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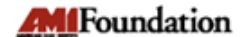
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Statement of the American Meat Institute on Efforts to Eradicate Foodborne Illness

February 11, 2003

Attribute Statement to AMI Foundation President James H. Hodges)



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We applaud the determination of Safe Tables Our Priority (STOP) to eradicate foodborne illness. AMI shares that determination, but we differ in our approach. To make real food safety enhancements and reduce foodborne illnesses, government and industry must partner to target risks using the best science and technology available. Although we share the desire to eradicate harmful bacteria from the food supply, "outlawing" pathogens will not make harmful bacteria disappear from raw meat, raw poultry or any raw agricultural products.

Instead, we need more and better science that will give us the tools we need to destroy harmful bacteria. The meat and poultry industry's top priority is to fund and develop technologies that will help us eliminate *E. coli* O157:H7 on fresh beef and *Listeria monocytogenes* on ready-to-eat meat and poultry products. Selling meat and poultry products that are as safe as they can be is good for our families, good for our customers and good for business.

The fact is, dramatic progress has been made in the last 10 years in enhancing federal regulations, educating consumers and implementing new technologies in meat and poultry plants. We are encouraged that USDA has documented declines in bacteria on fresh meat and poultry since HACCP went into effect in the late 1990s. We are further encouraged that the incidence of foodborne illnesses associated with our products have decreased sharply, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Both Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman and Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson credit industry-run HACCP programs for these declines. These encouraging and empirical data show us that our efforts are moving the safety trends in the right direction.

Like all consumer products, from cars, to car seats, to hair dryers, our products are safe when used properly. The meat and poultry industry, the larger food industry and consumers take their food safety responsibilities seriously. It is impressive to consider the trillions of meals consumed by the U.S. population every year and to realize that the vast, vast majority of those meals are consumed safely, without incident.

In contrast to some suggestions today, USDA exercises more authority in 2003 than in 1993 to inspect meat and poultry plants aggressively and take actions when food safety failures occur. The fact is, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service has many times



more resources than does its sister agency the Food and Drug Administration. The U.S. meat and poultry industry is among the most heavily inspected industries in the U.S. with continuous oversight by inspectors in our packing plants. We believe that adding more inspectors and more enforcement authority to USDA's very substantial regulatory authorities cannot be deemed "the solution" to a scientific challenge.

Rather, we need to develop new and better science that will truly help us eradicate bacteria from farm to table. In the meantime, the meat and poultry industry will work every day to attack food safety challenges with our best technological weapons. We owe it our own families and to our customers to do everything we can to assure that our products are as safe as they can be.

AMI represents the interests of packers and processors of beef, pork, lamb, veal and turkey products and their suppliers throughout North America. Together, AMI's members produce 95 percent of the beef, pork, lamb and veal products and 70 percent of the turkey products in the U.S. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Institute provides legislative, regulatory, public relations, technical, scientific and educational services to the industry. Its affiliate, the AMI Foundation, is a separate 501(c)3 organization that conducts research, education and information projects for the industry.

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