

June 17, 2003

President Robert H. Bruininks
University of Minnesota
202 Morrill Hall
100 Church Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Transmitted via facsimile: 612-625-3875

Dear President Bruininks:

We are writing to express our displeasure with the manner in which the website for the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) is being misused by the Center's director, Dr. Michael Osterholm, as it relates to information on the issue of food irradiation.

Specifically, we would like to call your attention to a story that was written by CIDRAP staff writer Michael Roos on May 30, 2003, entitled, "USDA to Offer Irradiated Beef to Schools Next January." We have enclosed a copy for your information. In that article, Dr. Osterholm is quoted as making the following statement: "Unfortunately the real error in moral judgment is the ongoing fear-mongering and misinformation campaign by Public Citizen regarding the well established safety of food irradiation."

We believe that this statement is inappropriate. Those of us who have signed this letter oppose the aggressive promotion of food irradiation at this time, including its use for school foods, because we do not believe research is conclusive on the technology's safety or its possible impact on the nutritive value of food. We believe that consumer organizations such as Public Citizen and the Center for Food Safety are providing invaluable information regarding the ongoing debate regarding the safety of this technology.

While Dr. Osterholm is convinced of the efficacy and the safety of the technology, and receives funding from the SureBeam Corporation and other irradiation companies for his Center, we are not. What Dr. Osterholm has done with his statement on the website is politicize the issue. That is unfortunate.

In any event, it is a shame that Dr. Osterholm turned down an invitation from the Cancer Prevention Coalition to participate in a symposium on food irradiation at the University of Illinois – Chicago on July 18, 2001, in which representatives from Public Citizen participated. He could have used that opportunity to lay out conclusive evidence that food irradiation has been demonstrated to be safe, and lay to rest the public health concerns shared by Public Citizen and others. We are going to offer Dr. Osterholm another opportunity to debate this issue with opponents of irradiation. We will be organizing another forum – this time in Minnesota – and will invite Dr. Osterholm to articulate his views on irradiation with those who have a differing viewpoint.

In the meantime, we urge you to request that Dr. Osterholm refrain from making future *ad hominem* attacks on Public Citizen and others who disagree with his position on the CIDRAP website. We can have an honest and civil debate on this issue. Dr. Osterholm's rhetoric leaves much to be desired, and as residents of Minnesota, we are disappointed. For further information on this, please contact Wenonah Hauter at Public Citizen, at (202) 454-5150, whauter@citizen.org

Sincerely,

Rodney Leonard
Community Nutrition Institute
Wahkon, MN

Tom Taylor
Organic Consumers Association
Minneapolis, MN

David Wallinga, M.D., MPA
University of Minnesota Medical School, class of '89
Co-Director Food and Health Program
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Minneapolis, MN

Wenonah Hauter
Public Citizen
Washington, DC

Enclosure

cc: University Board of Regents

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