

ACTION ALERT
January 15, 2001

USDA Proposes New Nutrition Labelling of Ground or Chopped Meat and Poultry Products

USDA Secretary Dan Glickman announced January 12, 2001 a **proposed** rule on Nutrition Labeling of Ground or Chopped Meat and Poultry Products and Single-Ingredient Products, designed, according to Glickman to provide consumers with easy to obtain and accurate nutrition information on fat, calorie, and cholesterol content.

The requirements in the proposal would create labels similar to the labels that currently appear on multi-ingredient products such as sausage, luncheon meat, ground pork with seasonings, and bacon.

The proposed rule affects major cuts of single ingredient meats including steaks, pork tenderloin, chicken and turkey. The nutrition information for chicken breasts, whole turkeys and steaks will be required on the label by the manufacturer, or posted by the retailer at the point of purchase. Nutrition information for ground or chopped products, including ground beef, pork and turkey would be required on the package labels.

The proposal is a response to the stipulation that if less than 60% of producers and retailers are voluntarily providing nutrition information FSIS is to create rules to require nutrition labeling. It changes the voluntary labeling program for these meats to a mandatory labeling program. The rule will not be published until January 18, 2001, and it will have a 90 day comment period ending April 18, 2001. **The rule can not take effect until USDA considers public comments and decides to issue a final rule.**

N.G.A. will assess the proposed rule once it is published and will provide members an analysis. N.G.A. is concerned about the negative impact on consumer costs and the retail grocery industry. Depending on how the rule is written, it could have a major impact on retailers, especially those who grind their own meat. For example, what if the rule requires these retailers to determine the nutritional content of each separate batch of ground meats rather than allowing the use of uniform standards that are currently posted voluntarily? N.G.A. sees the rushed nature of publishing this rule, just 2 days before Clinton leaves office, as an additional example of the Clinton administration's effort to push all its regulation through at the last minute. N.G.A. hopes to see the Bush Administration and the new secretary seriously reconsider the proposed rule and review the merits of its stipulations. Member comments and input can be forwarded directly to N.G.A. Many questions still remain, including whether or not existing signs, which retailers have been posting on a voluntary basis, will be acceptable for continued use under this proposal.

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