

## **SUBMISSION**

### **A1092: Irradiation of Specific Fruits & Vegetables**

I urge you to reject Application 1092 (A1092) for the irradiation of 12 fruits: Apple, apricot, cherry, honeydew melon, nectarine, peach, plum, rockmelon, strawberry, table grape, zucchini and scallopini (summer squash.)

I strongly oppose the irradiation of apples, apricots, cherries, honeydew melons, nectarines, peaches, plums, rockmelons, strawberries, table grapes, zucchinis and scallopinis (summer squashes). I oppose the irradiation of anything edible in fact, ever since my cat was neurologically damaged and ended up permanently paralysed in the rear legs through eating irradiated cat kibble.

The popular official argument is that “it only affects cats, not humans”. Well, something didn’t just happen to the cats, something happened to the food. Whether the effects in humans or any other animal is as overtly obvious as it was in the cats is irrelevant. Something happened during the irradiation process that changed perfectly normal cat kibble that has not, in its ex factory state, damaged other cats, only when it is irradiated as it was upon entry into Australia in 2008.

Over 100 cats were neurologically damaged, some so irreparably that they had to be euthanized. My own cat was paralysed from the neck down for some weeks, gradually recovered the use of her front legs, but was never again able to walk or toilet herself. I cared for her for five and a half years and she finally died in my arms immediately following a seizure on August 8<sup>th</sup> this year, just two months ago. So I have concerns about the wholesomeness of irradiated food – what happened to the food to do this to the cats? That should be the question you are interested in, not whether the effects are seen in humans. SOMETHING obviously happened to that food, therefore it cannot have been as wholesome as it was prior to irradiation. Irradiated cat food is now banned in Australia. The European Food Safety Authority acknowledges that the risk to humans cannot be ruled out.

Numerous alternatives to irradiation exist and I do not believe that the irradiation of these fruits for quarantine purposes will benefit people who eat it.

I am also worried that irradiated food will not be labelled. Currently imported food that is able to be irradiated is never labelled at point of sale and if you ask a fruiterer if it has been irradiated they mostly haven’t a clue what you are talking about.

Numerous studies have shown the potential health risks posed by irradiated food. The approval of these 12 regularly eaten fruits could significantly increase the amount of irradiated food in our diet.

In 2003, concerns over the safety of irradiated food led the European Union to rule out further irradiation approvals. The Australian Senate followed suit with a call for approvals to be halted until further research has been conducted. Claims that irradiated foods are safe are indefensible as no research on long-term consumption of an irradiated diet have been conducted.

Irradiation has been shown to deplete vitamin C, vitamin A, proteins, essential fatty acids and other nutrients in food and has been linked to health problems such as nutritional deficiencies, immune system disorders, abnormal lymph cells, and genetic damage.

While irradiation is promoted as beneficial to Australian farmers; each approval also enables irradiated imports from overseas. Irradiation is a tool of large agri-business – and supports mass

production systems that diminish the power of local food producers and destroy local markets.

Furthermore, irradiation will not eliminate the use of chemicals and pesticides in crop production; it will be used in conjunction with these and other food processes.

I also have concerns about the impartiality of the approval process as the Qld government is both the applicant for A1092 and a member of the decision-making Ministerial Forum. This is a conflict of interest and does not bode well for independent decision-making.

Finally, I am not confident that these fruits will be labelled. The government has initiated a “review” of mandatory labelling which will likely lead to the removal of labelling requirements. This will lead to these foods being deceptively marketed as “fresh” though they are processed and remove consumers’ right to choose. Irradiated food and their packages must be individually labelled as “treated with radiation” or “irradiated”. A1092 does not assure me that this will be the case.

For these reasons I call on you to reject A1092 and to rescind all previous irradiation approvals. I look forward to hearing your response to my concerns.

Thank you,

Name: Tania Cummings

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