

Kansas Cattlemen's Association

For Immediate Release

Contact: Brandy Carter

bcarter_kca@yahoo.com, 785-238-1483

Cattlemen Respond to Food Safety Legislation

Kansas cattlemen support safety measures that provide enhancement and promotion of food safety in the United States. Kansas Cattlemen's Association encourages increased controls and inspections of food sources and livestock at US borders and supports measures that prevent diseases and pathogens from entering the US rather than the current system of reacting to outbreaks. KCA supports testing of all imported agricultural products to insure food safety, not just broadened testing of products after an outbreak, such as the US did in September 2008 of milk-derived products from China.

However, there are new concerns that proposed legislation aimed to promote food safety would only hinder US production. HR 875, The Food Safety Modernization Act of 2009, will establish the Food Safety Administration within the Department of Health and Human Services.

This legislation would provide the Food and Drug Administration with the authority to visit and inspect US farms and ranches. The FDA would be responsible for setting practice standards for production agriculture and be responsible for monitoring and conducting surveillance of animals and the environment.

If enacted, this legislation would require the establishment of a national traceability system that enables the FDA to retrieve the history, use, and location of an article of food through all stages of its production and require producers to keep and maintain records for traceability. Producers would be required to provide the Administrator with access to and the ability to copy all records (paper or electronic) not only to determine whether the food is contaminated, adulterated, or otherwise not in compliance with the food safety law, but also to track the food in commerce. This essentially creates a mandatory animal identification system.

Providing the Food and Drug Administration with jurisdiction over farms and ranches is unrealistic. Transferring oversight from the USDA only hinders US production. USDA offices located in rural communities provide tremendous resources for producers, and USDA has a better understanding of production agriculture and the general practices of farmers and ranchers.

To establish a mandatory animal ID system is unfeasible. A mandatory ID system would replace programs and rational methods used in agriculture. Mandatory ID would impose higher cost to producers, infringe on producers' personal property rights, and yet it is an unreliable system for tracking food safety.

Lastly, this legislation would place authority over production agriculture by a government entity that has little understanding of agriculture. It would provide government surveillance over every farmer and rancher, and it will increase consolidation of the US food supply to larger corporate companies and force smaller US producers out of business.

There are many opportunities to provide additional food safety measures in the United States, and Kansas Cattlemen's Association will be proactive to create and provide input on the most effective strategies that will increase and promote domestic production and invigorate consumer confidence.