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JOE F. SANDERSON, JR.
Chairman
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VIA AIRBORNE EXPRESS

November 15, 2001

Docket Clerk
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety & Inspection Service
300 12th Street, SW
Room 102 Cotton Annex
Washington, DC 20250

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01-030N
01-030N-44
Joe F. Sanderson

Re: Docket number 01-030N

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing this letter in support of the industry petition filed by the National Chicken Council requesting that FSIS extend the effective date of its Moisture Retention and Labeling Regulation. We believe the January 9, 2002 compliance date is not feasible, if not impossible, to meet. Our company and our industry were not made aware of the pre-implementation procedures until July 2001. While the industry has been provided procedures for protocol submission and review, data collection to validate unavoidable moisture absorption, data collection to obtain moisture retention for individual products, and the design and production of new packages and labels must all be completed to comply with the regulation. Accomplishing all of this within six months is not achievable. For your information, several of our plants produce in excess of 200 products. Design and acquisition of relabeled packaging materials is a monumental task.

I question whether or not there is sufficient laboratory capacity to provide microbiological information that is required. Additionally, laboratories might be pushed beyond their legitimate capacity to handle the volume of required tests that are anticipated.

The change envisioned by the Department in limiting and requiring labeling for retained water in raw poultry products is the largest and most significant rule with which our industry will have to deal in my experience in the poultry industry. If it is to be done properly, a certain amount of time beyond six months is certainly required as well as a common and clear understanding of the implementation process and compliance with this rule. I believe we are short on both.

Sincerely,

Joe F. Sanderson, Jr.