

## **FOOD IRRADIATION: ARE WE READY ?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Food irradiation is beneficial; it saves lives, increases our food supply and makes a wider variety of foods available to more people. It is endorsed by every major health organization in the world. Recently, progress has been made towards the commercialization of food irradiation, including the passage of legislation allowing the irradiation of red meat, and a petition submitted to the USDA requesting approval for the irradiation of prepared meats containing a variety of food products. These two landmark actions have helped provide the impetus for a few courageous companies, representing the food and nuclear technology industries, to initiate commercial projects to irradiate meat and poultry that could be the forerunner of an emerging industry. The question now remains as to whether industry and current technology can safely and economically meet the requirements of large scale food irradiation. Are there companies ready to offer irradiation systems that will meet the needs of the food producers with reliable safe equipment? Are isotopic sources better for food irradiation than electron beams? If they are, can we assure enough Co-60 for future needs? Will the federal government help or hinder progress? These and other issues will be discussed along with a status report on where the technology stands today.