

SB2804

Measure Title:
RELATING TO PRE-PACKAGED MEAT.

Report Title:
Pre-packaged Meat; Adulterated; Definition

Description:
Amends the definition of "adulterated" to include pre-packaged meat that has been treated with gas or other technology to enhance color only.

Introducer(s):
TOKUDA

Current Referral:
AHW/HTH

LINDA LINGLE
Governor



State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512

SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DUANE K. OKAMOTO
Deputy to the Chairperson

TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON HEALTH
AND
AGRICULTURE AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2008
1:15 P.M.

SENATE BILL NO. 2804
RELATING TO PRE-PACKAGED MEAT

Chairpersons Ige and Tokuda and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill No. 2804 relating to pre-packaged meat with gas or other technology to enhance its color only. The Department of Agriculture is in support of the intent of this measure and offers comment.

While it may be generally accepted that treating meat with safe levels of carbon monoxide is not harmful, there are other concerns surrounding the treatment of meat in this manner. The red meat color resulting from the gas treatment may deceive the consumer into thinking that the meat is fresher than it is. It is possible for the meat to appear fresh but to have high bacterial levels indicative of spoilage even though the meat is within the labeled 'use, sell or freeze by' date listed on the package.

The Hawaii Teamsters and Allied Workers, Local 996

1817 Hart Street
Honolulu, Hi. 96819

Senator David Ige, Chair
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice-Chair
Committee on Health

Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair
Senator Kalani English, Vice-Chair
Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian affairs

Date: Monday, Feb. 25, 2008, 1:15pm, room 016

Re: Support SB2804, Relating to Pre-packaged Meat.

The Hawaii Teamsters Local 996 negotiates and enforces over 50 contracts serving 6000 members in various industries in Hawaii and Guam. We represent the meat cutters, Fish cutters and wrappers at Don Quiote (formerly Daiei, Hi.) and Times Market, which is still in a Labor dispute with Local 996.

SB2804, will amend the definition of Adulterated Meat, to include, when treated with gas or other technology for color enhancement only. The use of gas is not a process for sanitation yet the packaging company is allowed to extend the expiration date from fresh cut meat, (Meat cut at the store) which is 4 to 5 days, according to most professionals and store policies, except at Times Market. Expiration dates are extended for gas treated, Pre-packaged meat to over 10 days.

FDA, Code of Federal Regulations, Title 21, Volume 3, or 21CFR173.350, prohibits the use of carbon monoxide gas on Fresh Meat.

Since the mid- 1990's the USDA assumed the inspection functions in the State of Hawaii. The state inspected plants would normally qualify for federal inspections due to the "Equal to" requirements that States comply with federal regulations. State and local governments have an increasingly important role in helping improve public health through food safety and security.

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) provides guidance and assistance on the use of science driven, risk-based approaches to the control of food borne hazards.

State and local governments help oversee the administration of inspections to intrastate meat and poultry processing facilities, and the regulatory oversight of retail and inspection-exempt businesses handling those products.

The State has a Meat and Poultry Inspection program in place to enforce requirements “at least equal to” those of the FSIS’ Federal Inspection Program.

The position of Local 996 on Sec.408 [21 U.S.C. 678] is that it establishes the base standard and that no other jurisdiction will do anything to weaken the intent of the Federal Meat Inspection Act.

The Hawaii Teamsters Local 996, Supports SB2804.

Thank you for allowing me to testify.

Glenn Ida
Local 996 PAC Co-Chair
295-1280

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Senator David Ige, Chair
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice- Chair
Committee on Health

Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair
Senator Kalani English, Vice- Chair
Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs

Ralph Yanagi
47-480 Aiai Pl.
Kaneohe, Hi. 96744
808-285-2133

Date: Monday, Feb. 25, 2008, 1:15pm, room 016

Re: Support SB2804, Relating to Pre-Packaged Meat.

Since December, the procedure of pre-packing meats while not new to the industry in general, is something new to the state because of the amount of these products this company is now distributes to local stores. This method of preparing fresh cuts of meat involves the infusion of oxygen to a product to enhance it's color and longevity. In similar cases in the U.S., this procedure is used with other types of gasses, (such as carbon dioxide, nitrogen, and others) to DELAY discoloration.

While this practice of gassing meat products are "generally regarded as safe (GRAS) by the FDA, the fact remains that its use is intended to only prolong the expiration dates on these items and to brighten its appearance. The application of these gasses have no value where safety and/or sanitation is concerned and the fact, has been shown through studies that while the color of the product remains intact, the bacteria content proliferates.

As a professional meat cutter with 27 years of experience, this is a cause for concerns regarding basic industry standards.

The Standards set forth by the retail industry regarding "Fresh Meats" for example, Beef has a shelf life of three (3) days after the processing date, Pork has four (4) days and Chicken has five (5) days. This means that if pork chop is cut, packed, wrapped and displayed on the 7th of Feb. and labeled to expire on the 11th of Feb., it is mandatory to remove it from the display case by end of work on Feb. 11. With the introduction of gas technology the shelf life on selected pork items now has been increased to ten (10) days. That same pork chop is cut on the 7th

of Feb., it is now accessible to the public until the 17th. This is currently the example being used because there is now ongoing dialogue to further extend the expiration dates on pork products to fourteen (14) days.

The use of gas in pre-packaged meat is done only for cosmetic reasons, the risks involved to the general public in our State can be minimized if we agree to end the application of these gasses on pre-packaged meats. I believe, we need to take a proactive stance to protect consumers from exposure to tainted meat and end deceptive marketing at the store.

I support, SB2804.

Thank you for allowing me to testify.

Ralph Yanagi
Meat Cutter, 27 years
Times Market