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December 2, 2021

Mr. Paul Kiecker, Administrator
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-3700

Submitted Electronically

Re: Docket No. FSIS-2020-0036—Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Comments on Labeling of Meat or Poultry Products Comprised of or Containing Cultured Animal Cells

Dear Mr. Kiecker,

North Dakota Farmers Union (NDFU) appreciates the opportunity to comment on Docket No. FSIS-2020-0036—Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Comments on Labeling of Meat or Poultry Products Comprised of or Containing Cultured Animal Cells. NDFU, the largest general farm organization in North Dakota, represents more than 50,000 farm, ranch, and member families. NDFU supports accurate and truthful labeling for meat and poultry products. Our member-driven Policy and Action “opposes labeling products created using animal cell culture technology as ‘meat,’ and related products as ‘beef,’ ‘poultry,’ or ‘seafood.’”

Products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells are designed to closely imitate slaughtered meat and poultry. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) must establish product name and labeling requirements which differentiate products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells from traditional slaughtered meat and poultry products to promote transparency, eliminate the likelihood of consumer confusion, and allow for fair competition.

Consumers understand products labeled as “meat” and “poultry” to be derived from an animal that was born, raised, and harvested in the traditional manner. Allowing products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells to use “meat” and “poultry” would mislead consumers and likely cause consumer confusion regarding where the product came from and how the product was produced. To prevent consumer confusion, products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells should have a product name that clearly differentiates it from slaughtered meat or poultry products. Specifically, product names for products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells should be required to identify the origin of the product in the product name by using such terms as “cell cultured”, “cultured animal cell”, “cell cultivated”, “cultured cell”, or other similar terms. In addition, “cell cultured”, “cultured animal cell”, “cell cultivated”, “cultured cell”, “made from cultured animal cells,” “contains cultured animal cells,” or other similar terms should be required on product labels for products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells or products produced using a combination of cultured animal cells and slaughtered meat or poultry.

Family farmers and ranchers have a reputation for producing the highest quality meat and poultry products. If products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells are allowed to use “meat” and “poultry” in their product name or on their product label, it would allow the companies producing these products to unjustly capitalize on family farmers and ranchers hard-earned reputation for quality. Allowing products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells to be labeled “meat” or “poultry” would place family farmers and ranchers at a disadvantage because it will be difficult for them to differentiate their products from cultured animal cell products. Family farmers and ranchers want fair competition between their slaughtered meat and poultry products and products comprised of or containing cultured animal

cells. Fair competition requires truthful and accurate product names and labels for products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells, which will allow consumers to make informed choices about their purchases. Requiring accurate and transparent labeling for products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells would also safeguard consumers from being deceived by inaccurately named and labeled products.

Accordingly, FSIS should establish regulatory standards of identity for products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells that are separate and distinct from existing standards of identify for meat and poultry products. Standards of identity for products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells should also be prohibited from using common usage names for meat and poultry products as well as terms specifying the form for meat and poultry products.

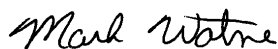
Further, FSIS should add to the Food Standards and Labeling Policy Book the following definitions and labeling requirements for beef and meat, as requested by Petition 18-01 from the United States Cattlemen's Association:

- "Beef" is product from cattle that have been born, raised, and harvested in the traditional manner. Products derived from alternative sources such as synthetic product from plants, insects, or other non-animal components and any product comprised of or containing cultured animal cells are prohibited from being labeled as beef.
- "Meat" is product from the tissue or flesh of animals that have been harvested in the traditional manner. Products derived from alternative sources, such as synthetic product from plants, insects, or other non-animal components and any product comprised of or containing cultured animal cells are prohibited from being labeled as meat.

The origin and components of a product comprised of or containing cultured animal cells should be clearly identified in the product name and on the product label. Accurate and truthful labeling is a valuable marketing tool for family farmers and ranchers and a key tool employed by consumers when purchasing meat and poultry products. Accurate product names and labels will ensure family farmers and ranchers are able to distinguish their slaughtered meat and poultry products from those products comprised of or containing cultured animal cells.

Sincerely,

NORTH DAKOTA FARMERS UNION



Mark Watne
President

