



Consumer Federation of America

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CFA's Carol Tucker Foreman to Testify Before House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee *Calls for Commission of Stakeholders to Create Modern Food Safety System*

Carol Tucker Foreman, Distinguished Fellow at Consumer Federation of America's Food Policy Institute will testify today before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies. Foreman will address the Government Accountability Office's recent report identifying food safety as a high risk area and urging broad transformation of federal food safety oversight.

"Progress on reducing foodborne illness has stagnated," said Foreman. "Despite government pronouncements of large declines in the incidence of foodborne illness, little progress has actually been made since 2001."

Foreman cited several reasons for this lack of progress including:

- insufficient commitment from the federal government;
- archaic food safety laws, which require contrasting approaches to protect the public health;
- deficient resources, particularly for FDA;
- a lack of clear authority to set and enforce performance standards;
- a lack of sufficiently targeted research; and
- a lack of on-farm authority.

As a solution to these problems, Foreman encouraged passage of the Safe Food Act, which would revise existing food safety statutes to allocate resources according to risk, provide authority to test for dangerous pathogens, authorize mandatory recalls, and penalize companies that knowingly sell dangerous food. The legislation would also create a single agency and assign responsibility to a single administrator responsible for all of the nation's food safety programs and for their budgets.

In order to jump start the necessary change, Foreman proposed a commission involving all stakeholders which would develop specific recommendations for creating a food safety system. The system should have protecting human health as its primary objective

and assign resources according to the public health risks associated with different products and processes. The recommendations would need to include specific changes to existing law.

“If Congress does not act now, the high-risk concerns identified in the GAO report will continue to grow; food-borne illness will continue to cause illness and death and public confidence in government will continue to decline,” Foreman said. “CFA is eager to work with Congress to make an effective, efficient food safety program real.”

Carol Tucker Foreman’s written testimony will be available on the CFA website this afternoon at: www.consumerfed.org. If you would like an advance copy, please contact Chris Waldrop at 202-797-8551 or via email at cwaldrop@consumerfed.org.

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Carol Tucker Foreman is Distinguished Fellow at Consumer Federation of America’s Food Policy Institute. She was Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Food and Consumer Services, 1977-81. Her duties included responsibility for USDA’s food assistance and food safety programs.

Consumer Federation of America is a non-profit association of over 300 organizations, with a combined membership of over 50 million Americans. CFA’s Food Policy Institute was created in 1999 and engages in research, education and advocacy on food and agricultural policy, agricultural biotechnology, food safety and nutrition.