December 19, 2002

Livestock and Seed Programs
Agriculture Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Stop 0249, Room 2092-S
Washington, DC 20250-0249
Fax: 202/720-3499

To whom it may concern:

I adamantly oppose feeding irradiated meat to children through the National School Lunch Program. When meats are blasted with the equivalent of over 100 million chest x-rays, new chemicals form, some of which have never been tested or described. Like cooking, irradiation damages vitamins, creates free radicals and destructive chemicals, destroying the nutrition of our children's' lunches.

Despite irradiation-advocates' claims, irradiated foods have not been shown to be long-term safe. There has been no long-term human-testing, including with normal children. The FDA did NOT perform the battery of tests suggested by the National Academy of Sciences adopted by the FDA as the standard for testing new food additives. The studies the FDA used to claim safety and approve irradiation are deficient. Some of those studies suggested ill-health effects; others were conducted at lower than intended exposure-doses. It is impossible to claim safety of that technology.

Additionally, parents have the right to protect their children. The lack of labeling irradiated food in schools deprives parents the knowledge to choose and refuse it for the health of their children.

Irradiation does not guarantee food-safety. In fact, if irradiated food is contaminated during handling and preparation, bacterial byproducts are more destructive and harmful (because of the damage to nutrients and protein by irradiation). Your responsibility, morally and civically. is to assure health rather than promote disease. Stop the notion of feeding our children potentially dangerous and disease-causing irradiated food. Please advise me of your decision in writing. Thank you for your valuable time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Leslie Tjarks

Leslie Tjarks
3978 S. Tamarac Dr.
Denver, CO 80237-1416