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~Important Dates~

49th
Management Conference
March 2006
The Drake Hotel
Chicago, IL

64th
Annual Convention
September 2006
Four Seasons Hualalai
Hawaii



NORTH AMERICAN MEAT PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION

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December 3, 2005

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

05-013N
05-013N-5
Deven L. Scott

RE: Docket No. 05-013N , Notice of Public Meeting-Possible Changes to
Regulatory Jurisdiction of Food Products Containing Meat and Poultry.

The North American Meat Processors Association (NAMP), a non-profit trade association of processors and distributors of meat, poultry, and allied products primarily to foodservice establishments, wishes to comment on the your proposed changes to inspection and amenability oversight as is suggested in the above noted docket.

Any change should be first considered on whether the change will impact food safety or whether the perception of the change by consumers in light of the new and continuing risks to public health created by animal disease and terrorism will be detrimental to the public welfare. It is our opinion that fragmenting the authority over foods and their identity standards neither serves the purpose of food safety nor enhances public confidence in the ability of government to protect it.

For too long authority over food safety has been divided capriciously between FSIS and FDA. Instead of resolving this problem, the proposal plays checkers with it, replacing one identity standard with another. Perhaps this is being done to maintain an equilibrium of inspection authority, but certainly not in the best interests of the public that prefers to look to one agency wholly responsible for meat and poultry safety. Similar amenability issues are apparent in other regulatory decisions within the agencies and between them, but unfortunately are not issues addressed by this docket.

At issue here is whether bagel dogs, natural casings, closed face sandwiches made with meat and poultry, cheese dips and other cheese products with less than 50% meat and/or poultry, or bread, rolls, and buns and salad dressings similarly produced, or dried poultry soup mixes, flavors bases or flavors, and pizzas with meat and poultry should be transferred from one agency to another. We categorically and emphatically say that *any* product containing *any* amount of meat and poultry should be the sole province of one agency, and that should be FSIS, whether it be a raw, cooked, or processed product.

This will avoid confusion over whom to petition for new products or changes in composition, and eliminate venue picking by creative marketers seeking to avoid the more rigorous inspection of FSIS than that of FDA. It is a well known that FDA has neither the resources nor manpower to inspect the myriad numbers of food plants on a regular basis, in fact it is alleged that FDA visits may be as infrequent as once in 5 years.

In this day of increased consumer concern about the safety of meat and poultry products, and the ever present danger of terrorist attack or natural disaster, it would behoove us to have all meat and poultry products under the more rigorous oversight of FSIS.

In the case of Pizzas With Meat or Poultry, we wonder if this is a concession to assuage FDA for its loss of Bagel Dog authority, or more an opportunity to further the interests of manufacturers and suppliers of pizzas to school lunch. The introduction of proprietary produced pizza into school lunch operations was a contentious issue a number of years back. It would be no less so today. With health professionals decrying the growing obesity of children, and USDA refocusing its healthy eating food pyramid hoping to improve the eating habits of all, any relaxation of FSIS oversight and possible further possible loosening of the identity standard under FDA, would be counter productive to the effort to teach and support better nutrition among school children.

With respect to the under 50% by weight rule for cheese products and bread products, or the flavor consideration of soup mixes and flavor bases, it seems inappropriate in any event to consider the transfer from FSIS's authority, and place more meat, and poultry products beneath FDA's surveillance under the guise that the meat and poultry in these instances as well as on pizza are only flavor enhancements. Are poultry and meat pot pies and the like the next to be affected? Has it been considered whether a combination of soy protein or other such additive might affect the weight of the meat or poultry and thus allow an addition beyond 50% meat or poultry in the total weight of the product?

In conclusion we reiterate our original proposition that *any* meat and poultry in *any* product should be under the authority of FSIS, and where there may be a legislative reason that such is not allowed, that every effort should be made to ask the Congress to correct it. We note the rising concern by the public and the Congress relative to FDA's ability to manage its already numerous tasks and responsibilities. It would seem folly to continue to intrust the meat and poultry oversight in any form to their overburdened and perhaps inadequate inspection system. To do otherwise may jeopardize consumer confidence, and bring into question the ability of government to adequately protect food safety, and the public health. The American public deserves better.

Respectfully submitted,



Deven L. Scott
Executive Vice President

cc: Board of Directors