



October 2, 2007

Carol Tucker Foreman
Consumer Federation of America
1620 I Street, NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Ms. Foreman:

I am writing to express my extreme disappointment regarding your ad campaign containing false information about state meat inspection programs and the companies they inspect. Some of what you say is simply false and your attempts to raise doubts about food safety are a slap in the face to state inspected meat processors and a disservice to American consumers. Please immediately pull this false advertising.

Your recent advertisement contains several direct and implied falsehoods regarding state meat inspection programs.

First, the headline “Hamburger With E. Coli or Without?” and the statement “USDA just announced that a meat processing plant is recalling its hamburger products because they may be contaminated with E.coli” insinuate that food borne illness is a problem with state inspected meat plants and products. This is simply not true:

The recall referenced in your advertising references products that were inspected and passed by federal inspectors at a federally inspected plant – not at a state inspected plant.

All state and federal meat plants have been *required* for years to test for *E. Coli*, *Salmonella*, and other microbial pathogens. There is absolutely no provision in the Farm Bill legislation to change this and no one has even suggested it.

Secondly, your advertisement also implies that state inspected facilities have “weaker inspections.”

State inspected plants are required to operate “equal to” federally inspected plants and this has been verified by USDA. Pound for pound, state products receive more “hands on” inspection than federal products.

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State and local agriculture and health officials conduct 80% of all food safety inspections, including meat and poultry. We take our consumer protection responsibilities very seriously. My office alone inspects pesticides, dairy, meat and poultry products.

Consumers can be confident that meat and poultry products processed in the United States under federal or state inspection are safe, wholesome, unadulterated and properly labeled.

I think it would be more productive for your organization to cooperatively work with those of us who are trying to level the economic playing field for state inspected plants who are unreasonably prevented from selling their safe and wholesome products across state lines.
Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "J".

Roger Johnson
President
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

CC: John Gage
American Federation of Government Employees