

# **A Consumer's Public Comment on the National Animal Identification System (NAIS)**

## **Prepared for a USDA Listening Session**

Thursday, May 14, 2009  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Good Morning, Secretary Vilsack and USDA/APHIS Hosts:

I'm Susan Blasko. I live and work in Falls Church, Virginia. I took a day off to come to Pennsylvania today to attend one of your listening sessions. I consider it a rare opportunity since there are so few of them.

I am a consumer, and I speak for myself. The fact that I am here at all should be an indication to you that the truth is dawning at last on the general population. It has been a gradual awakening, to be sure. For many years your department has been trying to force NAIS on us. What part of "NO" don't you understand? Yes, the eyes of the public are being pried open by the undeniable, inescapable truth:

- that the aim of the National Animal Identification Scam is to put small farmers out of business so that big-ag can be the sole provider of the world's food;
- that the food your department approves is making us sick and sterile (For the first time in our history, children are being born with cancer and diabetes. They probably won't outlive their parents. It is within your power to facilitate the reversal of this trend through regulations that sincerely address the problem. By pushing for NAIS, you contribute further to this condition. I find this unconscionable.);
- that concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), food processing plants, and milk pasteurization facilities are the origins of foodborne illness, not the crops of small farmers, grass-fed meats, and raw dairy;
- that the USDA has no legal authority to implement NAIS, and doing so violates the Constitution;
- that several "food safety" bills have NAIS written into them, often without the knowledge of even the legislators (very sneaky!);
- that the USDA is fully prepared to use force to implement NAIS, despite your claim that the program is voluntary (flap jackets have been issued);
- that genetically modified (GMO) foods are ubiquitous, in fully 80% of the foods in the grocery store that carry your stamp of approval, even though they facilitate the formation of tumors, heightened immune responses, and aggressive behavior in laboratory animals. Feed lot animals are fed GMO grains, candy, byproducts of citrus food processing with all the chemicals on the peel of the fruit, and who knows what else, which makes the animals – and us – sick.

I know these truths, and so do my friends, my co-workers, my cancer support group, my church, my family, and every stranger I get a chance to tell in the theatre restroom waiting line. I am the tip of an enormous iceberg that you are beginning to discover as more and more of us turn to locally produced foods, raw milk, and grass-fed meats, because they are safer than the food your department approves. We don't need a trace-back mechanism. We know where our food comes from.

You should be helping us to access this safe food supply instead of trying to eliminate it. Why won't you help us by outlawing CAFOs instead of protecting them? You're supposed to protect us. Implement regulations that will put big-ag out of business if their practices are making us sick. Don't target small farmers whose food is healing us. You asked for my suggestions for a solution to the growing food safety problem. I hope that you are honestly open to them. Here they are:

- Provide capital incentives to farmers to use the land – which is *theirs*, by the way! – to grow real crops without pesticides and chemical fertilizers instead of GMO's, raise animals on pasture instead of in crowded buildings, and produce clean, real milk that doesn't require the assault of pasteurization. Meat, milk and produce that result from such practices contain essential nutrients that we have a basic right to expect are present in our food.
- Test our foods for nutrient content before allowing them on the market, the same way the European Union does, and ban any foods from the grocery shelves that don't measure up.
- Require school cafeterias, hospitals, hotels, and every other institution or business that cooks for us to serve nutrient-dense foods.
- Stop rewarding big food companies that over-feed and under-nourish us with their GMOs, artificial flavors and colors, chemical preservatives, over-processing, and pasteurization of *everything* (I recently learned that almonds are now being pasteurized. What next? This is ludicrous!)

I am deeply troubled by what I've learned about NAIS. Not only is it expensive, intrusive, discriminatory, and deliberately hostile to small farmers; it is downright unconstitutional. Go back to the drawing board. Stand up to big-ag and industrial food processors. Just imagine what would happen if you do. You could solve the health care crisis, the environmental crisis, and the economic crisis in one fell swoop. For example:

- Heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, autism, allergies, behavioral and neurological disorders, cancer, and a host of other health problems would again become rare occurrences as we reclaim the health our society enjoyed before the birth of food processing, feed lots and GMOs.
- Ruminants of all sorts would graze on acres – no, *miles* – of pasture while they renew our soil so that it once again sequesters carbon as it did in our country's infancy. This is already happening at Polyface Farm, and Joel Salatin is teaching other farmers how to do it. I imagine you've heard about it. Why not focus more efforts on his proven methods? And what about the marvelous results that many of our Amish brothers and sisters have achieved without artificial means? Why not explore the wisdom of their traditions? CAFOs, GMOs and food processing are destroying this planet, and you are helping them. Don't let them get away with it.

Trying to convince the American people that CAFO meats, GMO crops, and pasteurized dairy are safe and nutritious when you know the opposite to be true is immoral, to say the least, Mr. Secretary. And foisting NAIS on us as consumers and on our farmers is corruption at its worst. *I am appalled. And you should be ashamed.*