

CONGRESSWOMAN
CHELLIE PINGREE

1ST DISTRICT
MAINE



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EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

November 18, 2011

Margaret A. Hamburg
Commissioner
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Ave
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear Commissioner Hamburg:

I was encouraged to see the November 1, 2011 statement from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on the personal consumption of raw milk. The statement asserts that the agency "has never taken, nor does it intend to take enforcement action against an individual who purchased and transported raw milk across state lines for his or her own personal consumption." While this is a step in the right direction, I continue to have concerns about some of the practices of the FDA.

Since being elected in Congress, I have heard from an increasing number of constituents and farmers from across the country that have raised concerns about FDA practices. For example, during tight budget times, it appears that the Agency has chosen to commit scarce resources to activities like farm raids and what many believe to be overly zealous enforcement of the ban on the interstate sale of raw milk. When consumers increasingly want to know where their food comes from and that it's safe, why does the FDA choose to put so much energy into these enforcement activities aimed at small farmers?

It also doesn't make sense to me that, given the numerous food safety scares involving large-scale producers, resources are being diverted to prevent consumers from choosing the type of milk that they drink. It seems to me that in some cases the FDA's attitude toward raw milk is putting undo pressure on states to crack down unnecessarily on raw milk producers and consumers.

Farmer and consumer groups have also brought to my attention their concerns about Michael Taylor, Deputy Commissioner for Foods at the FDA and a former lobbyist and executive for Monsanto. Many have voiced their worries that, given his long history at the Monsanto Corporation, where the emphasis is on large scale agriculture production, there is a perception on the part of many people that it may be difficult for him to remain neutral on issues like local food systems, food sovereignty, and food safety rules that reflect the scale of the producer. Would it not better serve all types and sizes of agriculture in the United States to have someone in this position with less of a perceived bias towards large scale genetically modified agriculture?

Thank you for your attention to these questions, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chellie R".

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress