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Vice President – Fresh Meat Quality Control & Food Safety
800 Stevens Point Dr., Suite 720; Dakota Dunes, SD 57049-8720
Tel: 605-235-2158 Fax: 605-235-3642
Email: dean.danilson@ibpinc.com

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FSIS Docket Clerk
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
Room 102, Cotton Annex
300 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250-3700

98-027R-3
98-027R
Dean Danilson

RE: Docket No. 96-027R – Reopening of Comment Period for the Proposed Rule Published April 13, 1998; Meat Produced by Advanced Meat/Bone Separation Machinery and Recovery Systems

These comments are submitted on behalf of IBP, inc., a slaughterer and processor of beef and pork products with operations throughout the United States and Canada, and with sales of beef and pork products throughout the world. IBP, inc. appreciates the opportunity to comment again on this proposed rule.

First, IBP refers to our previous comments filed on June 12, 1998 on this same proposed rule. Our comments made then are still appropriate and accurate to the issue at hand and IBP requests that those comments be referred to as an amendment to this comment.

The essential issues are:

- This debate is not a food safety issue. This has been established by FSIS in previous statements and public issuance, and is further supported in a paper presented by Dr. Lester Crawford, Georgetown University Center for Food and Nutrition Policy, which is also submitted as a comment to this proposed rule.
- This rule will result in a major and significant economic impact to the industry and consumer. Comments made in 1998 by IBP, AMI, and others, attested to this fact. The size and significance of the economic impact have been further substantiated in a detailed analysis conducted by Sparks Companies, Inc. in 1999, and which is also submitted as a comment to this proposed rule.
- This rule, if adopted, will have a significant, negative impact on the ergonomics of the workplace and the safety and well-being of the meat processing plant worker. The AMR rule of 1994 allowed the industry to apply new technology that automated previous jobs that were identified as significant ergonomic stress related jobs. The proposals advanced in this rule will effectively result in the loss of this technology and equipment from use in the beef industry, and which for competitive economic reasons, may cause the re-introduction of these manual tasks back into some meat processing operations.

- **Of critical concern is the flawed science that was used to develop the underlying details for iron limits that were presented in the proposed rule. The field survey data collected and analyzed by FSIS in 1996 is seriously flawed. There were problems with sample collection and identification, laboratory analysis methodology for iron, interpretation of results, and the drawing of erroneous conclusions. This resulted in an arbitrary and unsupported assignment of iron limits in the proposed rule. These actions represent a setback to the use of scientific methods for managing and advancing food safety issues as well as the regulation of food production systems in the U.S.A. These points are supported by work conducted by USDA ARS in a study completed in 1999, and of which the agency is aware.**

IBP urges the agency to fully consider comments made by the AMI, as well as comments made by the industry based AMR coalition. Points made in these comments regarding the need to re-evaluate the basic definition of meat are valid and merited, and IBP urges the agency to further consider reevaluation of this antiquated definition and requirement.

Thank you.

Respectfully



Dean Danilson