



Consumer Federation of America

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CFA Applauds Final Rule on Interstate Shipment of Meat and Poultry Products

Consumer Federation of America today applauded the Food Safety and Inspection Service for issuing a final rule on the Interstate Shipment of Meat and Poultry Products. The final rule creates a new voluntary cooperative inspection program that permits certain small plants, that were previously state inspected and can meet all federal inspection requirements, to ship their products in interstate commerce. The final rule reinforces the principle that meat and poultry products sold in interstate commerce should remain subject to the requirements of the federal meat and poultry inspection laws.

Carol Tucker-Foreman, CFA's distinguished fellow in food policy and a former assistant secretary of agriculture stated, "The first priority of meat and poultry inspection is protecting us and our families from adulterated food products. FSIS' final rule assures that products shipped in interstate commerce meet federal standards for safety."

CFA worked with other organizations to help craft a compromise on interstate shipment of meat and poultry products which was included in the 2008 Farm Bill. The groups who were part of the compromise included National Farmers Union, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, CFA, Food and Water Watch, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, American Federation of Government Employees, Center for Science in the Public Interest, National Consumers League, Government Accountability Project, and the Center for Foodborne Illness Research and Prevention.

The new federal program allows companies with up to 25 employees that were previously state inspected to qualify to sell their products across state lines. Each state will have a USDA employed state coordinator who will provide constant federal oversight of the operations in these plants, report to the Secretary of Agriculture if any plant in the program fails to meet federal standards and remove from the program any plant that fails to meet the standard.

CFA supports FSIS' decision to include both part-time and temporary as well as fulltime employees who handle meat and poultry products in the 25-employee limit. Most very small plants have few full-time employees. Many do not operate every day. Including part-time and temporary as well as fulltime employees in the employee limit is an effective means to assure the program serves the entities it was intended to serve. Not including part-time and temporary employees in the average number of employees would permit substantially larger entities to participate in a program that was designed to serve very small local plants.

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Consumer Federation of America is an association of nearly 300 nonprofit consumer organization that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy. The Food Policy Institute at CFA works to promote a safer, healthier and more affordable food supply.