

## Dingell, Stupak Applaud FDA's Approval of Irradiation on Lettuce Spinach

Washington, D.C. &ndash; Reps. John D. Dingell (D-MI), the Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and Bart Stupak (D-MI), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, today commented on FDA's decision to approve of the use of irradiation on fresh lettuce and fresh spinach. Food irradiation is a technology that destroys micro-organisms, such as E. coli and salmonella, that cause foodborne illness.

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After Eight Years, FDA Finally Acts on Petition to Help  
Prevent Foodborne Illness

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Irradiation has been approved for many uses in approximately 36 countries. In the United States, FDA has allowed irradiation in certain cases, including pathogen reduction in meat and poultry and for insect control of fruits and vegetables. However, until yesterday, FDA had not approved irradiation for pathogen reduction in fresh produce. A petition seeking the approval of irradiation for pathogen reduction in fresh fruits and vegetables and other ready to eat foods has been sitting at FDA since 1999.

Dingell applauded FDA's move stating, "After letting a petition that would allow irradiation on fresh fruits and vegetables to languish for more than eight years, I am happy to hear

that FDA has finally acted and approved irradiation for use on fresh lettuce and fresh spinach. However, I wonder how many illnesses could have been prevented and how many lives could have been saved if FDA had acted earlier. I urge the produce industry to adopt the use of irradiation as a measure to ensure the safety of its products. I also urge FDA to take quick action and approve irradiation for use on other fresh produce and ready-to-eat foods."

"After holding FDA's feet to the fire with nine hearings on the safety and security of our nation's food supply since January 2007, it is encouraging to see the FDA has given the food industry one more tool for improving food safety by approving irradiation for use on certain produce," Stupak said. "The estimated 20 food contamination outbreaks involving fresh leafy greens in the past decade are a clear signal action from the FDA was long overdue. I was pleased to see FDA include labeling requirements for irradiated lettuce and spinach, as has been done with meat. We will continue to closely monitor how FDA and the industry implement the use of this technology, which — implemented correctly — will be another tool to protect particularly the young and elderly who have been most prone to sickness from food contamination."

For information on the Committee's ongoing food safety investigation, visit the "Food Safety Investigation Web page".

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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