

OLSSON, FRANK AND WEEDA, P. C.

PHILIP C. OLSSON
RICHARD L. FRANK
DAVID F. WEEDA
DENNIS R. JOHNSON
ARTHUR Y. TSIEH
JOHN W. BODE+
STEPHEN D. TERMAN
MARSHALL L. MATZ
MICHAEL J. O'FLAHERTY
DAVID L. DURKIN
NEIL F. O'FLAHERTY
PAMELA J. FURMAN

ATTORNEYS AT LAW
SUITE 400
1400 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20036-2220
FACSIMILE (202) 234-3550

Sender's Direct Phone (202) 518-6323
Sender's Direct Facsimile (202) 234-1560

TISH E. PAHL
BRETT T. SCHWEMER
KAREN R. HARNED
ROBERT A. HAHN*
NAOMI J. L. HALPERN
RICHARD D. SIEGEL
STEPHEN L. LACEY◊
JAN M. BRUNNER◊
SUSAN P. GRYMES**
SHARON D. BROOKS◊
RYAN W. STROSCHEIN†

OF COUNSEL
MICHELE F. CROWN
JUR. T. STROBOS
JACQUELINE H. EAGLE
KENNETH D. ACKERMAN
MARK L. ITZKOFF

+ADMITTED IN OKLAHOMA ONLY
*ADMITTED IN NEW YORK ONLY
◊ADMITTED IN MARYLAND ONLY
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March 14, 2001

Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane
Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

RE: Docket No. 00N-1633; Marking Requirements For And Prohibitions On The Reimportation Of Imported Food Products That Have Been Refused Admission Into The United States; Proposed Rule

Dear Sir/Madam:

On behalf of the National Coalition of Food Importers (NCFI), a coalition of trade associations that represent different segments of the food importing community, I respectfully request that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) extend by 60 days the comment period in the above-referenced matter. Members of the NCFI are: American Spice Trade Association, Cheese Importers Association of America, Association of Food Industries, The Cocoa Merchants' Association of America, and the National Fisheries Institute.

On January 22, FDA published in the Federal Register a proposed rule entitled, "Marking Requirements For And Prohibitions On The Reimportation Of Imported Food Products That Have Been Refused Admission Into The United States." 66 Fed. Reg. 6,502. On January 24, the Administration published in the Federal Register a memorandum the President's Chief of Staff, Andrew H. Card, Jr., sent to the Heads and Acting Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies announcing a regulatory review plan. 66 Fed. Reg. 7,702. Among other things, the memorandum instructed the department and agency heads to postpone the effective date of regulations published in the Federal Register for 60 days, subject to certain exceptions. The memorandum defined "regulations" to include "notices of proposed rulemaking." It was unclear at the time how the memorandum would affect proposed rules. Some suggested that the comment period for these proposed rules would be extended for 60 days. As a result, there has been confusion that is likely to reduce the quantity and quality of comments in this rulemaking.

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Given the significant impact the proposed rule would have on food importers, NCFI respectfully requests that the agency extend the comment period by 60 days in the above-referenced matter.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. Bode", written over a horizontal line.

John W. Bode
Counsel to the National Coalition of Food
Importers

JWB.lws

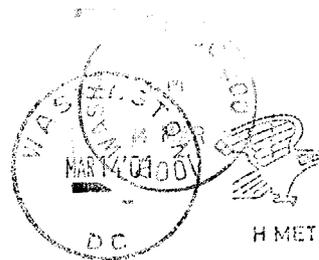
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Rockville, Maryland 20852

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