Bipartisan Congressional Effort to Launch to Restore Confidence in “Natural” Labeling

Health and Consumer Fraud Issues to be Raised

Washington, DC – Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA) and Rep. Charles “Chip” Pickering (R-MS) will hold a press conference to launch a bipartisan congressional effort to urge the USDA’s Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) to change its policies related to the use of the term “natural” on fresh poultry labels.

When: Tuesday, May 22, 2007 – 10:00 AM (EST)
Where: The U.S. Capitol, Room HC-7

Currently, approximately thirty percent of all fresh chicken sold to consumers in the U.S. has been pumped-up (either through injection or vacuum tumbling) with a significant percentage of water, sodium, binding agents like carrageenan (a seaweed extract), and other additives. Yet under current FSIS policy, this pumped-up chicken is being labeled as 100% Natural.

Estimates suggest that consumers are paying over $2 billion per year for chicken and are instead receiving saltwater. Leading national consumer groups have decried the effect of this misleading “natural” labeling on the household budgets of Americans consumers.

Furthermore, pumped-up chicken contains approximately 800% more sodium per serving than natural fresh chicken raising serious health concerns. While leading health organizations like the American Medical Association and the American Dietetic Association have been urging Americans to reduce their dietary sodium intake, deceptive labeling is making this far more difficult. Cardiovascular disease remains the number one killer of Americans.

The bipartisan congressional effort will urge the USDA to change its policies to ensure consumers are able to make informed choices about their food. Specifically, these members of Congress will request that the “Natural” label claim be universally prohibited on “pumped-up” fresh chicken. Further, they will request that USDA require that so-called “solution statements” be more prominent on poultry labels and that the statement clearly indicate each of the solution’s ingredients.

Digital photographs and B-roll will be available at the press event.

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