



H. R. 875: Death Warrant for Small Farms?

Although created to keep food safe and prevent food-borne diseases, the proposed bill, H. R. 875, may end up hurting the local food movement with strict regulations on food producers. Is this NAIS for gardeners?

07/30/2009

With rising costs of food and concerns for preserving our planet, more people are raising their own food in their backyard and buying food from local farmers. But could the passing of a resolution place your potted tomatoes under strict regulations by the federal government?

Rep. Rosa DeLauro, (D), introduced H. R. 875, or the Food Safety Modernization Act of 2009, to the House on Feb. 4, 2009.

The stated purpose of H. R. 875 is "to establish the Food Safety Administration within the Department of Health and Human Services to protect the public health by preventing food-borne illness, ensuring the safety of food, improving research on contaminants leading to food-borne illness, and improving security of food from intentional contamination, and for other purposes."

The bill was written in response to the recent outbreaks of food-borne diseases and is an effort to achieve and maintain food safety. Currently, the bill has over 40 sponsors, including the Center for Foodborne Illness Research and Prevention, Safe Tables Our Priority, Food and Water Watch and Trust for America's Health.

However, opponents of the bill - including the International Dairy Foods Association and the International Advocates for Health Freedom organizations - believe that it would be a death warrant for small farms and the local food movement. They argue the bill's requirements would induce more federal control and higher costs on sustainable farming and hurt the local food market by forcing small growers to dramatically raise their prices or go out of business all together. Sound familiar?

A few stipulations the bill would create include:

A new federal program called the Food Safety Administration to regulate food producers. Every food producer from corporations to roadside farm stands would have to register with the FSA and meet its safety standards.

Strict guidelines and supervision for small- and large- scale growers in an effort to meet safety standards.

FSA inspectors to examine and test all food products to ensure compliance with the safety standards. These visits would be regular and unannounced.

Penalties including \$1 million in fines per food safety violation or up to 5 years in prison if a person becomes ill from food consumed "in violation."

H. R. 875 was referred to the Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy and Poultry on April 23, 2009. Introduced bills and resolutions first go to committees that deliberate, investigate and revise them before they go to general debate, according to govtrack.org. To stay updated on the bill's status, [click here](#).