

62 Groups Request NAIS Not be Part of School Lunch Program

Schools weigh in on NAIS. Opposition stated to proposed ag appropriations bill requiring that school lunch programs buy only meat from NAIS-registered farms.

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Keeping the school lunch meals out of range of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is the goal of 62 organizations that recently signed a letter to the House Appropriations Committee asking Congress not to connect NAIS to the School Lunch Program.

The proposed 2009 Agriculture Appropriations Bill would require the School Lunch Program to buy only meats derived from farms registered with the NAIS.

The NAIS is a controversial three-step program that calls for registering, tagging, and tracking every single livestock and poultry animal in the country, whether or not the animal is kept for food.

Promoted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as an animal health program, NAIS has faced opposition from organic agriculture and consumer groups, family farming organizations, and property rights advocates from across the country who argue that its only true effect will be to harm both farmers and consumers.

The concerned organizations fear that requiring NAIS: Will not improve the safety of school food because most food contamination occurs at the packing plant and handling facilities, after NAIS monitoring ends.

Will discourage local and sustainable farmers from being involved in the School Lunch Program, which means reduced access to safe and healthy foods.

Will diminish the widespread support for farm-to-school programs that has been created in recent years. Says Ozer, "These programs actively involve local producers and avoid the health risks associated with centralized food processing such as the recent Hallmark/Westland recall."

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Source: Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance and National Family Farm Coalition