

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Agriculture

BILL: SM 1706

INTRODUCER: Senator Bullard

SUBJECT: Pink Slime in Meat Products

DATE: March 15, 2013

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Weidenbenner</u>	<u>Halley</u>	<u>AG</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

SM 1706 urges the Congress of the United States, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the United States Food and Drug Administration to ban the use of low-grade beef trimmings, also known as “pink slime,” in meat products or require labels on meat products that clearly indicate that the product contains the ammonia-treated filler.

This bill creates a Senate Memorial.

II. Present Situation:

“Pink slime” is a term that became widely popular in a negative sense after it was used to describe lean finely textured beef (LFTB) in a national news broadcast on March 7, 2012.¹ LFTB is a beef product developed in 1991 by Beef Products, Inc. (BPI), a South Dakota company, to provide more domestic lean beef. The process involves heating beef trimmings discarded in the butchering process, sending them through a centrifuge to separate the fat from the meat, and adding the meat to conventionally ground beef. The origin of the term is believed to have come from a 2002 internal email by a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) scientist used to describe LFTB after touring the BPI plant. BPI points out in litigation against the broadcast network and others that the American Heritage Dictionary describes slime as a “vile or disgusting matter.”²

¹ Avile, Jim. “Is Pink Slime in the Beef at Your Grocery Store?” <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/03/is-pink-slime-in-the-beef-at-your-grocery-store/>.

² <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/04/us-usa-media-abc-bpi-idUSBRE92313R20130304>.

The BPI process uses ammonium hydroxide to kill pathogens, primarily E. coli and salmonella. Ammonium hydroxide has been widely used in food processing for many years. USDA approved BPI's use of ammonium hydroxide as an antimicrobial intervention and determined then that it was a processing aid and not an ingredient and therefore did not have to be included on the food label for the product.³ Shortly after the 2012 media barrage, two nutritionists at the Mayo Clinic wrote that the USDA considers the pink slime process safe enough to allow the resulting product to be added to ground beef without requiring disclosure on meat labels.⁴ A May 12, 2012, editorial in the New York Times relates that consumer experts say that LFTB is safe, nutritious and relatively inexpensive and when mixed into ground beef, it lowers the average fat content. The editorial concluded by saying that industry and government should take the pink slime incident as a warning that Americans need to know more about the food they eat and the efforts being taken to ensure that it is safe⁵ USDA issued a press release and affirmed that LFTB is a safe, nutritious product followed by a press conference on March 29, 2012, in which the Secretary of Agriculture affirmed the safety and benefits of LFTB but said the USDA had to listen to its customers.⁶

In April, 2012, USDA confirmed that some companies have asked to include LFTB labels on ground beef, and USDA has approved voluntary labeling.⁷ H.R. 4346 was introduced on March 30, 2012 (112th Congress), to amend the Federal Meat Inspection Act to require that labels on packages of meat include a statement on whether the meat contains LFTB.⁸ That bill was not enacted into law and it has not been re-filed in the 113th Congressional session at this time.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Senate Memorial 1706 provides a series of Whereas clauses that

- describe “pink slime” and its manufacturing process,
- name manufacturing companies that will no longer use pink slime,
- name grocery stores and fast food outlets that will no longer handle products containing pink slime,
- refer to USDA's new policy to allow schools participating in the United States National School Lunch Program to have an option not to purchase ground beef containing pink slime, and
- affirm that USDA does not require the labeling of beef products that contain pink slime.

The memorial urges the Congress of the United States, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the United States Food and Drug Administration to ban the use of low-grade

³ Greene, Joel. “Lean Finely Textured Beef: The “Pink Slime” Controversy. Congressional Research Service. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42473.pdf>.

⁴ <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/meat-news/MY02058>. “Pink Slime and red meat – What’s the takeaway?” by Jennifer Nelson, M.S., R.D. and Katherine Zeretsky, R.D.

⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/13/opinion/sunday/what-if-it-werent-called-pink-slime.html>.

⁶ Greene, Joel. “Lean Finely Textured Beef.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/hr4346>.

beef trimmings, also known as “pink slime,” in meat products or require labels on meat products that clearly indicate that the product contains the ammonia-treated filler.

Copies of the memorial will be dispatched to the President of the United States, to the President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and to each member of the Florida delegation to the United States Congress.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
