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**AMERICAN MEAT INSTITUTE URGES FDA TO GIVE PETITION MAKING
UNFOUNDED ALLEGATIONS ABOUT MEAT PACKAGING A THOROUGH AND
EXPEDITED REVIEW**

Washington, DC, February 21, 2006 – In a letter filed with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today, the American Meat Institute (AMI) urged FDA to give a petition making unfounded allegations about meat packaging systems a thorough and expedited review.

According to AMI, Kalsec, Inc., maker of a technology that competes with carbon monoxide meat packaging systems, has filed a petition with FDA arguing that the agency should not have approved these systems. “This petition is not about food safety, although the petition tries to make it seem so,” said AMI President J. Patrick Boyle. “It is a calculated move to discredit a competing technology. Carbon monoxide packaging systems stand to make obsolete Kalsec’s product. That’s what this entire petition and accompanying PR campaign are all about.”

In its letter to FDA, AMI notes that Kalsec doesn’t tell the whole story. It selectively references some federal findings, while ignoring others in order to paint a picture that is not accurate. “Consumers should be outraged that the petitioner is using distortions – and a big PR firm in Washington -- to generate media coverage and generate fear about a safe, wholesome and federally inspected product that has the backing of FDA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.”

Controlled atmosphere packaging systems similar to the one at issue have been commonplace in food and meat packaging for decades. Similar controlled atmosphere packaging systems are used for bag salads, potato chips, nuts, bakery products, coffee, pasta, shredded cheese, pre-cut vegetables and others. These systems offer numerous benefits to the food industry and to consumers.

In particular, CO in meat packaging systems help maintain meat’s natural red color throughout its shelf life. “Meat packaged using these systems includes a prominent use-by or freeze by date and federally mandated safe handling labels that provide consumers with all the information they need to ensure the product is safe all the way to the table,” Boyle said.

“Kalsec’s claims that these products deceive the consumer aren’t about red meat. Their claims are red herrings. They are trying to suggest a problem exists when experts – including the FDA which has reviewed these technologies three times – says it is safe, appropriate and not deceptive,” he argued.

According to Boyle, temperature abuse during distribution is extremely rare. However, if such temperature abuse occurred, packages would bulge noticeably, would exhibit a distinct odor and meat would develop a slimy texture. He called photos that Kalsec is distributing of meat that has been temperature abused disingenuous because they rely upon sight alone – not the other sensory characteristics that would be readily apparent to a consumers.

Boyle said that thanks to technologies like this one, U.S. consumers spend less of their disposable income on meat than any other nation in the world. “This packaging technology maintains meat’s natural red appeal throughout its shelf life. When meat browns prematurely in retail stores – which sometimes happens – it must be discarded or discounted substantially. This is wasteful and costly and ultimately can drive up meat prices. Rather than buy into the fears being peddled by a competitor, consumers should embrace this technology for its many benefits.”

For more information, visit www.meatsafety.org