



March 6, 2008

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
United States House of Representatives
2262 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative DeLauro:

The American Commodity Distribution Association (ACDA) is extremely grateful to know that you are so very committed to the mission of providing high quality commodity foods for household nutrition assistance programs and for meals served to the 27-million school children who eat one or more meals each and everyday in school cafeterias across America.

The disturbing images that were caught on tape at Hallmark/Westland Meat Company in California are an obvious reminder that much more needs to be done to safeguard our nation's food supply. Those images also do not reflect the food safety care taken by the vast majority of food processors with each and every product they produce.

As terrible and appalling as this incident was to all of us at ACDA, we also strive to recognize the impressive things that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has done, and continues to do everyday. We are concerned that some may wrongly and unfairly use the Hallmark/Westland incident to argue against USDA commodity foods for nutrition programs. This would be an unwise and unwarranted action.

The commodity foods procured by the USDA for our nation's schools and household programs are of a very high quality. The USDA also has numerous safeguards in place to ensure that the commodity foods are as safe as possible. At one time commodities were seen as being of a lesser quality and unhealthy. Thanks to the hard work and forward thinking of our allies at the USDA, all commodities now must meet a stringent list of nutritional standards. Acceptable levels of fat, calories, and cholesterol must be accomplished during commodity procurement. Students, parents, school administrators, as well as the general public, must recognize that the USDA commodity programs are administered with an on-going emphasis on quality, safety, nutrition, and acceptability.

In closing, I would again like to thank you for playing such an important role in this process. We respectfully ask that our letter be made part of the fiscal 2009 hearing record.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Phillip J. Gambutti". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a distinct 'G'.

Phillip Gambutti
President of ACDA