



Consumer Federation of America

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Consumer Federation of America, Other Consumer Groups, Join Labor, Farm Groups and State Departments of Agriculture to Assure All Meat and Poultry Shipped Across State Lines Will Remain Subject to Federal Meat and Poultry Inspection Laws, Regulations and Policies

2007 Senate Farm Bill Proposal Re-enforces Food Safety Comes First

Consumer Federation of America, today joined other consumer organizations, and labor and farm groups to support a new inspection program that assures meat and poultry products sold in interstate commerce will remain subject to the requirements of the federal meat and poultry inspection laws.

Carol Tucker-Foreman, CFA's distinguished fellow in food policy and a former assistant secretary of agriculture stated, "We are delighted that we've been able to work out a compromise with the National Farmers Union and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture that assures the primacy of federal food safety law and protects consumers and workers.

"This law re-enforces the principle that the first priority of meat and poultry inspection is protecting us and our families from adulterated food products. New marketing opportunities must remain a secondary consideration."

Amendments to the federal meat and poultry inspections laws would permit certain small plants, that were previously state inspected and can meet all federal inspection requirements, to ship their products in interstate commerce. The groups that developed the provision have pledged to support it through Senate passage and the House-Senate conference and to oppose the provision if substantive changes are made.

"We're very grateful to Senator Tom Harkin for making this bill part of the Chairman's mark in the Farm Bill and to Senators Barbara Boxer, Richard Durbin, and Charles Schumer and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro who have made clear that the federal standards must be preserved," Tucker- Foreman said.

"Last month, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson, responding to criticism of the House-passed Farm Bill which ended the 40 year requirement that products shipped in interstate commerce must be federally inspected, encouraged the diverse groups to

work together to assure food safety protection and has pledged to support the new programs during the House-Senate Farm Bill conference.

“These new provisions may also raise food safety standards in state inspection programs, They provide an incentive for states to increase food safety testing by having USDA reimburse states for 100% of the cost of testing that exceeds the testing frequency of the federal government.”

The new federal program allows companies with up to 25 employees that were previously state inspected to qualify to sell their products across state lines. Each state will have a USDA employed “state coordinator” who will provide constant federal oversight of the operations in these plants, report to the Secretary of Agriculture if any plant in the program fails to meet federal standards and stop production and remove from the program any plant that fails to meet the standard.

The USDA office of Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office will provide regular ongoing reports to the Secretary and to the Congress on how the program is working.

The compromise coalition includes: Consumer Federation of America, National Farmers Union, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, Food and Water Watch, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, American Federation of Government Employees, Center for Science in the Public Interest, National Consumers League, Government Accountability Project, Center for Foodborne Illness Research & Prevention.

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Consumer Federation of America is a non-profit association of over 300 consumer groups, representing more than 50 million Americans. It was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy. The Food Policy Institute at CFA works to promote a safer, healthier and more affordable food supply. Carol Tucker- Foreman is distinguished fellow of food policy. She was assistant secretary for food and consumer services at USDA from 1977-81. She was responsible for meat, poultry and egg inspection as well as USDA’s food assistance programs.