

Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, Inc

Congressional Action Alert

June 15, 2010

ACTION ALERT ON SENATE FOOD SAFETY BILL

Please Contact Senator Brown and Senator Kerry NOW

Food safety is heating up again and we need your help! Although the Senate's food safety bill was delayed, there is now a concerted effort to bring it to the floor for a vote.

Unfortunately, as it is currently written, S. 510 will actually result in small local producers being driven out of business because of the burdens of compliance. S. 510 will further the consolidation of our food supply in the hands of a few food producers who are large enough to comply with the intensive regulatory scheme, while harming small producers who give consumers the choice to buy fresh, healthy, local foods.

Please contact your Senators NOW to urge them to amend or oppose the bill! Contact information and talking points are below.

S. 510 is a "one-size-fits-all" approach that will unnecessarily burden both farmers and small-scale food processors, ultimately depriving consumers of the choice to buy from producers they know and trust. Everyone recognizes the importance of food safety, but the regulation and requirements must be scaled to fit the risk. Small farmers with a smaller customer base means less overall risk!

TAKE ACTION:

Call both of your Senators. You can send an electronic message by going to the website www.Senate.gov and find our Senators' information, and clicking on the electronic mail format. You can telephone Senator John Kerry at 202-224-2742, and Senator Scott Brown at 202-224-4543. Ask to speak with the staffer who handles food safety issues. Tell the staffer that you want the Senator to amend or oppose S. 510. If you get their voice mail instead of the staff, leave the following message:

"Hi, my name is _____ and I live in _____. I'm very concerned that S.510, the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act, imposes unfair and burdensome regulations on local food sources, which are very important to me. I urge the Senator to support the Tester-Hagan Amendments to exclude small facilities and direct marketing farms from the most burdensome provisions of the bill. Please call me back at _____."

TALKING POINTS

Over 150 organizations have signed a letter of support for the Tester-Hagan amendments to exempt small-scale and local producers from the more burdensome provisions of the bill.

You can borrow some talking points from the letter (posted at <http://farmandranchfreedom.org/sff/Amend-S510-June-7.pdf>) or use the ones below:

1. Small, local food producers have not contributed to the highly publicized food borne illness outbreaks. Yet S. 510 subjects the small, local food system to the same,

- broad federal regulatory oversight that would apply to the nation's large food giants..
2. Increased regulations and record-keeping obligations could destroy small businesses that bring food to local communities. In particular, the reliance on hazard analysis and risk-based preventative controls, a concept similar to "HACCP", will harm small food producers. HACCP has already proven to be an overwhelming burden for a significant number of small, regional meat processors across the country. Applying a HACCP-type system to small, local foods processors could drive them out of business, reducing consumers' options to buy fresh, local foods. We suggest providing education and training for smaller food businesses, and a compliance self-audit.
 3. FDA does not belong on the farm. S. 510 calls for FDA regulation of how farms grow and harvest produce. Given the agency's track record, it is likely that the regulations will discriminate against small, organic, and diversified farms. Although language calling for "flexibility" may be included, but there are no enforceable limits or protections for small diversified and organic farms from inappropriate and burdensome federal rules. Massachusetts has fought hard to diversify our family farms; now this is being viewed as a negative in food safety circles.
 4. Food safety and security both come from a diversified, vibrant local food system. Local foods give consumers the choice to buy from producers they know, creating a transparent, accountable food system without federal government oversight. State and local laws, which are often size-specific rather than one-size-fits-all, are more appropriate for local food producers.

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