

ELISABETH HAGEN ANNOUNCES DEPARTURE AS UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD SAFETY AT FSIS

Dr. Elisabeth Hagen, the Under Secretary for Food Safety at the Food Safety and Inspection Service of FSIS, has tendered her resignation from the agency. She will be leaving in mid-December of this year.

Since August 20, 2010, Hagen has overseen the FSIS, which is charged with safeguarding the nation's supply of commercial meat, poultry, and egg products. She is also a principal member of the President's Food Safety Working Group.

In announcing her departure, Dr. Hagen said:

"It has been an ambitious three years. USDA and FSIS have successfully made preventing foodborne illness a real priority. The steps we have taken, from modernizing the agency, strengthening oversight of industry and increasing outreach to consumers has led to safer food and fewer foodborne illnesses."

Under Dr. Hagen's leadership, FSIS has pursued a number of initiatives to protect consumers — from adopting a new zero-tolerance policy for additional strains of E. coli in beef, to adopting new standards to protect Americans from Salmonella and Campylobacter in poultry. Her initial priorities included tackling non-O157 STECs and HACCP validation guidelines, improving prevention of Salmonella, and expanding the implementation of the HACCP-based Inspection Models Project (HIMP) for poultry. Many of these priorities remain works in progress. Others, like HIMP, have drawn criticism from food industry members.

Dr. Hagen is leaving public service to return to the private sector. The Obama Administration has not yet announced a successor.