

FOOD IRRADIATION: A THREAT TO HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE FARMING

Adapted from Materials by Public Citizen

Food is irradiated by exposure to high doses of ionizing radiation—the equivalent of millions of chest x-rays. Proponents of irradiation state that it kills bacteria and extends shelf life. In truth, irradiation only masks the filth in food caused by unregulated factory farming and unsanitary conditions in large corporate slaughterhouses.

IRRADIATION THREATENS PUBLIC HEALTH

- ▲ Irradiation destroys vitamins—up to 90 percent of vitamin A in chicken, 86 percent of vitamin B in oats and 70 percent of vitamin C in fruit juice. As the shelf life increases, more nutrients are lost.
- ▲ Irradiation produces new compounds in food that have been linked to cancer and genetic damage in rat and human cells.
- ▲ Fifty years of research has shown serious health problems in lab animals that ate irradiated foods, including premature death, mutations, nutritional deficiencies, prenatal death and other reproductive problems, fatal internal bleeding, suppressed immune systems, organ damage, tumors and stunted growth.
- ▲ Irradiation facilities that function with radioactive cesium-137 or cobalt-60 threaten workers and communities with radioactive leaks and accidents.
- ▲ Irradiation can kill bacteria, but it doesn't kill viruses or remove dirt, toxins, urine, feces and grime picked up in slaughterhouses or unhygienic processing facilities.

IRRADIATION THREATENS THE ENVIRONMENT

- ▲ Irradiation encourages monoculture and the growth of cash crops, threatening biodiversity. It sacrifices ecological sustainability by encouraging mass production that is dependent on increased chemical pesticide use.
- ▲ Radioactive waste to run irradiation facilities is transported long distances, increasing the risk of radioactive accidents that would damage the local ecosystem and threaten public health.
- ▲ Irradiation facilities have a record of leaks and accidents that threaten local ecosystems.

IRRADIATION CONTRIBUTES TO AN UNSUSTAINABLE WORLD

- ▲ Food irradiation is an expensive resolution for food safety problems, addressing symptoms instead of causes. Food that is produced in a sustainable manner does not need irradiation.
- ▲ Irradiation encourages massive, wasteful and costly transportation of food. Food that is grown and consumed locally does not need irradiation.
- ▲ The massive adoption of food irradiation erodes the people's right to choose where and how their food is produced. A food system that is democratic and empowers citizens to make wise choices does not need irradiation.
- ▲ Food irradiation paves the way for multinational corporations at the expense of small food producers who do not need irradiation. ❖