

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 15, 2010

Margaret A. Hamburg, M.D.
Commissioner of Food and Drugs
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Ave
Silver Spring, MD 20993-0002

Dear Commissioner Hamburg:

Thank you for the ongoing efforts of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to maintain the safety and security of our nation's food supply. We are writing to call attention to an important food safety issue relating to watermelon, a vital crop in our country and to American consumers.

As Members of Congress, we recognize the significance of sound and effective safeguards in our food supply to identify and prevent potential sources of food-borne illness. Likewise, preventative measures based on science-based food safety requirements, are key to effectively prevent and respond to food safety incidents in this nation.

The Watermelon industry is known to be one of the most proactive sectors in its approach toward food safety as evidenced by the creation of its own Guidance for the Fresh Watermelon Supply Chain, which received significant input and high accolades from FDA. The watermelon industry also participated in a successful U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) pilot program of food safety audits with USDA auditors in Mexico in 2009.

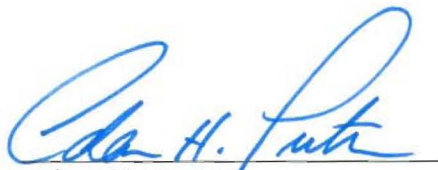
In addition, watermelon growers and handlers created an advanced traceability process that traces individual watermelon from farm to consumer, a system that many handlers in the industry are utilizing designed to ensure enhanced food safety. However, we understand that watermelon farmers and handlers are concerned regarding the commodity-specific and risk-basis of FDA's proposed food safety requirements (FDA-2010-N-0085-0020) and rules as they relate to this crop.

For these reasons, please give all due consideration to the comments and concerns of the U.S. Watermelon Association that were submitted into public comments earlier this year in light of sound scientific criteria, regarding this crop with an economic impact of over \$1 billion annually. We encourage the FDA to continue to work collaboratively with watermelon growers and handlers toward an effective and efficient system of food safety in order to continue to provide American consumers with a safe, secure and healthy product.

Multiple generations of Americans that have enjoyed this traditional summertime fruit, and the FDA's time, effort, and thorough consideration of this important food safety issue is greatly appreciated.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Adam H. Putnam
Member of Congress



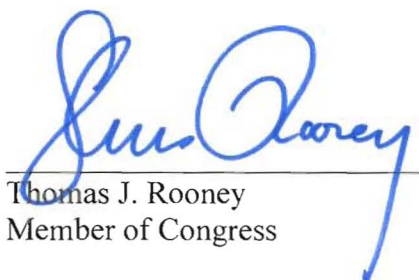
Brad Ellsworth
Member of Congress



Vern Buchanan
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