

Why Oppose Food Irradiation?

Irradiation destroys nutrients and creates new chemicals in food.

- Irradiation disrupts the chemical composition of everything in its path – not just harmful bacteria – and creates chemicals called “unique radiolytic products” some of which do not occur naturally in food.
- The FDA has done no long-term studies on the health effects of eating irradiated food.
- Research dating to the 1950s has revealed a wide range of problems in animals that ate irradiated food, including premature death, a rare form of cancer, stillbirths, genetic damage, organ malfunctions, low weight gain and vitamin deficiencies.
- It destroys essential vitamins and other nutrients in food.
- It can change the flavor, texture and odor of food.

Irradiation masks cruel and disgusting conditions in slaughterhouses.

- Though it destroys food-borne pathogens, it does nothing to remove the carriers of these pathogens - the fecal matter, urine, pus and vomit that contaminate meat in many meatpacking facilities.
- It does nothing to slow down line speeds in plants, which cause contamination of meat, numerous workplace accidents, and atrocities to both humans and animals.
- It perpetuates the filthy conditions in massive factory farms, where animals are crowded together, pumped with antibiotics and hormones, and covered in their own excrement.

Irradiation contributes to consolidation and globalization of the food industry and hurts family farms.

- Irradiation prolongs food shelf-life and destroys so-called “barriers to trade,” such as invasive insects. This will allow agribusiness corporations to move their operations outside the U.S., where costs are cheaper, but labor and environmental standards are often compromised.
- Small family farms and local economies will be put at a tremendous disadvantage because they will not be able to make their prices competitive.

Irradiation facilities create air pollution and other environmental threats.

- “E-beam” irradiation facilities create ground level ozone; a highly toxic pollutant that exacerbates asthma and other lung conditions, and is a precursor to smog.
- “E-beam” irradiation facilities also produce nitrous oxides, which also exacerbate respiratory problems and contribute to acid rain.
- Irradiation facilities that use nuclear material create a nuclear waste stream and put the public and workers in danger.
- Since the 1960s, dozens of accidents have been reported at irradiation facilities. For example, radioactive water has been flushed into the public sewer system, radiation has leaked from facilities, facilities have caught fire, groundwater has been contaminated, and workers have been injured or lost their lives. Most of these accidents were cleaned up with taxpayer money.