The Investigations Operations Manual (IOM) is the primary source regarding Agency policy and procedures for field investigators and inspectors. This extends to all individuals who perform field investigational activities in support of the Agency's public health mission. Accordingly, it directs the conduct of all fundamental field investigational activities. Adherence to this manual is paramount to assure quality, consistency, and efficiency in field operations. The specific information in this manual is supplemented, not superseded, by other manuals and field guidance documents. Recognizing that this manual may not cover all situations or variables arising from field operations, any significant departures from IOM established procedures should have the concurrence of district management.

For 2014, the IOM contains some important changes which clarify or present new information and procedures. Of particular note Subchapter 8.3 - Investigation of Foodborne Outbreaks includes Farm Investigations, Approach, Sampling, Form 3623 Farm Investigation Questionnaire, Recording 483 Observations, and Reporting. As with each new edition of the IOM, please take time to review sections of the manual for changes which may apply to your work. Additions to the IOM are highlighted in gray.

Since December 1996, the IOM has been posted on ORA's Internet Website, http://www.fda.gov/ora/inspect_ref/iom. The entire IOM is available there, with all graphics included. Future updates to the IOM will be performed periodically during the year to the on-line version. The hard copy is published annually. Remember, whether reviewing the "hard copy" or the "on-line" version of the IOM, the most recent version is the document of record.

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Melinda K. Plaisier, Associate Commissioner for Regulatory Affairs
FDA/Office of Regulatory Affairs

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