



Consumer Federation of America

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STATEMENT OF CFA's CAROL L. TUCKER-FOREMAN ON APPOINTMENT OF DR. KATHLEEN MERRIGAN AS DEPUTY SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

President Obama's appointment of Kathleen Merrigan to be Deputy Secretary of Agriculture sends a strong and positive message of change at USDA. Dr. Merrigan has been a high ranking Senate aide, a USDA official and is currently director of the food, agriculture and environment program at Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition.

In the Senate she helped develop the Organic Standards Act. As AMS Administrator she charted the course for successful implementation of the law.

As AMS Administrator she took steps to assure the safety of ground beef used in school lunch programs, protecting our kids from foodborne illness. In 2000, Dr. Merrigan instituted a new policy establishing a zero tolerance for both *E. coli* O157:H7 and *Salmonella* in ground beef purchased for use in federal feeding programs and requiring testing to assure the standard is met. USDA purchases hundreds of millions of pounds of ground beef products for child nutrition and other programs each year. Although the Department had detailed requirements for packaging, it had no pathogen standards. This standard not only reduced the chance of school children getting sick from federally purchased food, it also raised the overall quality of USDA's ground beef purchases.

The Deputy Secretary traditionally takes on day to day oversight of USDA operations. Dr. Merrigan's history indicates she will bring a new perspective to this role. Her appointment sends a message that the Obama Administration intends to chart a new path for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. American consumers applaud this appointment.

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The Consumer Federation of America is a non-profit association of 300 consumer groups, representing more than 50 million Americans, that seeks to advance the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy. Carol Tucker Foreman is the Distinguished Fellow at CFA's Food Policy Institute and former assistant Secretary of Agriculture.