

Secretary Jane Henney
Food & Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

5879 '00 OCT -5 P1:32

RE: H.R. 4461 / S. 2536 FDA Labeling Requirements for Irradiated Foods

Dear Secretary Henney,

I am writing to oppose any attempt to change or weaken the current FDA labeling requirements for irradiated foods.

It is my understanding that the USDA/FDA appropriations bill (H.R. 4461 / S. 2536) contains a section requiring the FDA to develop "alternative terms" for describing irradiated foods (such as cold pasteurization, electronic pasteurization, etc.) I believe this would be deceiving to consumers since there is no better term to describe irradiation than the term "irradiated." Pasteurization is defined by the dictionary as "exposing food to elevated temperature" not ionizing radiation.

I urge you to remove all labeling instructions from the final appropriations bill coming out of the conference committee and let the current FDA labeling requirements for irradiated food stand as they are. Industry can comment directly to the FDA on labeling requirements by submitting its comments like the rest of us. Irradiated foods are sold internationally and need to be honestly labeled as such for international commerce.

A U.S. consumer should not have to ask a grocery store manager- "Has this product been heat-treated or irradiated?" to find out how the "fresh" meat has been further processed. Consumers want straight-forward, prominent labeling of irradiated foods by the use of the term "irradiated." A free market depends on truthful consumer information. Any change in the current, accurate labeling of irradiated foods will be seen by consumers as an accommodation to business interests at the expense of the consumer and will cause them to lose confidence in both Congress and the Food and Drug Administration. Many voters already believe that industry money controls Congressional votes. An action such as this would confirm voter cynicism.

Please let me know what action you plan to take in response to my letter.

Sincerely,

Alexander Howbert

1129 White St.

Ann Arbor, MI 48103 C5204

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P.S. It is obvious that this is just a way to try to deceive consumers. How can this even be considered OK?