



Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund®

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Obama White House Garden Good First Step in Supporting Sustainable Agriculture

Focus Needs to Include Support for Sustainable Beef, Poultry Production Says Farm-To-Consumer Legal Defense Fund

Falls Church, Virginia, (March 22, 2009)—The Acting President of the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund said that the new White House Garden will serve as a much-needed catalyst for a discussion of how to make it easier for consumers to reap dietary benefits of food that is produced sustainably and close to home.

“We applaud the Obamas for starting the garden and demonstrating how healthy food can and should be part of everyone’s diet,” said Pete Kennedy. “But more work is needed. For even as the First Family is highlighting the importance of fresh, sustainable food, Congress and the President’s own Agriculture Department are working to restrict access to locally-raised, sustainable meat and dairy products.”

Kennedy noted that there are five bills being considered in the U.S. Senate and House, which seriously threaten the ability of consumers to easily obtain nutrient-dense food from local, sustainable farmers.

“Under the guise of food safety, HR 875, HR 814, HR 759, S 425, and S 510 will place burdensome and unfair regulation on small farms, a key source of locally produced food for those people who don’t have the time or room to have a backyard garden. Small farms and the local food movement are not part of the food safety problem in this country; they are part of the solution and should be left alone.”

HR 814 is essentially a bill that supports the mandatory implementation of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) -- which is the USDA’s program to electronically track every livestock animal in the country—while the others focus on

produce, processed foods and game under the jurisdiction of the Food and Drug Administration.

“We understand the pressure that Congress faces to improve the safety of food produced by the mass-production industrialized system. But it is critical that the laws not interfere with the right to choose local foods or with our farmers' ability to raise safer, healthier foods,” Kennedy said. “Small sustainable farms are fundamentally different from factory farms, and should not be regulated the same way.”

Kennedy noted that all of the proposed food safety bills suffer from a "one-size-fits-all" approach. “And even though the bills' sponsors might intend for them to apply only to food crossing state lines, the federal agencies regularly take a broader view of their jurisdiction. The FDA's and USDA's past actions clearly show that Congress must place strict limitations on these agencies, or they will impose burdensome and unfair regulations and enforcement actions on small farms.”

Kennedy urged everyone who is concerned about their access to local, sustainable foods “to call on their U.S. Representatives and Senators to support a food safety bill that focuses on the real threats to food safety, such as uninspected imports from China and lax inspections of massive slaughterhouses and other factory processing, and ask that any new laws explicitly exempt small farmers.”

“This issue cannot be left to the agencies' discretion. Their focus must be on the broken factory farm system and not on small, sustainable farmers.”

About The Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund: The Fund defends the rights and broadens the freedoms of sustainable farmers, and protects consumer access to local, nutrient-dense foods. Concerned citizens can support the Fund by joining at www.farmentoconsumer.org or by contacting the Fund at 703-208-FARM (3276). The Fund's sister organization, the Farm-to-Consumer Foundation (www.farmentoconsumerfoundation.org), works to promote consumer access to local, nutrient-dense food and support farmers engaged in sustainable farm stewardship.

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