

Dingell, Stupak Open Investigation into Safety of Meat Treated with Carbon Monoxide; Demand Answers

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NEWS RELEASE
Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Demand Answers from Safeway, Meat Packers

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In letters sent yesterday to Safeway Stores, Inc., Tyson Foods, Inc., Pactiv Corporation and Precept Foods LLC (Hormel Foods Corporation/Cargill Incorporated), Dingell and Stupak questioned the companies' practice of packing fresh meat in carbon monoxide, which artificially colors the product and disguises spoilage. Safeway Stores, Inc. is the largest, and one of the few, grocery chains that sells meat packed in carbon monoxide.

"American consumers deserve to know that when they purchase food that looks fresh and safe, it actually is," said Dingell. "We want to hear from Safeway and its meat suppliers about the precautions, warnings and other protections they have put in place to prevent consumers from unknowingly purchasing spoiled or contaminated foods."

Carbon monoxide treated products find their way onto grocery store shelves through an FDA approval process called Generally Recognized As Safe (GRAS). GRAS products are approved without pre-market review because, by FDA standards, they have proven to be sufficiently safe.

More than a year ago, Energy and Commerce Committee Democrats raised concerns about the dangers carbon monoxide packaging poses to the public health, particularly the elderly. In letters dated February 9, 2006, and March 30, 2006, they requested that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) remove products treated with carbon monoxide from markets until the safety of these products could be assessed. These requests were ignored.

Noting that the Committee would be opening an investigation into the FDA's GRAS approval process, Stupak said, "We refuse to let the FDA continue stonewalling consumers and Congress about this dangerous deception. We are particularly concerned about the FDA's decision in light of our discovery of carbon monoxide treated fish from China and other Asian countries that are regularly rejected for spoilage. The American people deserve to know whether FDA was aware of the apparent masking of spoiled fish with carbon monoxide when it determined that its use was 'Generally Recognized As Safe.'"

[See letter to Hormel Foods Corporation and Cargill Incorporated »](#)

[See letter to Pactiv Corporation »](#)

[See letter to Safeway, Inc. »](#)

[See letter to Tyson Foods, Inc. »](#)

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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