



September 22, 2014

The Honorable John A. Boehner
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Boehner:

The Conference for Food Protection (CFP) is writing to express its concerns about attempts in Congress to prohibit the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) from fulfilling its food safety enforcement mission by restricting its ability to address public health issues linked to the sale of raw milk. We urge you to oppose any efforts to weaken public health protections relating to the sale or distribution of this dangerous product for human consumption.

CFP is an organization of food safety professionals from the food industry, regulatory agencies at all levels of government, academia, and consumer organizations that meet to identify and address problems of food safety. We promote food safety and consumer protection by encouraging the adoption of sound, uniform policies by state regulatory agencies and industry through the model FDA Food Code.

Each year foodborne diseases sicken an estimated 48 million Americans, killing 3,000 of them. Many of these deaths are preventable. Relying on sound science and proven safety interventions—such as pasteurization—is one way to prevent illness. Prior to pasteurization, milk was a common source of the bacteria that cause tuberculosis, Q fever, diphtheria, severe streptococcal infections, typhoid fever, and other foodborne illnesses. The incidence of disease outbreaks associated with milk has fallen dramatically since pasteurization of milk became widespread. The number of milk-related outbreaks has dropped from nearly 25 percent of all disease outbreaks due to contaminated food and water in 1938 to less than 1 percent of reported outbreaks today. Importantly, of that 1 percent, an overwhelming majority—70 percent—of outbreaks are linked to raw milk.

This figure becomes more staggering when you consider that less than 1% of the population consumes raw milk. Strikingly, over 80 percent of the outbreaks had at least one victim under the age of 20, meaning that children—among the most vulnerable to foodborne illness and those who drink milk as a primary source of nutrition—are at greatest risk.

Because of raw milk's well-documented risks, FDA has prohibited its interstate sale for human consumption since 1987. However, a number of states still permit raw milk sales within their borders. In those states, the rate of outbreaks associated with raw milk are 2.2 times higher compared to states where raw milk is banned, according to data collected by the CDC.

Claims by raw milk advocates that raw milk carries significant medicinal benefits have no basis in science. In fact, raw milk is known to carry some of the most dangerous foodborne pathogens—Salmonella, E. coli, Campylobacter, and Listeria. Pasteurization, a simple process of heating the fluid to kill bacteria, destroys these dangerous microbes, rendering it safe, while maintaining the nutritional integrity of the milk. In contrast to raw milk advocates' claims, an extensive library of scientific articles attesting to the dangers of raw milk may be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/rawmilk/raw-milk-index.html>.

Despite the overwhelming evidence from the public health community and food safety organizations, legislation has been proposed in Congress that would authorize interstate sales of raw milk. The members of the CFP believe such legislation threatens to put consumers—especially children—at risk. There is no justification for changing federal policy prohibiting the interstate sale of raw milk with so much scientific evidence that it is unsafe for human consumption.

If you have any questions, please contact our Executive Director, Dr. David McSwane, at (317) 696-0573 or dmcswane.cfp@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. M. Luker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "Luker" clearly distinguishable.

John M. Luker, Chair
Conference for Food Protection