 2004 with the goal of integrating all of the biosurveillance programs across the US into a single system to enhance our capability to detect agents and disease trends and respond rapidly.*
- **NRCS-Natural Resources and Conservation Service:** *USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the primary federal agency that works with private landowners to help them conserve, maintain and improve their natural resources. The Agency emphasizes voluntary, science-based conservation; technical assistance; partnerships; incentive-based programs; and cooperative problem solving at the community level.*
- **NICC- National Interagency Coordinating Center:** *As part of the National Operations Center, monitors the Nation's critical infrastructure and key resources on an ongoing basis. During an incident, the NICC provides a coordinating forum to share information across infrastructure and key resources sectors through appropriate information-sharing entities.*
- **NOC- National Operations Center:** *Serves as the primary national hub for situational awareness and operations coordination across the Federal Government for incident management. The NOC provides the Secretary of Homeland Security and other principals with information necessary to make critical national-level incident management decisions.*
- **NRCC- National Response Coordination Center:** *A component of the National Operations Center, serves as the Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency primary operations center responsible for national incident response and recovery as well as national resource coordination. As a 24/7 operations center, the NRCC monitors potential or developing incidents and supports the efforts of regional and field components.*
- **NWS- National Weather Service:** *The National Weather Service (NWS) provides weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States, its territories, adjacent waters and ocean areas, for the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the national economy. NWS data and products form a national information database and infrastructure which can be used by other governmental agencies, the private sector, the public, and the global community.*

- **ODIFP- FSIS Office of Data Integration and Food Protection:** *FSIS' Office of Data Integration and Food Protection oversees all food defense activities of the Agency, developing and implementing procedures to prepare for, respond to, and recover from intentional and unintentional contamination and significant food emergencies and natural disasters affecting meat, poultry and egg products. ODIFP closely collaborates with other offices within FSIS to ensure adherence to emergency management policies, food defense directives, and the consistency and quality of data analyses.*
- **RRCC- Regional Response Coordination Center:** *Located in each Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) region, these multiagency coordination centers are staffed by Emergency Support Functions in anticipation of a serious incident in the region or immediately following an incident. Operating under the direction of the FEMA Regional Administrator, the RRCCs coordinate Federal regional response efforts and maintain connectivity with State emergency operations centers, State fusion centers, Federal Executive Boards, and other Federal and State operations and coordination centers that have potential to contribute to development of situational awareness.*
- **RD-Rural Development:** *USDA's Rural Development is committed to the future of rural communities. Our role is to increase rural residents' economic opportunities and improve their quality of life. Rural Development forges partnerships with rural communities, funding projects that bring housing, community facilities, utilities and other services. We also provide technical assistance and financial backing for rural businesses and cooperatives to create quality jobs in rural areas. Rural Development promotes the President's National Energy Policy and ultimately the nation's energy security by engaging the entrepreneurial spirit of rural America in the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements. Rural Development works with low-income individuals, State, local and Indian tribal governments, as well as private and nonprofit organizations and user-owned cooperatives.*
- **SEDO- FSIS Senior Executive Duty Officer:** *The AA or the EMC representative from ODIFP serves as the Incident Commander (IC). The IC coordinates the work of the EMC in response to a particular significant incident. Depending on the nature, scope, and complexity of the incident, the IC may designate any member of the EMC as IC to coordinate key activities critical to the management of the incident.*

## APPENDIX E

### EXERCISE PARTICIPANT EVALUATION FORM COMMENTS

Seventeen of the 26 players (65% of participants) completed an exercise evaluation form. Their feedback is summarized below.

#### Strengths of the Exercise

##### *Overall*

- The majority of the participants stated that the exercise was helpful. Respondents to the evaluation felt that the exercise was an excellent way to bring DHS and USDA emergency response staffs together for a discussion about how to coordinate a response during a natural disaster.
- 94% of the participants surveyed agreed that the exercise was well structured and organized.
- 94% of the participants surveyed agreed that the exercise scenario was plausible and realistic.
- 100% of the participants surveyed agreed that the exercise facilitator was knowledgeable about the material, kept the exercise on target, and was sensitive to group dynamics.
- 88% of the participants surveyed agreed that their participation in the exercise was appropriate for someone in their position.
- 82% of the participants surveyed agreed that the participants included the right people in terms of level and mix of disciplines.

#### Areas for Improvement

##### *Injects*

- Several participants stated that they would have preferred that the level of detail used to explain the consequences of the flood be more granular to make the scenario more realistic.
- One participant suggested that the scenario should have included a chemical, biological, or other agent to ensure that the MAC Group was activated.

##### *Expand the Participant List*

- Several participants asked that USDA-DHS personnel at the state level be involved.

***Logistics***

- Phone participants stated that it was extremely hard to hear what was being discussed several times throughout the exercise making them feel as if they were not needed.
- One participant felt that the acronym list and the flow chart would have been more beneficial if they were shared prior to the exercise.