



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

**Comments on the Use of Cellular Agriculture to Manufacture Products Derived from
Livestock and Poultry Stem Cells**

Docket No. FSIS-2018-0036

November 30, 2018

I am respectfully submitting these comments on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and the farmers and consumers of the State of Mississippi we represent.

Meat inspection has a long history in the U.S. That history has resulted in the safest, most trustworthy food system in the world. For consumers to maintain this trust as new food technologies emerge, safeguards must be followed. Additionally, the consumer must be informed at the point of sale so that educated purchases can be made.

USDA spent years not only identifying potential critical control points with the production and processing of meats but also working with industry to ensure that consumers know that what they feed their families is safe. The same procedures must be in place for new cell-cultured food products, or else traditional meats could suffer repercussions. I applaud the cooperation between FDA and USDA to jointly oversee the production of cell-cultured food products derived from livestock and poultry.

As the Commissioner of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, I have a natural interest in the long-term viability of the meat industry in our state due to its importance to the agricultural community. However, these comments do not represent an attempt to prevent new and emerging technologies from entering the marketplace. Neither are they an attempt to request FDA or USDA to implement more red tape and government burdens over businesses. Rather, I am requesting FDA and USDA to fulfill their intended role, which is to protect consumers and enforce truth-in-labeling laws and standards of identity.

Because cell-cultured food products will be manufactured in a laboratory-type setting, many consumers will be concerned about food safety. Questions regarding potential hazards that could occur during the manufacturing process will certainly arise. Consumer protection and safety is a major priority of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce; thus, the agency must be able to ensure that food products are safe for our citizens to consume. I ask that the

FDA and USDA consider all potential hazards and food safety concerns before any cell-cultured food product is available for retail consumption.

Regarding truth-in-labeling and standards of identity, I ask that you consider the producers and the consumers in all decisions that are made. As we have seen with many foods in the past, label names allowed to be on new foods can be detrimental to the foods they attempt to imitate, emulate, follow or profit from. I ask that you protect the earned value that lies in the names of traditional meats, and prevent any pejorative terms or negative connotations from arising due to the label name of cell-cultured food products. For example, if cell-cultured food product companies refer to their products as “clean meats,” there is an underlying implication that traditionally produced meats are dirty. I ask that you assist these companies in avoiding mischaracterizations as the field of cell-cultured food products expands. I believe it is in the best interest of consumers, as well as industry, for FDA and USDA to use the regulatory oversight they have to prevent dubious, fraudulent, and untruthful labeling claims. Many foods in recent years have been affected by food fraud, and it is incumbent upon the agencies to prevent it from spreading further into the world of meats.

I appreciate the work that FDA and USDA have accomplished so far and encourage both agencies to continue engagement with stakeholders and states as issues pertaining to cell-cultured food products become more focused over the coming months and years.

On behalf of the State of Mississippi and our citizens, thank you for receiving and considering these comments.

Sincerely,



Andy Gipson
Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce