



Consumer Federation of America

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Statement of CFA's Chris Waldrop on USDA Announcement to Identify Retail Stores where Recalled Meat has been Sold

Today the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that they will provide consumers with information identifying the names and locations of retail stores where recalled meat products have been sold. This is a welcome improvement to the recall process and we are pleased to see USDA finally implementing this long-overdue measure.

Consumer groups have argued for years that providing this type of information to consumers will help them more accurately determine if products they have already purchased are part of a recall. CFA commends Under Secretary Richard Raymond for his dedication in assuring the implementation of this valuable consumer protection measure.

However, CFA is disappointed by the decision to limit the provision of this information only in the case of a Class I recall. In his comments announcing the rule, Secretary Schafer referred to the problems identified at Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Company which led to the largest recall in U.S. history - 143 million pounds of beef products. This was a Class II recall and would not have been subject to the new rule proposed today, despite significant consumer concern surrounding this recall. It is odd that Secretary Schafer would refer specifically to this landmark recall and then announce a rule that would not provide consumers information about where product was sold in a recall of this type.

Other government agencies have recognized the importance of providing information to consumers about all recalls. The state of California passed a law in 2007 requiring companies involved in either a Class I or a Class II recall to provide a list of other companies who may have received meat products subject to the recall. During the Hallmark recall, California made public the list of all grocery chains, supermarkets and restaurants that received the recalled meat. In March 2008, USDA's own Food and Nutrition Service posted a list of all the school districts that had purchased meat from Hallmark through the National School Lunch Program.

The past years have seen an increasing number of recalls for meat and poultry products. Consumers are sensitive to these recalls and are seeking out information to protect themselves and their families. The best way to help protect consumers is to provide them with sufficient information so they can quickly and accurately identify recalled products in their possession. Until now, the key piece of information that was missing was *where*

recalled products had been sold. Without that information, consumers risked consuming the contaminated product, greatly increasing their risk of illness or even death.

USDA's announcement today is a welcome change that will help protect consumers.

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Consumer Federation of America is a non-profit association of 300 consumer groups, representing more than 50 million Americans. It was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy. Chris Waldrop is the Director of the Food Policy Institute at CFA, which works to promote a safer, healthier and more affordable food supply.