January 15, 2003

Livestock and Seed Programs
Agriculture Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Stop 0249, Room 2092-S
Washington, DC 20250-0249

Dear Sir or Madam,

I strongly oppose the use of irradiation on meat served to childeren in the National School Lunch Program. When meat is subjected to the equivalent of more than 100 million chest x-rays, new chemicals are formed that have hver been tested.

In addition, irradiation damages vitamins and creates free radicals that can damage the body's cells over time.

Without long-term human studies showing the safety of irradiated food, I am not confiddent in this technology right now. Childeren shouldn't be exposed to it -- certainly not without parents' consent. That means, at the very least, parents must be informed in advance and the food must be labeled as having been irradiated.

Sincerely,

Mary Esper
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Worcester, MA 01603-1838