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LB 1092

maintain state meat inspection. The amendments also provide that the Department of Agriculture, jointly with the Ag Committee, shall submit a report to the Legislature next December detailing the necessary statutory or regulatory changes that are needed to the state Meat and Poultry Inspection Act, or other authorities and resources needed, and to discuss participation among interested meat processing establishments. The amendments establish a target date of April...of August 1, 2001, for state inspection to begin. Based on conversations with FSIS personnel, the certification process will take from one to two years and will likely take at least a year and a half, since Nebraska would essentially be starting from the beginning. So, essentially, the amendments follow a time table and process which we believe mirrors the certification process that should be in LB 1092 when enacted. In keeping with the original intent of the bill, the committee amendments provide that the program will be a five-year pilot program. The original bill limited the number of inspectors to two. While the committee amendments do not limit participation to any set number of inspectors, it does contemplate that the size of the program shall be limited to small to mid-size processors voluntarily seeking a grant of state inspection. We anticipate that the number of inspectors needed would be covered in the report to the Legislature. The program would be evaluated after the third year for level of participation and economic impact of state inspected plants. The program would be terminated any time after two years if the number of plants under state meat inspection fall below five. The committee felt that Senator Robak's is a very timely one. There are currently 25 states in the nation which provide state meat inspection at some 3,000 facilities. Recently, Minnesota began phasing in state meat inspection. According to administrators of the Kansas law who testified at the hearing, its state meat inspection program is considered as an activity that the state utilizes in order to promote value-added activity in its agricultural sector.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: One minute.

SENATOR DIERKS: Smaller and middle size plants have tended to prefer state inspection, which is often seen as more responsive and helpful while enforcing standards that are at least equal to those of the federal government. There's also interest among