



SEP 29 2001

Public Citizen
Health Research Group
Attn: Mr. Tony Corbo,
Organizer/Lobbyist
215 Pennsylvania Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Mr. Corbo:

I am writing in response to your August 22, 2001, letter regarding statements reported to have been made by the SureBeam Corporation. In the August 8, 2001, Reuters' article you enclosed, author Alicia Ault writes that Wil Williams, a SureBeam Corporation spokesman

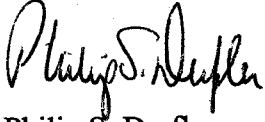
said that the machines the company uses to irradiate food are capable of pasteurizing products, and that is a claim the Agriculture Department allow the firm to make. It's up to SureBeam's clients to decide if they want that level of sterilization ...

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has no information as to whether the SureBeam Corporation irradiation equipment is capable of pasteurizing meat and poultry products.

Furthermore, FSIS has not approved any labeling submitted by SureBeam Corporation or any other firm that includes claims or statements indicating that meat and poultry products treated by ionizing radiation using the Surebeam equipment are pasteurized. FSIS would consider allowing a labeling statement or claim that a meat or poultry product has been "pasteurized" if (1) the term was presented on labeling in a non-misleading and truthful manner, and (2) the lethality treatments applied by the processor achieved the destruction of all vegetative microorganisms in the product. In the recent final rule allowing the irradiation of meat, FSIS did acknowledge that product pasteurization using the permitted dosages is theoretically possible (64 FR 72158-59). However, neither SureBeam nor any other firm has yet presented FSIS with data proving that their irradiated meat and poultry products are, in fact, "pasteurized." Additionally, neither Surebeam nor any other firm has yet presented FSIS with labeling bearing the term "pasteurized" that was not viewed as misleading.

In regard to the claims Surebeam has made in its advertising, we are aware that the Federal Trade Commission is examining the issue and FSIS will cooperate with them in their review, if needed.

Sincerely,



Philip S. Derfler
Deputy Administrator
Office of Policy, Program Development
and Evaluation