

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary Washington, D.C. 20250

JUL 26 2013

Dr. Michael F. Jacobson Executive Director Center for Science in the Public Interest 1220 L Street, NW., Suite 300 Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Dr. Jacobson:

Thank you for your letter of May 16, 2013, cosigned by other organizations, regarding the Center for Science in the Public Interest's (CSPI) petition to the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). The petition requested rulemaking that would declare specific strains of antibiotic-resistant *Salmonella* to be adulterants. I apologize for the delayed response.

I share your commitment to food safety, and thank you for your input on this issue. FSIS received CSPI's petition requesting that the Agency amend its regulations to declare certain strains of *Salmonella* as adulterants according to 21U.S.C., §601(m)(1) and (2)(A) and 21 U.S.C. §453(g)(1) and (g)(2), and is currently considering the merits of the petition. As part of this process, FSIS is also evaluating comments submitted by the public.

As you are likely aware, the definition of "adulterant" is a legal one, and FSIS must operate within the bounds of both case law and the statutes when fulfilling its food safety mission.

While review of the petition is continuing, FSIS has implemented measures that are aimed at reducing Salmonella illness rates, including tightened Salmonella performance standards for poultry slaughter establishments, as well as new procedures for inspection program personnel at beef and poultry slaughter establishments to verify that establishments maintain adequate sanitary dressing procedures. Also, FSIS has proposed a rule to modernize the inspection of poultry slaughter that will prevent at least 4,500 Salmonella illnesses per year. We look forward to your support of these efforts.

Thank you again for your letter. I appreciate receiving your feedback, and look forward to working with you and your partner organizations in the future on issues of mutual interest.

Please share this response with the organizations that cosigned the letter.

Sincerely,

Thomas L Vilsack

Secretary