



Consumer Federation of America

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CFA Statement on Nomination of Dr. Elisabeth Hagen as Under Secretary for Food Safety

Dr. Elisabeth Hagen brings impressive education credentials to the position of under secretary for food safety. Her rise through the ranks at USDA has been meteoric. She joined the department four years ago as deputy assistant administrator for public health, was appointed FSIS chief medical officer four months ago, and now has been named to the highest ranking food safety position in the U.S. government.

Consumer advocates who work closely with the FSIS on policy issues have had limited direct experience with Dr. Hagen. We have been told, however, that she has been a strong advocate for improved food safety policies and has urged the agency to be more aggressive in asking companies to initiate recalls. She has been quoted as urging the agency to consider steaks and chops with detectable surface levels of *E. coli* O157:H7 adulterated. Currently *E. coli* O157:H7 is an adulterant only in ground beef. That policy is not sufficiently protective. In 2009 there were 13 recalls of ground beef products contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7 involving almost 700,000 pounds of ground beef products that caused 40 illnesses and 3 deaths. There has been no consistent decline in recalls, illnesses or deaths in six years. From the beginning of the Obama Administration we have urged that the food safety initiative include modernizing this program. We look forward to working with Dr. Hagen in achieving that goal and others that will reduce the toll of foodborne illness.

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The Consumer Federation of America is a non-profit association of 280 consumer groups, representing more than 50 million Americans, that seeks to advance the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy.