

Title Post package irradiation: Status of technology and update on FDA petition
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Abstract

In the United States, the use of food irradiation has been approved by FDA for many foods including wheat, flour, fresh fruits, and vegetables, dry spices, seasonings, enzymes, pork, poultry, red meats, shell eggs, and seeds for sprouting. The FDA regulates all aspects of irradiation: what products can be treated, what source of ionizing radiation can be used and the dose, and how the treated products are to be labeled. Before marketing, an irradiated food application must receive sanction by FDA under the existing food additive approval process. This can be a slow process, as exemplified by the fact that approval for red meat irradiation took about 5 y, involving both the FDA and the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. In the late 1990's, the Food Irradiation Coalition was formed as a group of 30+trade association members and others, who channeled their mutual food irradiation interests into a food additive petition for ready-to-eat foods and worked through the National Food Processors Association to file a petition with the FDA in October, 1999. In the past several years, with large-scale recalls and illnesses associated with packaged, prepared, and processed meats, it has become even more apparent to Coalition members that food irradiation pathogen reduction efforts with these ready-to-eat foods, in particular, are long overdue. The ready-to-eat petition covers a wide variety of prepared and packaged foods. The strategy and status of filing this petition that covers several classes of ready-to-eat foods vs. a more traditional "product by product" strategy will be discussed. The further approval and use of food irradiation for enhancing the safety of certain ready-to-eat food products, especially where additional cooking is not performed by the consumer, is a critical enhancement to food safety.