We Pay a Premium for Organic, So Why Not Irradiated Meat?

By ACSH Staff — August 25, 2015

Would you pay a premium to keep your family from getting the food-borne illnesses that sicken 48 million Americans and kill 3,000 more each year?

You probably just thought, "yes, of course."

What if the technology to do so were endorsed by the World Health Organization and the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and it meant you could cook your hamburger as rare as you like without concern?

Now, you might have probably thought, "Even better!"

Actually, that technology already exists. But the same environmental groups that give a "health halo" to the meaningless process that produces organic food wouldn't want to buy this consumable at all--much less pay more for it.

That's because it involves radiation, and anti-science groups like Natural Resources Defense Council have made careers--and hundreds of millions of dollars--out of scaring people about many things, including radiation. That's despite the fact that every study shows food irradiation neither adds compounds to food nor takes nutrients away nor is harmful to human health in any way.

The process is not cheap; it adds about 80 cents per pound to the cost, and the wealthy elites who buy organic food have been steeped in anti-science thinking for so long that even Mother Jones writing about using radiation to prevent illness outbreaks due to food won't change their minds. And even though we are rarely, if ever, in agreement with them, we are sincere in applauding them for trying.

The poor are certainly more pro-science-- the vaccination rate in rural Alabama versus the vaccination rate in San Francisco, California tells us that--but the poor can't stomach paying that much more for meat. Like with most things, until the rich uptake at a premium, the free market won't be able to bring the price down.

So we may be stuck without access to safer meat.

What Mother Jones readers may not know, but journalist Kiera Butler does, is that many of them are probably consuming irradiated food already. They just don't know it because ABC News hasn't made a media circus out of it the way they did "pink slime." Lots of herbs and spices are irradiated to prevent salmonella, as are mangoes, and even the French do it to some cheese.
Do you think the time has come where we vanquish the voodoo and embrace what we can to make the American food supply safer?

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