



407 SOUTH SECOND STREET
BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA 58504
Ph: (701) 223-2522
Fax: (701) 223-2587
e-mail: ndsa@ndstockmen.org
www.ndstockmen.org

Dec. 17, 2018

Docket Clerk
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Mailstop 3758, Room 6065
Washington, DC 20250-3700

RE: Docket No. FSIS-2018-0036; Joint Public Meeting on the Use of Cell-Culture Technology to Develop Products Derived from Livestock and Poultry; USDA/FDA Request for Comments

To Whom It May Concern:

The North Dakota Stockmen's Association is an 89-year-old beef cattle trade organization representing more than 3,000 North Dakota ranch families. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.

In 2017, Stockmen's Association members identified imitation and lab-grown proteins as a priority issue of concern and developed policy calling for 1) educational efforts to inform consumers about the differences between meat and alternative products and 2) truth-in-labeling rules that clarify those differences.

Beef competes for the center of the plate every day and must win over the hearts (and the stomachs) of consumers in restaurants and grocery stores. Unrivaled for taste, quality and nutrient-denseness, we are convinced that beef can hold its own – but it must have a level playing field. As such, we urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ensure a fair and competitive marketplace is preserved for all meat

products as both agencies work to develop a regulatory framework for cell-cultured food products derived from livestock and poultry.

The NDSA is aware of the recent joint statement that USDA and FDA intend to jointly oversee the production of cell-cultured food products derived from livestock and poultry. While a basic description of how the responsibilities will be shared was included in the announcement (*wherein FDA oversees cell collection, cell banks and cell growth and differentiation and USDA assumes oversight during the cell harvest stage and over the production and labeling of food products derived from the cells of livestock and poultry*), the technical details of the arrangement were not unveiled. We ask that you consider the following as the plan is formalized and before lab-grown products are allowed on the commercial marketplace:

We support USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS) having primary jurisdiction over cultured protein products. As these new products come to market, USDA-FSIS seems best placed to ensure cell-cultured protein is safe and accurately labeled.

Consumers deserve the highest food safety standards when it comes to the products they put on their tables. USDA-FSIS inspects processing facilities daily; by contrast, FDA only inspects facilities once every several years. Continuous, daily inspection by highly trained professionals is a hallmark of USDA-FSIS that keeps consumers safe. It will also ensure that all meat food products are treated equally. Under USDA-FSIS oversight, any product purporting to be a meat food product will be subject to the same inspection procedures as traditional products.

The NDSA believes USDA-FSIS must apply existing food safety expertise to the regulation of cell-cultured products derived from livestock and poultry, beginning with one of the fundamental components of inspection under the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) – that every animal is subject to ante-mortem inspection. While the proposed dual framework places cell collection at FDA and inspection at USDA, cells should not be taken from any animal whose health has not been verified by an FSIS inspector. As such, we encourage both agencies to consider the importance of USDA's role throughout all stages of the cell-culture production process, including pre-harvest. The USDA-FSIS mark of inspection is a powerful regulatory tool, and no

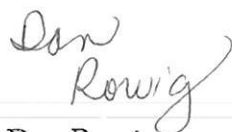
product should receive the benefits provided by this mark unless subject to the full extent of regulation under the FMIA.

In addition to food safety, USDA, under the law, is obligated to ensure all meat food product labels provide consumers with the appropriate information to make informed purchasing decisions. Lab-grown meat is not the same as traditionally raised meat and, thus, it should not be allowed to be marketed as meat. Consumers deserve to know if the product they are buying is beef produced the way nature intended or a product manufactured in a laboratory. We encourage USDA-FSIS to ensure cell-cultured protein manufacturers base their product labels on sound science, not deceptive marketing claims that mislead consumers and disparage conventionally raised meat. As the purveyors of cell-cultured products seek to differentiate themselves to consumers, we encourage USDA to consider developing a federal standard of identity for these products, as well as appropriate labeling descriptors that will promote honesty and fair dealing in the interest of consumers.

In conclusion, NDSA firmly believes the regulatory framework governing cell cultured products derived from livestock and poultry must be solidified before lab-grown products are allowed to enter the commercial marketplace. The safety of these products must be stringently vetted and verified, appropriate safety mechanisms and protocols established and implemented, and new standards of identity should be developed to ensure these products are not allowed to masquerade as something they are not. Anything less would be a disservice to consumers and livestock producers alike.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact our office at (701) 223-2522.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Rorvig". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Dan Rorvig
President