NASDA strongly supports the efforts of Congress and the Administration to decisively and expeditiously strengthen homeland security. States play a key role in homeland security and provide the first line of defense in protecting critical infrastructure, health, and safety. As partners in the federal system, state departments of agriculture are keenly aware of the need for an effective strategy to safeguard the nation's agricultural production tools, especially food safety and animal and plant health.

In July 2002, the Bush Administration identified food and agriculture as a “critical infrastructure” for the security of the Nation. Since then, several Presidential Directives have been issued which generally direct the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other federal agencies to coordinate their activities related to homeland security. Many of these activities directly or indirectly involve food and agriculture security. For example, in February 2003, the Administration issued *Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5)* which describes how the federal departments will manage domestic incidents by establishing a single, comprehensive national incident management system. In February 2004, the Administration issued *Homeland Security Presidential Directive 9 (HSPD-9)*. This directive establishes a national policy to defend the agriculture and food system against terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.

In March 2004, DHS began implementing HSPD-9 and organized a new *Food and Agriculture Sector Coordinating Council (FASCC)* to accomplish this task. The purpose of this council is to work with DHS, USDA, FDA and other federal agencies on homeland security strategies and issues. The council represents the full spectrum of the Nation’s food production system from “farm to fork.” Because the council represents such a wide range of farm and agriculture interests, it has been organized into two distinct sectors: *industry and government*. NASDA formally participates on the “government sector” coordinating council (GCC) which is comprised of federal, state and local governments. In addition, the council includes two NASDA affiliates—the National Assembly of State Livestock Health Officials, and the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO).

NASDA has also established a Food and Agriculture Security Committee which will examine how to coordinate activities with the Department of Homeland Security and other federal departments and agencies that oversee and support the agricultural production system.

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