

AAMB speaks out on food labeling

ELIZABETHTOWN — The American Association of Meat Processors' Stephen Krut recently voiced their feelings to the Food and Drug Administration on the food labeling proposal outlined in the December 21 Federal Register.

"As an organization representing nearly 1,400 predominantly small, family-owned meat plant operations, we are vitally concerned that a well-thought-out, understandable and affordable (to the consumer and the manufacturer) system be developed," said Krut. "The AAMP believes that the implementation of a half-baked nutritional labeling scheme at this stage would seriously jeopardize its long range reception by both the consuming public and the industry."

AAMP strongly supports the concept of nutritional labeling and believes in the right of the consumer to know the composition of the food he or she is purchasing, he added, AAMP also believes it impossible to determine the parameters for a nutritional labeling system until it can be demonstrated that consumers have a consensus on what they want, what the cost will be to obtain it, and whether they are willing to pay for it.

Several years ago, AAMP commented that the USDA, FDA, and FTC should "get their act together" in the area of nutritional labeling, meaning that three different agencies should not be out promoting three different labeling schemes, but rather should work to develop a consensus. That consensus labeling format should be administered by one agency, not two or three, said AAMP.

Krut pointed out that AAMP believes it is premature to go any further at this time than to strive for a degree of uniformity for a voluntary nutritional labeling system. In this effort, by exposure to differing nutritional labeling formats through the open marketplace, shoppers will determine through their purchases which labeling format they find most ac-

ceptable and most understandable.

To do anything beyond maintaining a voluntary system and developing guidelines aimed at some degree of uniformity would be to impose on the consumer a nutritional labeling system that he or she may neither want, understand or be able to afford, he said.

Krut said, "Agency and legislative advocates of a mandatory system do not even offer an explanation of what foods would be covered and under what circumstances."


"Some contend that processed foods would require mandatory nutritional labeling, but fail to define processing. To some a steak need not be nutritionally labeled, unless it is processed by freezing. In the meat industry,

processing can be anything from cutting to freezing to wrapping to fabricating product, all without changing its nutritional value.

"But mandatory labeling advocates do not address this issue in any meaningful way."

In summation, Krut said, AAMP must reject the mandatory nutritional labeling proposal as suggested and outlined in the Federal Register as being

too incomplete, too ill-defined, too needlessly expensive and not based on actual needs and wants that are balanced with a willingness to be financed through increases in the food shopping budget. A task force approach to attain superior nutritional labeling standards through a cooperative, voluntary approach is AAMP's recommendation and one that should merit fullest consideration.

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