

Deboned meat

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one required by law that states in letters that are at least one half the size of the product name, just what percentage of powdered bone is in that product. As such, Krut related, the product is not very popular with consumers.

The problem has its foundations in 1976, when Carol Tucker Foreman, then executive director of the Consumer Federation of America, led her group in a suit to block the use of MDM.

It was banned in September of that year.

The USDA convened a panel of government scientists which examined all the health and safety aspects of the DMD in the diet. They could find no reason to ban the product.

The issue went back to the USDA for a re-evaluation. By then, Ms. Foreman had been appointed Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. When the matter came up for re-evaluation, she approved regulations requiring that it be called "tissue from ground bone".

By June, 1978, public hearings had been held at which MDM's health and safety had been confirmed by other scientists. The USDA then issued standards for the use of the product, and the name was changed from "tissue from ground bone" to "Mechanically Processed (species such as beef or pork) Contains Up to ___ Percent Powdered Bone".

The new description, Krut noted, was better, but still unappetizing. Nobody in the meat industry "in their right mind", he added, would buy mechanically deboning meat equipment as it stands now, for there is no market for the product.

This means, he explained, that in a 1000 pound steer, there would be about 400 and some pounds of table cuts. Plus about seven to 13 pounds per beef carcass that could be saved through mechanical deboning.

"The market value of the steer would reflect this potential," he added. "That meat wouldn't have the same price value as steak, but it would add value to the carcass."

It would also serve to reduce the spread in price between the farmer and the consumer, he reasoned. More beef would be sold, he thought, and lower beef prices would be possible.

The AAMP has two aims in the MDM issue right now.

According to Krut, the organization believes that the label on MDM should be dropped. The ingredients list on the meat product could carry the percentage calcium content.

Also, due to the fact that Carol Tucker Foreman was involved in the MDM issue before she became assistant secretary of agriculture, the AAMP believes that she should step down from the decisionmaking process on the issue of mechanically deboned meat.

Right now, there is a citizens' petition to alter labeling requirements for mechanically processed meat products in the USDA.

Krut suggests that anyone concerned should write to their Congressman, asking them to forward the letter to the USDA. Or one can write to the Honorable Carol Tucker Foreman, Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Service, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 201-A Administration Building, Washington, D.C. 20250.

"The consumer was never really asked about this matter," Krut commented. "He was just told that he didn't like it."

USDA seeking comments on mechanically deboned poultry

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Department of Agriculture has released a new study, "Health and Safety Aspects of the Use of Mechanically Deboned Poultry," which details the latest scientific information and reevaluates this mechanically-processed product.

The department is encouraging consumers, the industry, the scientific community and other interested groups to comment on the report and its recommendations, as well as on appropriate labeling of products composed partially or entirely of mechanically deboned poultry.

MDP results from the mechanical separation of poultry meat from bone. It was first approved by the department in 1968, following a study by the National Academy of Science which found it safe for us. MDP is presently used in such items as poultry rolls, turkey frankfurters and chicken bologna.

Current poultry inspection regulations restrict mechanically deboned poultry to a one per cent limit on bone content but do not require specific labeling identification as is now required for mechanically

processed red meat products. MDP is listed in a product's ingredient statement by the type of poultry, such as chicken or turkey.

Mechanically processed red meat products were approved for use in July 1978 after they were evaluated by an interagency panel of scientists. The panel's report formed the basis not only for acceptance of the products, but also for limitations on their use and labeling requirements.

The same panel, along with other experts, was used to reevaluate MDP. They studied 18 substances in MDP, most of which they found presented no problem. However, they recommended these changes:

Limit the use of MDP made from mature fowl to 20 percent of the meat or poultry portion of a produce and prohibit its use in strained, junior and toddler foods. This recommendation stemmed from concern about fluoride content in mature fowl such as spent laying hens. No fluoride problem was found in MDP made from young chicken or turkey and no limit on its use is recommended.

Eliminate use of kidneys from mature chicken in

MDP. This would avert a problem of cadmium in MDP which could be a health risk for infants and children.

Require that labeling show the presence of MDP so that its cholesterol and calcium content, which are higher than for hand-deboned poultry, could be recognized by those on medically restricted diets.

Restrict total fat content of MDP within the limits of good manufacturing practices.

Consider minimum protein level or maximum moisture-protein ratios (a means of measuring protein content) for MDP. The studies showed that total protein was lower and moisture-protein ratios were higher in MDP than in hand-deboned poultry.

Regulations to assure that all poultry products are wholesome, unadulterated and truthfully labeled are issued by the department's Food Safety and Quality Service as required under terms of the Poultry Products Inspection Act.

An announcement on the availability of the study and the department's request for comments appeared in the June 29 Federal Register.

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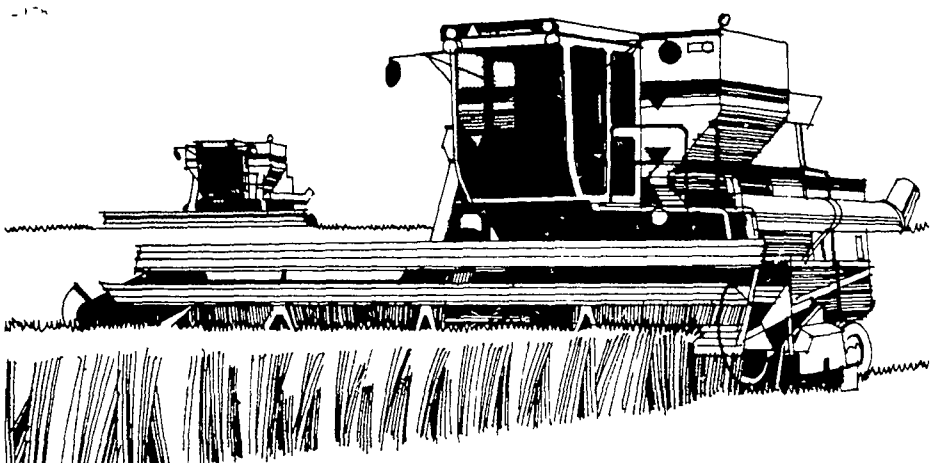
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