

Tom Vilsack
United States Department of Agriculture

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

Re: Docket # APHIS-2009-0100

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

3,529
farm letters
w/this same
body.

I urge you to reject the proposed amendment to phytosanitary treatment regulations that would allow the construction of new irradiation facilities anywhere in 15 southern states (Docket # APHIS-2009-0100.) These facilities are intended for imported fruits and vegetables, to kill pests such as fruit flies that would otherwise prevent these products from entering the United States.

Right now, USDA's policy is to allow irradiation facilities for imported fruits and vegetables to be built in specific locations in Mississippi, North Carolina, and Georgia. I oppose this current approval for the construction of irradiation facilities, and absolutely oppose any attempt to expand the list of locations where irradiation facilities for imported food can be constructed.

In addition to my concerns about the safety of irradiated food, which can deplete vitamins and create new chemical byproducts in treated foods, I also believe it is inappropriate for USDA to facilitate more produce imports into the United States. The purpose of these facilities is to help exporting countries deal with pest infestations that currently serve as a barrier to sending their produce to the United States.

USDA should not put U.S. farmers at a disadvantage by encouraging more imports of fruits and vegetables from countries with pest problems, putting domestic producers at risk if the irradiation treatment is ineffective or pests escape. And USDA should not be encouraging more imports from countries with weak labor, environmental, and other standards that can undercut U.S. farmers.

Expanding the use of irradiation is an inappropriate way to deal with the risk of pests carried by imported food. USDA should not put consumers, U.S. farmers, and communities in these 15 states at risk by expanding the use of irradiation.

Sincerely,

Sarah Alexander
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