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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515-6115

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November 8, 2001

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DAVID V. MARVENTANO, STAFF DIRECTOR

COSPONSOR H.R. 3075,
THE "IMPORTED FOOD SAFETY ACT OF 2001"

Dear Colleague:

Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspects 100% of the meat that is imported into the United States. On the other hand, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) inspects imported fruits and vegetables, which experts say are among the most vulnerable to tampering and intentional contamination, only .7% of the time. FDA has only 150 inspectors to cover 307 ports of entry where imported food enters the United States.

Many of us have thought for a long time that FDA's inspection program is not adequate to ensure the safety of imported food. In light of the events of September 11th, concerns with food safety have only increased. For example, in this post-September 11th environment, does it make any sense for the U.S. to continue importing food from countries that support terrorism, such as raisins from Afghanistan? These foods receive little attention from FDA and continue to make their way to America's dinner table.

If you believe, at a minimum, that imported fruits and vegetables and other food regulated by FDA should not be allowed to enter the U.S. without an inspector being present, we invite you to cosponsor H.R. 3075, the Imported Food Safety Act of 2001. This bill gives the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services the authority and resources he needs to make sure there are FDA inspectors present when food comes into the U.S., and that the inspector has the tools he or she needs to detect intentional or other adulteration that could pose a serious public health risk.

Funds are provided for more inspectors and the development of rapid test technology that can identify microbial or chemical contaminants. The Secretary is given authority to limit the number of ports through which food may enter the U.S. in order to ensure an inspector is present at all times. The bill also gives the Secretary recall authority over imported food and requires that imported food be labeled with its country of origin.

If you have questions or if you would like to cosponsor the bill, please contact us, or have your staff contact Bruce Gwinn or John Ford, Committee on Energy and Commerce Democratic staff, at extension 5-3641.

Sincerely,



JOHN D. DINGELL
RANKING MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE



SHERROD BROWN
RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH