

FSIS RegulationsComments

From: olabel@consumer.org
Sent: Thursday, May 04, 2006 10:34 PM
To: FSIS RegulationsComments
Subject: Addendum to Consumers Union's Comments on Docket No. 04-006P, Availability of Lists of Retail Consignees During Meat or Poultry Product Recalls

Consumers Union, the nonprofit publisher of Consumer Reports magazine, has already submitted comments to FSIS on Docket No. 04-006P, "Availability of Lists of Retail Consignees During Meat or Poultry Product Recalls." This email communication is an addendum to those comments, as we now have the results of a recent statewide poll of Californians on the issue of meat recalls and retailer secrecy, and wanted FSIS to have the benefit of knowing public opinion in California on the topic.

Consumers Union engaged the services of the Field Research Corporation to conduct a random sample survey of Californians on meat recalls. Founded in 1945 by Mervin Field, Field Research Corporation is one of the largest public opinion research organizations in the Western U.S.. The Field survey is an independent, non-partisan, public policy survey of Californians. The survey results are based on four questions added to a statewide survey of California adults and was conducted by means of telephone interviews with a random sample of 1,000 California adults in English and Spanish on February 12-16, 2006.

Sampling was conducted by means of random digit dialing, which selects telephone exchanges within all area codes serving California in proportion to population. From each exchange a random sample of telephone numbers was created by adding random digits to the telephone exchange selected, permitting access to both listed and unlisted telephones. After the completion of interviewing, the overall sample of adults interviewed was weighted slightly to estimates of the state's adult population. According to statistical theory, results from the overall adult sample would have a sampling error of +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Results from subgroups would have somewhat larger sampling error ranges. There are other possible sources of error in any survey in addition to sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sampling, sequencing or through omissions or errors in interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize potential errors.

The four questions from the survey of California adults about contaminated beef and poultry products were developed by Consumers Union and Field Research Corporation jointly. Following are the questions and overall results:

- 1) Have you seen, read or heard about any situations in the past few years where contaminated beef or poultry products were recalled? Results: Yes, Have Heard = 65%; No, Have Not = 32%; Don't Know = 27%.
- 2) If you were to hear of a recall of contaminated beef or poultry products from stores or restaurants in your city or town, how concerned would you be--very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned? Results: Very Concerned = 59%; Somewhat Concerned = 30%; Not Too Concerned = 7%; Not At All Concerned = 3%; No Opinion = 1%.
- 3) Current U.S. Department of Agriculture rules permit beef and poultry manufacturers to operate under a voluntary recall system when unacceptable levels of contaminants are found in their products. Do you favor voluntary company recalls of contaminated beef and poultry or mandatory recalls with penalties for not complying? Results: Voluntary Recalls = 11%; Mandatory Recalls = 84%; No Opinion = 5%.
- 4) To encourage beef and poultry manufacturers to come forward to recall their products under the current voluntary system, the California Department of Health Services and the USDA have agreed not to release the names of the stores and restaurants where tainted beef or poultry have been shipped and sold. Do you think the California Department of Health Services should keep confidential the names of retailers involved in a meat recall or do you think the department should be allowed to make the names of those stores and

restaurants public? Results: Keep Confidential = 15%; Make Public = 80%; No Opinion = 5%.

These results show overwhelming support among Californians for USDA to release the names of retail stores and restaurants that receive USDA-recalled beef and poultry. We hope you will take these survey results into consideration.

Sincerely,

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Consumers Union