



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 24, 2010

Salt-Water-Soaked Chicken Not at all Natural, Says CSPI

Statement of CSPI Executive Director Michael F. Jacobson

On behalf of the 850,000 members of the Center for Science in the Public Interest (including almost 100,000 in California), I am honored to be here today with Senator Barbara Boxer. I'm delighted that she is standing up for both consumers and honest poultry producers.

Chicken, salt, and water all are natural, but when you combine the three what you get is chicken that is anything but "all natural."

When Americans take their hard-earned dollars to the supermarket, they want to get the most value for their money. And when they see labels like "100 percent natural," they assume that the foods really are. Unfortunately, too many unscrupulous poultry producers, with the regrettable acquiescence of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, have drained the meaning from those words.

The practice of pumping up poultry with salt water is basically a hidden tax of up to 15 percent that extracts about \$2 billion from American consumers each year. This isn't about "enhancing" chicken, it's about enhancing profits.

Think of it this way. This looks like a 7-and-a-half-pound chicken. But the label admits that 15 percent of its weight is added water. You think you're buying 7.5 pounds of chicken, but you're really getting less than six and a half pounds of chicken and more than one pound of added water. This bag of chicken has two small drumsticks and a boneless thigh—that's a little more than a pound of chicken, and that represents what consumers are getting cheated out of. Instead consumers are getting this pint of water.

Harm to our pocketbook would be bad enough, but adulterated chicken is also harmful to our health.

Sodium chloride, or salt, is probably the single most harmful ingredient in the food supply. It's a major promoter of high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, and other ailments. Most adults should not consume more than about 1,500 milligrams of sodium per day, yet the average adult is consuming closer to 4,000 milligrams a day. Researchers have estimated that reducing sodium to recommended levels would save on the order of 100,000 deaths a year.

One of the practices that has made our food supply so dangerously high in sodium is the adulteration of chicken with a salty broth. Just three days ago the Institute of Medicine called for sharply lower sodium levels in our food supply. Salted chicken would be one good place to start.