



Certified Organic Meat Leader Commends Retention of Organic Feed Standards

Applegate Farms supports organic integrity including livestock diet

BRANCHBURG, NJ (April 15, 2003) – On April 12, Congress repealed Section 771, an amendment to the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2003. Section 771, approved in February, would have allowed meat to be labeled certified organic even if the feed the livestock ate were not certified organic. It took 12 years to create the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) certified organic federal law, which went into effect Oct. 2002. But it took only one Senator from Georgia working on behalf of one poultry producer in his district to attach an amendment designed to weaken organic feed standards. Applegate Farms, the largest natural and organic deli-meat company in the United States, supports the integrity of organic food production and extends its gratitude to the members of Congress who successfully repealed the amendment to the Omnibus Bill.

"There was bipartisan support from Congress to repeal the bill," said Chris Ely, co-owner of Applegate Farms and member of the Organic Trade Association's livestock committee. "Applegate applauds the Organic Trade Association for its efforts to protect organic standards and thanks the members of Congress who voted for the repeal. We also commend U.S. Representative Farr and U.S. Senator Leahy for their sponsorship of the repeal bill and their dedication to organic companies and consumers."

The certified organic meat and poultry used for Applegate's deli meats and other products comes exclusively from small farms where animals are raised in strict compliance with the USDA's standards for organic, including the use of certified organic feed and the avoidance of antibiotics and synthetic growth hormones. The provision language in Section 771 stated that if certified organic livestock feed costs more than twice the price of conventional feed, producers could use conventional feed and still label their meat "organic."

"The problem with the Omnibus was that it created the potential for organic-labeled meat to contain genetically modified organisms, synthetic pesticides and other chemicals via conventional feed. This isn't fair to organic product consumers who would have no way of knowing if the meats they are buying are really organic," said Stephen McDonnell, Applegate's president. "The success of this repeal is ultimately a victory for consumers."

In the coming months, Applegate Farms is launching several new lines of certified organic meat products including turkey and roast beef deli meats, frozen ground turkey burgers and hot dogs. The company assures consumers they can feel confident that Applegate's organic meats are truly organic, right down to the grain fed to each organic turkey, pig and cow.

Applegate Farms, founded in 1987, provides healthy deli meats to natural, gourmet and conventional grocery stores. The company produces more than 70 natural meat products and 13 certified organic products made from antibiotic-free beef, pork and poultry. Applegate Farms never uses artificial ingredients, coloring agents or chemical preservatives in processing. In addition, the company exclusively contracts with more than 50 small family farmers in Canada and Pennsylvania. These family farms follow Applegate Farms' strict protocol for natural and organic practices as well as the humane treatment of livestock.

Organic & Natural Meat & Cheese