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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515-6115

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June 5, 2007

DENNIS B. FITZGIBBONS, CHIEF OF STAFF
GREGG A. ROTHSCHILD, CHIEF COUNSEL

The Honorable Andrew C. von Eschenbach, M.D.
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Dr. von Eschenbach:

Under Rules X and XI of the Rules of the United States House of Representatives, the Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations are investigating the adequacy of the efforts of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to protect the safety of the Nation's food supply.

The Committee is particularly concerned about the safety of food imports from China. In the last decade, the number of Chinese food imports has increased three fold. Along with this increase in imports, the amount of tainted food from China has also increased. Some recent examples of tainted food from China include mislabeled wheat flour contaminated with melamine, filthy juices and fruits, dried apples preserved with a carcinogen, and mushrooms laced with illegal pesticides. It is quite disturbing to consider that China lacks effective controls to ensure that their exported foods are safe.

The Committee is specifically concerned about the safety of fish and seafood from China. For example, it was recently discovered that catfish imported from China contained two antibiotics banned by FDA. Further, there have been numerous examples brought to the Committee's attention of imported fish and seafood containing contaminants such as salmonella, antibiotics, bacteria, and nitrofurans (a cancer-causing chemical).


In order to assist the Committee in its investigation of the safety of the Nation's food supply, we request that you provide us with the following information for each of the last six years (2001-2006) by no later than close of business on June 12, 2007:

1. The number of food imports from China. Please include both the number of entries and the number of lines;
2. The declared value of all food imports from China;
3. The number of imports from China that were detained pending laboratory examination;
4. The number of Chinese food samples analyzed by private laboratories;
5. The number of Chinese food samples analyzed by FDA laboratories;
6. The number of Chinese food samples determined to be violative;
7. The number of violative Chinese food shipments that were reexported;
8. The number of violative Chinese food shipments that were destroyed;
9. The percentage of Chinese food samples found to be violative in each district and each laboratory; and
10. The number of FDA personnel (by full-time equivalent) conducting Chinese food import work for each district, each laboratory, and at headquarters.

If the Food and Drug Administration is unable to assure the safety of Chinese food imports, then the Administration should consider a complete ban of all food imports from China until such time that FDA can assure the American consumer of the safety of these imports.

Your assistance with this request is appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact us or have your staff contact Kevin Barstow or David Nelson with the Committee on Energy and Commerce staff at (202) 226-2424.


Sincerely,




John D. Dingell
Chairman



Bart Stupak
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



Charlie Melancon
Vice Chair
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



Mike Ross
Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce