December 16, 2002

Livestock and Seed Programs
Agriculture Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
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To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is written to strongly support the introduction of irradiated foods, especially irradiated ground beef, as an additional option in the National School Lunch Program. Here are some facts to consider:

- No food preservation technology has been studied more extensively than irradiation. In fact, according to Dr. Michael Osterholm, Director, University of Minnesota Center for Infectious Disease Research & Policy, more research has been done on irradiation than any other food processing technology including canning and freezing combined!

- Food irradiation is endorsed by all leading health organizations including the World Health Organization, the American Medical Association, the American Dietetic Association, the American Council on Science & Health and dozens more.

- There is strong consumer acceptance of irradiated ground beef in the marketplace. Currently over 4000 supermarkets are offering irradiated ground beef. Irradiated ground beef is also available at several hundred restaurants and nationwide by mail order and home delivery.

We must stop the spread of disease in foods (such as fresh fruit, raw vegetables, poultry and ground beef) just like we stopped the spread of disease in milk with pasteurization. Irradiation will do for ground beef and other foods what pasteurization has done for the dairy industry.

I encourage the USDA to move forward with food irradiation as an additional food safety option in the school lunch program.

Sincerely,

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