

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 11, 2003

Mark B. McClellan, M.D., Ph.D.
Commissioner of Food and Drugs
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Dr. McClellan:

We write to urge the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to consider comments submitted by The Peanut Institute regarding the inclusion of peanut butter in its review of a health claim for nuts and the reduced risk of coronary heart disease (CHD).

As fully explained in The Peanut Institute's comments, peanuts, including peanut butter, account for more than two-thirds of the total annual tree nut and peanut consumption in the United States. Moreover, peanut butter, by law, consists of a minimum 90% shelled and roasted peanuts (FDA Standard of Identity, 21 C.F.R. § 164.150). More than one-half of all peanuts consumed in the United States are consumed as peanut butter. Thus, of total nut consumption in the United States, approximately one-third are consumed as peanuts, one-third as peanut butter, and one-third the combined total of all tree nuts. Scientific evidence has demonstrated that the same cholesterol and CHD-lowering health benefits offered by peanuts are also offered by peanut butter.

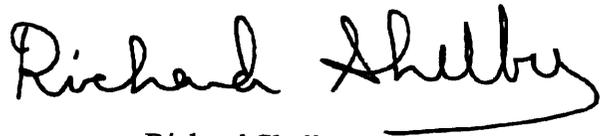
We encourage the FDA to consider The Peanut Institute's comments in conjunction with the International Tree Nut Council Nutrition Research and Education Foundation's petition. Additionally, we encourage the FDA to issue a single health claim proposal addressing nuts and peanut butter. We believe this is the most efficient means of considering all relevant data regarding the nut and CHD health claim. Further, we believe that a single action by the FDA, addressing all nuts and peanut butter, is needed in order to prevent confusion among consumers who might construe multiple FDA actions to mean that certain nuts are more healthful than peanut butter or other nuts.

In light of the cardioprotective benefits offered by peanut butter, as set forth in The Peanut Institute's comments, and the usefulness of this information to consumers seeking to make informed and healthy food choices, we respectfully urge your timely action regarding the comments. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jeff Sessions
United States Senator



Richard Shelby
United States Senator