



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

NOV 26 2001

John D. Graham
Administrator
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Graham:

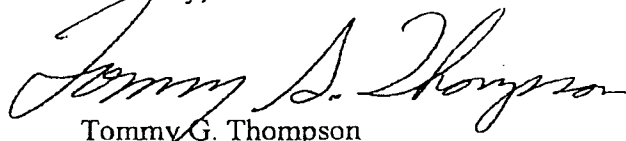
I am writing in response to your letter of September 18, 2001, which encouraged the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to proceed, as appropriate, toward issuing a final rule addressing the labeling of the *trans* fatty acid content of foods. I have placed a high priority on health promotion and disease prevention, and I agree that consumers need information to assist them in maintaining healthy dietary practices and reducing the risk of coronary heart disease.

I have asked FDA to proceed as quickly as possible to evaluate the more than 2,700 comments it has received that address the scientific, economic, policy and legal underpinnings of the proposed rule. I expect to be briefed by FDA in mid-December on the major concepts for the final rule once FDA has completed its review of the comments.

I also have conveyed to Dr. Bernard Schwetz, the FDA Acting Principal Deputy Commissioner, and to Mr. Joseph Levitt, the Director of FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, your interest in this rule, as well as your commitment to conduct a rigorous, careful and expeditious review of the draft final rule once DHHS submits it to the Office of Management and Budget.

Again, thank you for your interest in this rule that will promote the public health of American consumers.

Sincerely,


Tommy G. Thompson