Southern Exposure 2015 (SE15) was a nuclear power plant exercise sponsored by the State of South Carolina, Duke Energy, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Department of Energy, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). A significant aspect of this radiation release exercise was the agricultural impacts, and the Emergency Support Function #11 (ESF #11) Coordinator to FEMA Region IV (R4) in conjunction with USDA headquarters and state office staff, plus Veterinary Service Assistant Director for District 2 along with her staff were involved in a number of planning efforts and specific workshops.

The three day exercise July 21-23 included a two day FEMA Region IV Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) activation exercise in which USDA Food and Nutrition Service assisted by providing three RRCC ESF #11 Desk Officers. FEMA Region IV sent one of their regional Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMAT) to the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in addition to FEMA sending a National IMAT.

Day one of the exercise was the H.B. Robinson Plant graded Nuclear Regulatory Commission exercise and day two focused on South Carolina Emergency Management Division and county emergency management activities. The ESF #11 Coordinator assisted the state by participating at the South Carolina Emergency Operations Center for day two of the exercise. The SE15 activities concluded with the third day being a “Day Fourteen” Table Top Exercise (TTX) in Florence, SC focusing on transition from response to recovery, at fourteen days post incident. At this TTX, four breakout sessions were held with one focusing on the Food and Agriculture sector. SE15 exercise activity concluded with a Long Term Recovery TTX September 9-10.

**Lessons Learned**

**Successful**
- The R4 ESF #11 Coordinator was able to staff multiple sites (RRCC and SEOC) with support from Food and Nutrition Service Desk Officers.
- There was good ESF #11 support and communication between most USDA agencies and programs at the SEOC.
- The ESF #11 Coordinator was able to assist FEMA R4 IMAT, SC Emergency Management Division ESFs 17 and 11 plus interact with USDA representatives on the Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center (FRMAC) Advisory Team for Environment, Food and Health while at the SEOC.
- USDA Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination, Rural Development and Department Management participation/support was critical throughout planning, preparation workshops and actual exercise.
- Multiple workshops were held prior to SE15 that addressed exercise specifics such as Price Anderson Act, American Nuclear Insurers, and the Stafford Act.
Challenges/Areas for Improvement

- Having the Advisory team plus FEMA National IMTs onsite at the beginning of the exercise was unrealistic and creates false expectations for a response.
- The state response partners voiced confusion as to what specific resources/assets the Advisory Team brings to the response.
- Price Anderson Act and Stafford Act procedural conflicts were minimized during SE15 yet still need clarification from FEMA HQ.
- ESF #11 and Advisory Team communications were an area for improvement at the RRCC, and suggests the need to develop formalized communications protocols for USDA personnel activated to Federal emergency coordination roles.
- Not all requested USDA agencies at the state level participated in the exercise.
- In a real world event of this nature, the National Response Coordination Center would have been activated and should have been for the purposes of this exercise.