

## FACTS ABOUT STATE MEAT & POULTRY INSPECTION PROGRAMS

### Why Consumer Groups Should Support Interstate Meat Sales Legislation

The Consumer Federation and United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) are urging Congress to oppose legislation which would allow state-inspected meat and poultry to be sold in the national marketplace. **Their statements are simply wrong and their opposition is based on false premises.**

*The safety of our food supply is not the issue—consumers in the United States enjoy the safest meat and poultry supply in the world.* The real issue is the need to pass legislation that gives American processors and small businesses the same marketing opportunities that are now given to companies in 34 foreign countries, such as Croatia and Nicaragua. Current law discriminates against U.S. products and favors foreign imports. Hard working American processors and family-run small businesses are simply asking for a fair and reasonable chance to market their products here at home.

State-inspected products—which compose 10 percent of the red meat consumed in the United States—are the only commodities that are restricted from sale across state lines. Imported meat products—which compose 20 percent of the red meat consumed in our country—can be shipped and sold anywhere.

Ironically, the Consumer Federation testified in support of interstate meat sales legislation during a Senate Agriculture Committee hearing in April 2000. *Why have they reversed their position now—especially when state inspection programs are being held to higher standards than ever before?*

Today, there are no real distinctions between state and federal inspection requirements. In fact, many states impose inspection requirements that are more stringent than USDA, and there has never been a documented food-borne illness from state-inspected meat and poultry products. Our locally-produced, state-inspected meats are some of the best specialty products in the country. **Here are the facts:**

- Each state inspection program is required to comply with and implement *all* federal food safety and consumer protection laws, regulations and requirements—more than 80 in total.
- To ensure compliance, each state inspection program is annually audited by USDA. The audit document is *more than 125 pages of instructions, regulations, and procedures that state plants must comply with.* USDA's audit document for evaluating foreign inspection systems is a one-page checklist. Importing countries do not have the frequency or scrutiny that state inspection programs undergo.
- USDA's January 2007 "*Review of State Programs,*" which was a special review required by the 2002 Farm Bill, once again certified that state inspection programs are "at least equal to" federal inspection requirements.
- USDA is required by law to monitor state programs and assume direct responsibility at state plants if a state fails to do so. USDA has *never* found that a state inspection program should be discontinued.
- USDA's assessment and audit data continues to show that state inspection programs are highly effective and provide consumers with a wholesome, unadulterated food product that is properly labeled and safe.

State and federal meat inspection programs should function together as a seamless system in both intrastate *and* interstate commerce. The Consumer Federation and UFCW should support interstate legislation because it will create a more uniform inspection system—and this is good for American consumers, producers and businesses.