

Food, & ...

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

- **Indian Gaming Procedures Rule:** DOI will forward a proposed rule that would authorize the Secretary to adopt procedures for the conduct of casino style (class III) gaming, under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). The rule would be used when an Indian tribe alleges that a state refuses to negotiate an Indian gaming compact in good faith. Tribes are authorized to make such allegations in federal court and to participate in a judicially supervised mediation scheme, but in Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Florida, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states may assert sovereign immunity from suit. The proposed rule would allow tribes to seek relief from the Secretary when states refuse to consent to suit. DOI expects this rule to be very controversial with the states. The DOI Appropriations bill contains a rider that OMB interprets as allowing DOI to complete this rulemaking, but precludes it from implementing the rule in FY98. The public will be given at least 60 days to comment on the proposed rule. Bruce - FYI - this is a big deal - the governors will hate it. In fact, it may make the FLRA. Contravening both small. Etc
- **AK Indian Country Case:** On December 10, the Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in the Venette case. Senator Stevens and others contend strongly that the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) extinguished Indian Country establishing a corporate, private property model of Native land ownership. The advocates for Venette assert that ANCSA did not extinguish Indian Country, and that the Venette lands in particular should be recognized as Indian Country. Over 20 states filed a brief in support of AK's position. The U.S. is not a party to the case, but a Solicitor's opinion issued during the Bush Administration will be cited by AK in favor of its position.
- **Atlantic Salmon:** On December 15, Secretary Babbitt will participate in the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Plan signing ceremony in Augusta, ME. The agreement between the Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of ME, and the National Marine Fisheries Service establishes a cooperative effort to reduce incidental take and help recover Atlantic Salmon populations in seven ME rivers.
- **Quaker Neck Dam:** On December 17, Secretary Babbitt will take part in demolishing the Quaker Neck Dam on the Neuse River in central NC.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

- **FDA Meat Irradiation Rule:** USDA has worked closely with FDA in the approval process for irradiation of meat to facilitate the rapid completion of a USDA rule that spells out the procedures plants will be required to follow to irradiate meat, including ground beef, and descriptive labeling for irradiated meat products. USDA issued a brief statement in reaction to the December 2 FDA announcement that it is publishing a rule to permit irradiation of meat, explaining that USDA "views irradiation as another weapon in the fight against pathogens that can contaminate raw meat and poultry." Terry/Ten - who is this coming out? What does it do? Etc

USDA -
OMB
345-3446
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With ...

CNN - Irradiated food: It works, but few are buying - November 25, 1997

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 STORY PAGE

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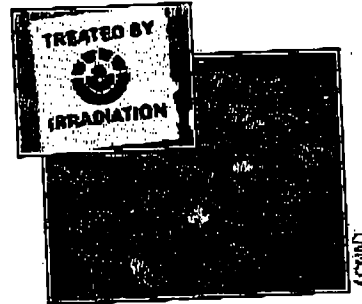
Irradiated food: It works, but few are buying

November 25, 1997

Web posted at: 4:37 p.m. EST (2137 GMT)

 From Correspondent Eugenia
 Halsey

MULBERRY, Florida (CNN) -- Since the 1960s, NASA has been making astronauts' food safer by irradiating it. But for many people, irradiation -- bombarding food with gamma rays from radioactive cobalt-60 to kill food contaminants -- still evokes images of food that glows in the dark.


 Irradiated food comes
 with this label

At Food Technology Service Inc., an irradiation plant near Tampa, Florida, the process starts when pallets of food, already in its final packaging, are put inside tall metal containers that are moved to an irradiation chamber surrounded by 6-foot-thick concrete walls.

**CNN's Eugenia Halsey takes a
 tour of an irradiation plant**

607K/55 sec./320x240

435K/55 sec./160x120

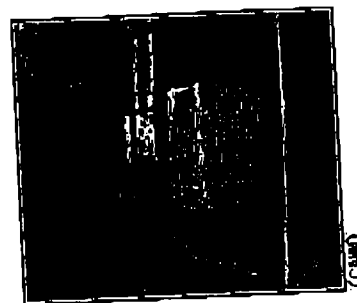
QuickTime Slide show

about 20 to 30 minutes, the gamma radiation passes through the food, killing harmful bacteria and slowing decay but not leaving the food radioactive.

It's "no more than your teeth would be radioactive by the dentist X-raying them," says Food Technology Service's Pete Ellis.

The process causes a vitamin loss but most scientists say it is insignificant and there is no evidence that chemical changes caused by irradiation can cause cancer. Ellis says the changes are no different than what happens

The containers are then exposed to the racks of bluish-looking cobalt-60, which stay in a protective pool of water when not in use. In the process, which takes


 The fruit is loaded into
 large metal containers
 before being irradiated

before being irradiated

when food is canned or cooked.

But some consumer groups are not enthusiastic about irradiation, arguing it takes the emphasis away from cleaning up the food supply.



Finding irradiated food in grocery stores can be difficult

"It's saying, don't worry about how clean the packing house is or the slaughterhouse, kill the germs, but maybe leave the fecal matter on the food. That's not what Americans want," says Michael Jacobson of the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

Don't look too hard for irradiated items in your grocery store.

Although every major scientific organization says the process is safe, most companies are afraid to sell irradiated food until consumers demonstrate they're ready for it.

Special Sections:

- [CNN Plus: Consumer News - Food](#)

Related stories:

- [Contaminations raise the question: Is food safe? - August 20, 1997](#)

Related sites:

Note: Pages will open in a new browser window

- [Center for Science in the Public Interest - Home Page](#)
- [The Food Safety Consortium](#)
- [The American Nuclear Society \[ANSWER\]](#) - a fresh resource of nuclear sciences and technologies which are very important: nuclear medicine, nuclear energy, food irradiation, and nuclear techniques used in manufacturing and processing industries.

External sites are not endorsed by CNN Interactive.



+food +irradiation

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Food
156441

*Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health
Office of Public Health and Science
Department of Health and Human Services*

*200 Independence Ave, SW, Rm 716-G
Washington, DC 20201
Phone: 202.690.7694
Fax: 202.690.6960*

FAX TRANSMISSION COVER SHEET

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From: JIM O'HARA

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Have a Healthy, Active Day!

HHS NEWS

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

P97-41
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 2, 1997

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
Arthur Whitmore: 202-205-4177
Broadcast Media: 301-827-3434
Consumer Inquires: 800-532-4440

FDA APPROVES IRRADIATION OF MEAT FOR PATHOGEN CONTROL

The Food and Drug Administration today approved irradiation of meat products for controlling disease-causing micro-organisms. The approval applies to fresh and frozen red meats such as beef, lamb and pork.

"Irradiation of meat could prove to be another important tool to protect consumers from food-borne disease," said Michael A. Friedman, M.D., Lead Deputy FDA Commissioner. "The process has been shown to be safe and to significantly reduce bacterial contamination."

This approval is based on FDA's thorough scientific review of a substantial number of studies conducted worldwide on the effects of irradiation on a wide variety of meat products. The studies included examination of the chemical effects of radiation, impact on nutrient content of irradiated products, potential toxicity concerns, and effects on microorganisms in or on irradiated products. FDA concluded that irradiation is safe in reducing disease-causing microbes in or on meats, and that it does not compromise the nutritional quality of treated products.

FDA has previously approved irradiation of poultry to control pathogens, of pork for control of the trichina parasite, of foods such as fruits, vegetables, and grains to control insects, and of spices, seasonings, and dry enzymes used in food processing to control microorganisms.

Food products are treated by subjecting them to radiation from radioactive or machine sources, which kills significant numbers of insects, pathogenic bacteria and parasites. Irradiation does not make food radioactive, nor does it noticeably change taste, texture, or appearance.

Irradiation of food products to control food-borne disease in humans has been generally endorsed by the United Nation's World Health Organization and the American Medical Association.

Disease-causing microorganisms that can be controlled by irradiation include *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 and *Salmonella* species.

FDA's approval is the latest action by the Clinton Administration to take positive steps to reduce the number of consumers suffering from food-borne pathogens. Other steps include the implementation of mandatory Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) safety programs at seafood, meat, poultry processing plants; expansion of the nation's network of surveillance sites for food-borne disease; funding additional research on food-borne disease control and detection; increasing the number of inspectors and inspections of domestic and imported produce; and implementing industry and consumer education programs on reducing food-borne illness risks.

Irradiation, although a potentially useful tool for helping reduce risk of food-borne disease, is a complement to, not a replacement for, proper food-handling practices by producers,

FDA APPROVES IRRADIATION OF MEAT PATHOGEN CONTROL

<http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/NEW00603.html>

processors, and consumers.

This approval is in response to a petition filed in August 1994 by Isomedix Inc. of Whippany, N.J.

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ATTENTION TV BROADCASTERS: Please use open caption for the hearing impaired.

*Good
1/5/98*

*Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health
Office of Public Health and Science
Department of Health and Human Services*

*200 Independence Ave, SW, Rm 716-G
Washington, DC 20201
Phone: 202.690.7694
Fax: 202.690.6960*

FAX TRANSMISSION COVER SHEET

Date: 12/2/97

Please Deliver on Receipt!

To: Thomas Friedman

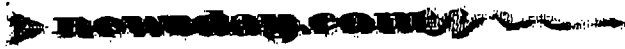
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From: Jim O'Hara

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Have a Healthy, Active Day!

Top News**Beef Irradiation Approval Sought**Sports

By CURT ANDERSON AP Farm Writer

Lotteries

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Buffeted by recalls of tainted meat, the beef industry has been urging government approval of irradiation to kill E. coli and other harmful bacteria.

InternationalNational

Amid pressure from Congress and renewed consumer interest in food safety, the Food and Drug Administration planned today to announce whether the process would get the green light. Industry officials expected approval.

WashingtonBusiness

The FDA has been considering a 3-year-old petition from Isomedix Inc., a New Jersey company with long experience in medical sterilization, which wants to offer meat processors irradiation with cobalt-60 gamma rays. No radioactive substance comes into contact with the meat.

Wall StreetEntertainmentHealth/Science

Such techniques enable meatpackers to kill bacteria at the end of the production line, after it is already sealed in packages and cannot be contaminated further. This is particularly important in ground beef, where bacteria can easily get beneath the surface during grinding.

Regional

Although irradiation has been available for years for poultry, pork, spices and some fresh produce, interest in approving the process for beef intensified after this summer's recall of 25 million pounds of Hudson Food Co. hamburger for fear it was tainted with E. coli.

The meat industry lobbied vigorously for irradiation as an alternative to Clinton administration proposals for greater government authority to recall contaminated products and punish violators.

"I think there is a greater degree of interest," said Patrick Boyle, president of the American Meat Institute, a meatpacking industry organization.

In this year's FDA spending bill, Congress ordered the agency to act within 60 days on the Isomedix petition. The bill also changed labeling requirements for all foods treated with irradiation so that the words need be no larger than those for the ingredients.

If the FDA approves irradiation dosage levels for various forms of red meat, such as frozen, fresh and so on, it will be up to the Agriculture Department to issue regulations for processing plants that conform to those levels.

Once that is done, Boyle said, meat plants would have to figure out how to use irradiation, whether they can afford it and if there is a consumer demand. It is uncertain how adaptable the process would be for hamburger that is ground in the grocery.

Most likely, consumers would see products marketed in the future that would offer them the choice of purchasing irradiated meat.

"I think it's going to take a little time for industry and consumers to move towards the adoption of irradiation as a purchasing option," Boyle said.

Beef Irradiation Approval Sought

One reason irradiation is not widely used on other products is consumer wariness of the process and lack of education about it, said Brian Folkerts, vice president for governmental affairs at the National Food Processors Association.

“We need to stop giving consumers the impression that the label is a warning when it has been found safe,” Folkerts said. (PROFILE (CO:Isomedix Inc; TS:ISO; IG:MTC;) (CO:Hudson Foods Inc; TS:HFI; IG:FOD;) (CAT:Business;) (CAT:Medical;) (CAT:Agriculture;) (CAT:Consumer;))

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HHS NEWS

Food and Drug Administration
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

P97-
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 1, 1997

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
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Page 2, P97-40, Meat Irradiation

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-More-

Page 3, P97-40, Meat Irradiation

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Meat Irradiation Qs and As

What is irradiation?

Irradiation is the application of radiant energy (radiation) to a target material. Various forms of radiant energy include: microwave and infrared radiation that heat food during cooking; visible light or ultraviolet light used to dry food or kill surface microorganisms; and ionizing radiation that can penetrate deeply into food, killing microorganisms without raising the temperature significantly. Ionizing radiation, resulting from cobalt-60, cesium-137, x-ray machines, or electron accelerators, is the type that has been recently approved for treating meats. Irradiation is also a common way of sterilizing disposable medical supplies, such as syringes and surgical gloves.

Does irradiation leave any radioactivity behind -- even trace amounts?

No. Irradiation processing does not make anything radioactive, and does not allow any radioactive substance to touch food.

To what foods does this new approval apply?

It applies to red meats (such as beef, pork, or lamb) and to certain products made from that meat, including ground meat, whole cuts, and organ meats.

Are there other foods for which irradiation is approved?

Irradiation has already been approved to control insects in foods where they may be found, to inhibit ripening or sprouting of fresh fruits and vegetables, to control the parasite in pork that can cause trichinosis, to control pathogens in poultry, to control microbes in enzymes, spices and seasonings, and to sterilize meats for astronauts' space meals.

How long has irradiation been approved for these uses?

FDA's first approval for an irradiated food was in 1963, to control insects in wheat. Since then, there has been a long and gradual expansion of approvals including spices in 1983, a general revamping and expansion in 1986, poultry in 1990, and meat for astronauts in 1995.

What food-safety issues does irradiation address?

Irradiation can reduce the number of pathogenic organisms in food. However, it is important to recognize that different organisms have different sensitivities to irradiation and that, while irradiation can kill microorganisms, irradiation does not leave a residual antimicrobial protection against growth of surviving microorganisms or recontamination.

Why does industry want it?

Irradiation has the capability of reducing the number of microorganisms in food. While irradiation may not be the treatment of choice for controlling pathogenic organisms in all cases, industry generally prefers to have multiple options available to ensure safe food.

Does irradiation change the nutritional content of meat?

As with other methods of food processing, irradiation of meat can cause losses of some vitamins. Irradiation of meat in a frozen state, and under reduced oxygen levels (vacuum packaging), tends to minimize vitamin losses. Overall, FDA has concluded that irradiation of meat and meat byproducts will not adversely affect the nutritional adequacy of consumers' diets.

Does irradiation affect the taste of meat?

Irradiation can, but does not necessarily, affect the taste of meat depending on the radiation dose and the conditions of irradiation, e.g., whether the meat is frozen or vacuum packed. For irradiation to be successful in the marketplace, conditions must be established such that the irradiated product is acceptable to the consumer.

When can consumers expect to see irradiated meat on the market shelves?

That will depend on a series of decisions and actions taken by the industry. Ordinarily, before companies adopt a new technology they will make cost/benefit estimates and marketing assessments and pilot test those applications that look economically favorable. If irradiation were to be applied on a large scale, appropriate facilities would need to be built. FDA has no way to forecast the results from such activities.

Moreover, USDA must issue a regulation permitting the use in meat processing plants, which will also specify how irradiated meat products must be labeled.

Why don't we see irradiated product for sale in the marketplace?

At least three things must occur for such a product to be common in the marketplace. First, government rules must allow for sale. Second, manufacturers must be convinced that it is in their interest to become competent in a new technology and to invest in developing a product commercially. Third, consumers must want to buy such products, thereby encouraging further investment from manufacturers.

Students of consumer behavior often speculate that many people have a general fear of anything to do with radiation, and will not purchase irradiated foods. However, to date, consumers have rarely had an opportunity to make such a choice. Reports of occasions where irradiated foods have been offered for sale do not show consumers being unwilling to buy irradiated foods.

Will meat be labeled so that consumers will know that it has been irradiated?

Yes. Meat products are regulated by USDA under the Federal Meat Inspection Act. Therefore, a regulation will need to be issued by USDA before any labeling is required. Although it is not now certain exactly what the regulation will state, it will most likely be similar to that of the irradiated poultry regulation, which requires a special green logo, as well as a statement of "treated with radiation" or "treated by irradiation."

Doesn't the recent FDA reform act address labeling for irradiation?

Yes. It restricts the FDA from requiring a type size larger than that required in an ingredient statement on products regulated under the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (which does not cover meat). However, because meat is regulated under the Meat Inspection Act, which is administered by USDA, the new FDA reform law does not directly affect USDA's authority in this area.

How long did it take FDA to act on irradiation for meat?

The petition requesting approval for meat irradiation was filed with FDA on August 25, 1994 -- 3 years and 3 months ago.

Why did it take FDA so long to approve irradiation for meat?

FDA reviewed the large body of relevant data in its files, a considerable collection of data submitted by the petitioner, as well as the scientific literature relevant to this decision.

Some of the issues that needed to be addressed include:

- Will irradiation generate chemicals in meat that would be toxic in the amounts that people are to likely consume?
- Will irradiated meats provide adequate nutritional value?
- Will irradiation conditions allow some harmful bacteria to remain and cause the meat to become more hazardous?

Answering these questions required significant investigations of radiation chemistry, dietary exposure, toxicology, nutrition, and microbiology.

Why does FDA call irradiation a "food additive"?

FDA does not call the irradiation process itself a food additive. In 1958, the U. S. Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act was amended to require premarket approval for use of a food additive, and a "food additive" was defined as any substance the intended use of which may be reasonably expected to

result in its becoming a component or otherwise affecting the characteristics of any food, (including "any source of radiation" used to prepare, process, or treat food). Thus, Congress, through the Food Additives Amendment of 1958, determined that irradiation should be subject to premarket review.

What were FDA's major concerns about irradiation as a food processing technique?

The concerns are the same as with any food processing technique: that irradiated meats 1) would be as nutritious as non-irradiated meats; 2) that no harmful byproducts would be formed in the meats; and 3) that irradiation would not set up conditions that would allow meat to become hazardous (for example, by preferential growth of relatively radiation-resistant bacteria) under anticipated conditions of handling and storage.

Why is FDA approving irradiation in the first place? Wouldn't it be better to prevent contamination of meat with harmful microbes?

First, the law requires approval of petitions for the use of a food additive when that use has been shown to be safe. While this places a burden of proof on a petitioner, FDA cannot arbitrarily deny approval when that burden has been met.

Second, while striving to prevent pathogens from contaminating meat is the most important step to assure safety, it is not the only step. Safety is assured better when multiple actions are taken to reduce the probability of a hazard. It is in everyone's interest to take every reasonable step to improve the safety all foods, including meat, and irradiation can be an important tool to help achieve the goal of safer meat.

Does radiation kill all harmful microbes in meat?

This will depend on which harmful microbes are present and in what amounts. Irradiation at the doses approved does not eliminate every single microorganism from meat, but will reduce their numbers substantially. Furthermore, irradiation cannot prevent recontamination in the home or restaurant and cannot be relied on as the sole assurance of safety, but it does reduce harmful organisms to much lower, safer levels. It is important to remember that irradiated meat still must be properly handled, processed, and stored -- just like non-irradiated meat -- to ensure its safety.

Does irradiation solve all food-safety problems?

No. Irradiated meats still must be properly handled, processed, refrigerated, and stored, just like non-irradiated meat, to ensure its safety. Irradiation is a complement to, not a substitute for, sound sanitary meat production and manufacturing practices.

What are the concerns of those who oppose irradiation for meat?

Some people have expressed concern about the chemical changes that irradiation can cause in

meat, or about the possibility that nutrients may be lost. Some people also express concern about the possible environmental or worker safety impacts of operating irradiation facilities. Others have stated that irradiation will be used as a substitute for sanitary meat-production practices.

FDA has carefully evaluated these and other possible concerns, and has found no adverse impacts that would be of significance. FDA has reviewed a large body of scientific data relevant to the chemical changes resulting from irradiation. FDA's environmental review has taken into account the close regulation, by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, of facilities using radioactive materials as well as the regulation of worker safety by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Good sanitary practices are always important, for quality as well as safety, and will continue to be essential to meat production.

How does irradiation compare to other types of food-sanitation technologies? Does its sanitizing effect last longer than other technologies?

Two factors can play a role in reducing the occurrence of harmful organisms in foods; factors that reduce numbers of microorganisms and factors that prevent further growth. Irradiation, like thermal processing, is quite effective at reducing the number of microorganisms but leaves no residual effect that can prevent later growth of remaining, viable organisms. Thus, its effect can be considered only in light of other, complementary factors such the number of microorganisms before irradiation, the temperature of storage, and the adequacy of controls to prevent recontamination.

Is FDA placing any restrictions on the use of irradiation for meat?

The petition limited the maximum amount of ionizing radiation to be used for the treatment of meat: 4.5 kGy for refrigerated product, and 7.0 kGy for frozen product. The kGy (kiloGray) is a unit of measurement for ionizing radiation. These limits are in the final rule.

How cost-effective is irradiation compared with other food-sanitation technologies?

FDA has not attempted to evaluate costs. Under the food additive provisions of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, the cost of a technology and its potential benefit to the consumer are not criteria to be considered in permitting use. FDA is required to base its approval decisions strictly on safety considerations.

Does FDA's decision mean that all meats will be irradiated?

FDA's decision does not require irradiation but simply permits it. The extent to which meat will be irradiated will depend on decisions made by the industry and consumers. FDA has not attempted to make market analyses of this technology because it would not affect its decision.

Should consumers handle irradiated meats the same way that they handle non-irradiated meats? For example, can irradiated meat be held longer at refrigeration temperatures before

being cooked or frozen? Can irradiated meat be held longer at freezer temperatures before being cooked? Is there anything different about cooking irradiated meat?

All meats, irradiated or not, should be handled carefully, and stored under refrigeration or freezer temperatures. Just because meat has been irradiated, it is not safe to leave it sitting for prolonged time at room temperature.

Irradiation will delay the spoilage caused by bacteria but food can also spoil due causes that irradiation will not prevent, such as enzyme degradation or rancidity from reactions with air. Because the numbers of spoilage organisms would be reduced, irradiated meats should have a longer shelf life than nonirradiated meats at refrigerated temperatures. Frozen meats tend to degrade for reasons other than growth of microorganisms, and irradiation is not be expected to prolong shelf life.

Cooking meat that has been irradiated is no different than cooking non-irradiated meat.

Are there environmental issues raised by irradiation of meat and other foods? For example, how are radioactive wastes from food-irradiation facilities handled?

Radiation facilities do not produce radioactive waste. Rather, radioactive material used will become less radioactive with time. Generally, radioactive sources that become too weak for some commercial purposes will be used where less radiation intensity is needed or returned to the supplier.

How did FDA handle the environmental issues raised by food irradiation?

FDA examines the potential environmental impact of each of its actions. In this case, FDA notes that a radiation facility that treats food must comply with all other requirements for operation of that facility and that treating food does not present any additional environmental issue. Radiation processing with radioactive sources constitutes an industry closely regulated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. FDA concluded that adequate controls exist to prevent any significant adverse environmental impacts.

Is it possible to irradiate food without using radioactive materials?

Yes. Radiation produced by electron accelerators or X-ray generators has the same effect as radiation from radioactive materials. However, food container sizes must be adjusted for different types of radiation because accelerated electrons can't penetrate food more than a few inches, while radiation from radioactive materials is more penetrating and can be used with containers a few feet thick.

Food Industry Trade Coalition

Food Labels
U.S. Food Industry Feeding the World

August 13, 1998

Ms. Elena Kagan
Deputy Assistant to the President
Domestic Policy Council
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. Kagan:

The Food Industry Trade Coalition would like to bring to your attention two provisions in the Senate-passed version of H.R. 4101, the Fiscal Year 1999 Agriculture Appropriations bill. One would mandate import labeling to accompany all beef and lamb products offered for sale to consumers in the U.S. The other would mandate country of origin labeling for imported produce at the retail level. We urge you to call for the elimination of both of these provisions from the final bill.

Meat Labeling Provision

The meat labeling provision would require immediately upon enactment that all beef and lamb sold to consumers in the U.S. be accompanied by labeling identifying it as "United States," "Imported" or "Blended with Imported." The estimated cost to retailers, foodservice operators and the beef and lamb industry will exceed \$100 million.

In addition, processed meats which contain any trace of imported beef or lamb must be accompanied by labeling stating either "Blended with Imported" or "Contains xx Percent Imported." Thus a predominantly pork or turkey hot dog, for example, will bear a new label if it contains any imported beef or lamb.

Any fresh, ground or processed beef or lamb not correctly identified as "United States" or "Imported" or "Blended with Imported" would be considered misbranded, triggering possible criminal prosecution under the Federal Meat Inspection Act of all businesses that distribute and sell those meat products.

If this provision is retained, you can expect the following consequences:

Beef will lose more market share to chicken and pork. Forty percent of the beef consumed in the U.S. is ground beef, and 20 percent of that ground beef is made from imported lean trimmings. The labeling requirements will lead to consumer confusion and, therefore, will discourage the use of imported lean beef, thus reducing the supply of

*The Food Industry Trade Coalition represents businesses and employees worldwide.
800 Connecticut Avenue, NW 4th Floor Washington, D.C. 20006-2701*

Bruce
Tom Freedman
Where are we
on this?
Elena

ground beef. This will raise ground beef prices and turn consumers away from the most popular single beef item and toward other convenient, economical alternatives - such as chicken and pork.

Beef and lamb producers will suffer more economic losses. Feeder cattle prices will drop because Canadian producers will increase shipments to the U.S. of feeder cattle which, after having been fed in the U.S., will qualify for "United States Beef" labeling. Foreign beef and lamb diverted from the U.S. market will now compete more aggressively with U.S. beef and lamb in export markets, hurting U.S. exports. We can also expect that countries which import U.S. beef, such as Canada, which last year bought 13 percent of U.S. beef exports will adopt similar labeling requirements. This will further shrink U. S. beef exports, to the detriment of U. S. beef producers and processors.

Consumers will be confused and possibly misled about beef and lamb quality and safety. Using labeling requirements to encourage discrimination against imported products does not enhance consumer confidence in beef and lamb safety or quality. In fact, some consumers may perceive imported meats to be superior to U.S. product. For example, New Zealand lamb has grown from seven to 30 percent of U.S. lamb sales by capitalizing on the favorable image U.S. consumers have of New Zealand lamb. Thus, labeling could have the opposite impact from what its proponents desire.

USDA may not be able to enforce the labeling requirements. There is no way to traceback the origin of a product absent some sort of labeling or certification throughout the beef and lamb production chain, including producer certification that the live animal was fed in the United States.

Produce Labeling Provision

The clear objective of the produce labeling amendment is to restrain U.S. imports of winter vegetables and early season table grapes from Mexico. The great majority of imported produce enters this country to satisfy consumer demand for year-round availability of fresh fruits and vegetables. For many commodities, such as grapes, winter vegetables and specialty tropical fruits, there simply is not enough domestic produce to meet consumer needs.

This amendment conflicts with the U. S. free trade position on other issues. The U.S. government has opposed, and continues to oppose, labeling schemes by foreign governments that mask protectionist motives. The U.S. has recognized that these policies serve to impair trade and decrease economic efficiency. If the U.S. adopts this position, its credibility in trade negotiations on issues such as labeling for growth hormones, pesticides, or genetically engineered food products will be severely compromised.

This amendment will impose new costs on the U. S. retail and produce industries. The cost of segregating, storing and labeling U.S. and imported products will impose unnecessary economic burdens throughout the U.S. produce and retail distribution system. For example, the average produce department carries over 340 items year round. Displays change constantly due to supplies and the perishable nature of the product.

Country of origin signs would have to be constantly changed and updated. Retailers would face a nearly impossible task to put the right label or sign in place at the right time. Additional costs would be incurred in added labor, signage and display space. Inevitably, these costs would be reflected in consumer prices.

Some proponents of the Senate produce labeling amendment argue that country of origin labeling is necessary to assure the safety of imported foods. Country of origin labeling does not address the safety issue. If food is not safe, whether it is imported or domestically grown, it should not be in the food distribution system.

Proponents of these amendments are attempting to tie country of origin labeling of meat and produce into the now-popular "consumer right to know more" movement; however, the amendment would offer consumers no useful information to assist in their purchasing decisions. These amendments unfairly attempt to stigmatize imported beef, lamb and produce as inferior food products. Numerous studies have shown that when shopping for food, consumers rank taste, nutrition, product safety and price as their top concerns. They do not make food purchasing decisions based on the origin of a particular product. The latest consumer research by the Food Marketing Institute, Trends in the United States: Consumer Attitudes and the Supermarket - 1998, reaffirms the fact that consumers look for high quality products that are available for a reasonable price.

These amendments, which are based only in misguided protectionism by their proponents, have no basis in making food safer. Producers can, and many do, voluntarily label their products in the marketplace. A government mandate is unwarranted.

For the reasons we have cited above, we urge you to support the removal of both of these provisions from the final FY 1999 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

Respectfully submitted,

**American Bakers Association
American Frozen Food Institute
American Meat Institute
Association of Sales and Marketing Companies
Consumers for World Trade
Food Distributors International
Food Marketing Institute
Grocery Manufacturers of America
International Dairy Foods Association
International Mass Retail Association
National Food Processors Association
National Grocers Association
National Meat Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce**

and their member companies.