

Eggmen challenge FTC witnesses

DECATUR, Ga. - Hearings by the Federal Trade Commission on their proposed regulations governing food advertising began Monday, July 12, in San Francisco, Calif., but not without specific challenges from the egg industry.

The egg challenge came Thursday, July 1, in a pre-hearing conference in Washington. Prior to the conference, designated group representatives were allowed to review prepared statements submitted by witnesses scheduled for the first hearings. Among the witnesses are Drs. William E. and Sonja S. Connor, both of whom plan to expound upon the anti-egg side of the cholesterol issue.

Don Colleton, attorney for NCEN, and Irving Isaacson, attorney for U.E.P., challenged FTC's plan to permit the doctors' testimony "because they dive right into the very heart of the scientific issues relating to the cholesterol-

diet-heart controversy." In its announcement of the hearings on March 2, FTC disclaimed any attempt to settle the scientific issues relating to cholesterol-diet-heart controversy.

The egg representatives called on Presiding Officer William Dixon to delete Section 437.9 from the current hearings and re-publish the hearing notice if the Commission does, indeed, want to hear testimony relating to the scientific issues. Attorneys for FTC responded that any question on cholesterol could not be decided without reviewing the scientific issues and that the hearing notice was not intended to indicate that testimony on the issues would not be welcomed.

Dixon asked the group representative to submit a written statement on this challenge and he would take it under advisement. He noted that even if he decided to re-publish the hearing notice, he saw no reason to

delay receipt of testimony already scheduled. He said that other scientific testimony could be presented at later hearings.

The Presiding Officer denied a request to identify witnesses who had been invited by the FTC to present testimony supporting the proposed rules. The Officer said such identification would serve no worthwhile purpose and, in reality, all witnesses had been invited by FTC via the notice in the Federal Register.

According to James F. Fleming, U.E.P. vice president for Governmental Relations, under the proposed rules, the FTC would establish guidelines for all food advertisements which make nutritional claims. Such statements as "Eggs Are Good For You,"

"Milk is a Bodybuilder," "Chicken is High Protein," etc., would be forbidden unless the statements were accompanied by a full-disclosure of the products' contents. Firms would be allowed to advertise "no cholesterol" or "low cholesterol" products, with full disclosure labels, the egg industry could not respond with anti-cholesterol advertisements, he said.

According to previous statements filed on the issue by U.E.P. Attorney Irving Isaacson, even a letter to the editor of a newspaper, magazine, or other publication (except scientific or professional journals) which acclaim the virtues of eggs could be classified an advertisement under the FTC proposed definition.

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Drought erodes European harvest hopes

NEW YORK, N.Y. - The worst drought on record will mean poor harvests for the European Community this year. Petrus J. Lardinois, EC Commissioner for agriculture, held a news conference in Brussels recently and reported on the following crops:

Grain. The 1976 harvest could fall five per cent short of 1975's mediocre harvest of 97 million tons.

Sugar. Instead of the 11 million tons harvest predicted a few months ago, production will reach 9.5 million tons at the most. If the drought continues, the harvest could fall below 9 million tons. However, because of stocks and deliveries of about 1.2 million tons from African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries which are parties to the Community's Lome Convention, there should not be any shortages.

Potatoes. Unless rain comes soon, shortages like last winter's will occur.

Fruits and vegetables. Production could drop slightly, while demand has been and will continue to be much stronger.

Beef. This market has the most problems. More animals than usual have had to be slaughtered because of

fodder shortages, and at the same time, people are eating less beef. Price support measures taken by the Commission have offset to some degree the effects of steeply falling prices.

Milk. Despite recent decreases, overall production this year will be about the same as last year. There will be another surplus.

Summing up, Lardinois said the drought should not seriously affect consumer prices for basic foods, such as bread, milk, sugar, and meat. On the other hand, for the prices of potatoes, fruit and vegetables, and a few minor products, some surprises could be in store.

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