



Consumer Federation of America

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Consumer Federation of America Applauds USDA Decision to Label Mechanically Tenderized Meat

Consumer Federation of America today applauded USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service for its proposal to label mechanically tenderized meat.

"This is good news for consumers," said Chris Waldrop, Director of the Food Policy Institute at Consumer Federation of America. "Without labeling, consumers would never know that the steak they are purchasing has been mechanically tenderized and may present a greater risk for foodborne illness."

Mechanical tenderization is a process by which small needles or blades are repeatedly inserted into the product. These needles or blades pierce the surface of the product increasing the risk that any pathogens, such as *E. coli* or *Salmonella*, located on the surface of the product will be transferred to the interior. The process is often used on less expensive cuts of meat to increase tenderness.

In order to kill pathogens which may be located on the interior of these products, consumers must cook these products differently than they would intact steaks and roasts. Without labeling to identify these products as mechanically tenderized, and information on how to properly cook these products, consumers may be unknowingly at risk for foodborne illness. Labeling of mechanically tenderized products would allow consumers to identify these products in the supermarket and handle them appropriately.

In December 2009, 21 people in 16 states were sickened with *E. coli* from mechanically tenderized steaks. Mechanically tenderized steaks and roasts were also implicated in the largest beef recall in Canadian history by XL foods, in which 18 people were sickened in that country.

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Consumer Federation of America is an association of nearly 300 non-profit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy.