

USDA  
Break Out Room Yellow  
May 22, 2009 5.22.09 Louisville KY

KZ: It's probably easier if we sort of converge in the middle, because we'll be passing the mics around and—

FS1: Oh, you're going to pass the mic?

KZ: Oh, you're all getting your chance. So do you mind?

[voices answering—inaudible]

KZ: Oh, sure.

[speaker inaudible]

KZ: Okay. Uh-Hunh (Affirmative). My name is Keith Zotti. This is Marquita. We are from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service—Veterinary Services—in Riverdale, Maryland. And the two of us are writer/editors for the various programs for animal health. We're not directly related to the NAIS program, so— Well, let me just say up front that we're not going to use this time as a Q and A because we really don't have those technical answers that—you know—some of you really want. But these conversations are being tape recorded and everything will be transcribed and delivered to the secretary so he has some sense of what your concerns are, your opinions, any suggestions, or alternatives you have for this program. So when you get the mic, I urge that you speak clearly into it so the transcriber has an easier time getting what you're saying. Also, if you could introduce yourself. Just state your name—first names are fine. It's just easier for the transcriber to associate the name with what was said. I know there's a lot of passion about this topic. I've noticed that in the past few sessions I've been at and, understandably, I just ask that we all respect each other's differing views. And if you have a question or a statement you want to make, it's fine. Just make sure speaking it into the mic so we can capture it. So to that, does anyone want to begin with an opinion or comment, a statement? Sure.

DE: I'm David Easely. I'm the potassium guy. All right? So I think those—comment that—I've really—has stuck in my mind is the man who was talking about the drunk looking for his car keys over where the light was better. And this idea of us distracting ourselves with identifying animals is asinine. I think that this process of going after the people that are doing everything right and creating a tremendous burden on them is—you know—destructive to what our goal is. Now I am a behavioral scientist. Anything, any behavior that's monitored, we do less of—any behavior. If I monitor the number of times I go to the bathroom, I'll go to the bathroom less. Doesn't matter what the value of the behavior that's monitored. If I monitor the number of smiles I make, I'll smile less. If I intend to do something, I need to be very careful of how I monitor and what I monitor. If I want to increase a behavior, then I want to set a goal and monitor failure to meet that goal. This process—this government process—is set to monitor something that is something that, I believe, most people in the United States want to increase. This process will actually decrease that outcome. The process itself of demanding that people come and represent themselves like this will actually decrease the participation and decrease the behavior that we're after. If you want to increase a behavior, you set a goal of what the behavior is, and then you monitor failure to meet the goal. I think that anybody in this room can see that this process could go— I mean if there is a wish by the United States Department of Agriculture to increase food safety and increase the— What is the word for food that is not contaminated? There's a special word for— No, I'm sorry; that's not it. Remember that food safety involves making sure that there's no germs on food when it gets to the consumers. That is the definition of food safety. Food safety is not about providing wholesome food. Food safety, by law, is defined in the statutes; and food safety has to do with causing epidemic diseases of bacteria. The food safety issue that we're dealing with is the food safety problem of the actual food product that is put on my table has the nutrient removed from it—potassium. And the nutrient—the non-nutrient preservative—sodium added. The reason that this only can happen in this direction is the only way to get potassium into food is while it's alive and to have the pumps that are living pump the potassium in and the sodium out. When you process any food— If you hang a piece of beef in a refrigerator and set about to make it age properly, what is done is it's sprayed with lactic acid. Well, lactic acid opens the potassium channels, causes the potassium to come out. The lactate is a sodium lactate, and the sodium goes into the beef. It alters the available water in the meat, and it makes it where it cannot spoil. But it also make— The more it's processed, the more it goes toward having twice as much—less than twice as much—potassium as sodium. And when that occurs and you feed it to somebody, it's not fit to eat. Our cultivars of fresh vegetables that are grown here in Kentucky that come— Unfortunately, even the ones that are presented to our Farmer's Market are washed. The wash water, when that comes out of the field in Shelby County— Do you mind if I go on? Am I boring you?

[speaker inaudible]

DE: Okay. If I grow lettuce in Shelby County Kentucky and intend to bring it to the Farmer's Market here in Louisville, I have to wash it, to cool it, and to make it clean. That wash water is—comes out of a shower head, and there's a big bin like this about three feet deep, big around as this table and a big shower head goes over it—that water is chilled. It goes through a chiller over here and re-circulated. In order to keep it from freezing up in the chiller for a hundred gallons of water, they add a hundred pounds of sodium chloride—a big bag—[makes machine noises]—dump it in there. That keeps the water from freezing. In order to keep that water from having bacteria in it, they dump a gallon of Clorox in it. Now you have Clorox, sodium chloride. Sodium is extremely soluble in cold water. Potassium chloride is absolutely insoluble in cold water. When that chilled water goes over the vegetable that is high in potassium and has no sodium in it, it opens the potassium channels on the surfaces of the vegetables. The potassium pours out; the sodium goes in and replaces it. And the—you start out with a hundred pounds of potassium chloride—I mean sodium chloride. It completely dissolved clear into the water. No— In the bottom of the cistern, there is nothing; it's just dissolved. After you run that thing, you end up with seventy-five pounds of potassium chloride in the bottom of the cistern, and you go dump that on your field. Recycle the potassium, and you have a fresh vegetable that is safe. It cannot support life, and it will not go bad for weeks in your refrigerator from Shelby County, delivered to the Farmer's Market here in Louisville. And it's the same— Except in California, we grow cultivars—special cultivars that when we drill the soil, the soil is— You break the crust of salt on the soil and the salt in sea and in the Imperial Valley to drill in the seeds to grow all the vegetables. Those cultivars are genetically modified or selected to thrive in salty soils. What those cultivars do is in the vacuoles of the leaves, they have special mechanisms to crystallize sodium in the leaves. So it pumps the sodium out of the soil and puts it little vacuoles out in the leaves. So the plant itself is actually high in potassium—the cells of the plant are high in potassium, but the vacuoles are sequestering sodium. When the plant is cut, that plant is automatically— Those vacuoles burst, and it's automatically high in sodium and low in—has the same amount of potassium—but it has all that sodium burst into the structures of the plant. And it changes the available water so that the plant cannot spoil. "Available water" is a food safety term, and if you— Pure water is measured at one, and anything with available water below a certain amount can't support life; and that's what you want. That's how you preserve food. Okay. But all food processing goes this direction of this high concentration of potassium inside a cell and a low concentration of sodium to the other way of moving the potassium out and sodium in. The human kidney has three pumps to deal with the salts. There's a pump to get rid enormous amounts of potassium because we're designed to eat a high potassium, low sodium diet. We have a—there are just three

pumps. We have a second pump that conserves sodium because humans are sodium dependent animals; and we have to have high sodium in our blood. The third pump is a ratio pump that is used to get rid of sodium on the rare occasion a human might have more sodium in his diet than he needs—than he sweats out. This high— When a person eats more sodium than he needs, he runs this third pump. But this third pump wastes two grams of potassium for every gram of sodium out. In a diet— A primitive diet that has twenty grams of potassium a day and one gram of sodium a day, this would never be a problem, because you run the pump to pump out the one gram of sodium, and you waste two of the eighteen grams of potassium out. And then you use the first pump to pump out potassium, so it would never be a problem. The modern diet—one point two billion people that eat the modern diet—eat ten grams of sodium a day and four grams of potassium a day. That is the ratio in the modern diet. What happens is you get rid of those— You get rid of two grams of sodium using those four consumed grams of potassium. You have the eight remaining grams of sodium, and the way your kidney uses potassium to get rid of it, it has to run that pump. And it borrows the potassium from inside muscles and inside nerve tissue. And this is the cause—the low-voltage, then, that is generated in muscles by drawing down the potassium from a hundred forty inside to a hundred ten inside—causes failure of the muscles to work, failure of the insulin pumps to work; and this is the cause of all hypertension, all type-two diabetes, insulin resistance, all erectile dysfunction. This was published in the New England Journal of Medicine May 10, 2007. When I commented to the pyramid—the USDA/ FDA Joint Committee about human nutrition, I was mis-quoted; and they took out my comments. So this is very serious to me. The other thing that happens about food is there is emerging data that the causes of neural— First of all, these things, high blood pressure, type two diabetes, and erectile dysfunction, can be reversed in days or weeks. You know, people testify about the Pima Indians being put on the diet or the Australians being put on their primitive diet. Any human being that alters potassium/sodium ratio, four days he's well. Nerve tissue is irreversibly damaged by this process, and the most active nerve tissue is the most seriously damaged—irreversibly. In growing infants the most active nerve tissues are what are called the empathy cells, the non-verbal cells that give and take nurturance. These are the cells that are harvested in a child that's fed the modern diet when he's pre-verbal, and this is the cause of autism. Autism has gone from being one in twenty thousand Americans in 1938, when it was first reported, to one in forty people in the United States today. And in places where people are fed supplements, where people are very rich, it's one in ten children. People who supplement their diet with nutrients rather than with food are giving their children the sodium salts of nutrients, and they're destroying children irreversibly. In 1938 when the first cases of autism were reported in the United States—reported by a psychiatrist in Boston—all of the cases were by professionals. All the children who had autism, all of the fathers were Ph.Ds and doctors,

and all the mothers were Ph.Ds and doctors. And all those people were feeding their children the modern diet, living in cities. The conclusion of the psychiatrist was that it was genetic, and that there were too many high-strung genes of those people mixed together. That was the conclusion, and that has been— You know, I don't know whether any of you has been to law school, but in law school the easiest way to fail yourself is to draw a conclusion—to be “conclusory” they call it—you know. But doctors are always looking for conclusions and answers, and that's why I'm here. Because the evidence is clear that the sodium and potassium ratio of food is causing all these illnesses, and it's reversible in adults—and it causes irreversible damage. This is also the cause of attention deficit disorder and Alzheimer's disease, and macular degeneration. Thank you.

KZ: Would anybody else like to comment? I know— You have to leave?

CB: Are you going to do specific questions? How are you going to run this?

KZ: Well, we can address any topic you'd like. So is there a topic you want to discuss?

CB: Well, it's my understanding the secretary would love us to look at these issues and come up with ideas to address them, right?

KZ: Well, if you have any—

CB: Well, I'm Caren Bergener, and I do have a thought about the first question, which is cost. How I like to talk about this is that NAIS would be—have a terrible ROI. So if you are a business person and you were putting money into this and you would look at what you got out of it, you would say— I mean even if we were to sort of agree that it was possible to actually do it—and I have some experience with databases—and I can tell you, you can't get all these databases to work together. It will cost millions and millions and millions of dollars, and it will never happen. So if we were to go down fantasy lane and assume that the thing will work, the return on the investment would not be sufficient. No sensible business person would ever put their money into it. And, therefore, it is not an appropriate way for the tax payers to invest their money, and it is not an appropriate way for people who eat to invest their food dollars because it's a mandatory program. So worse case scenario, the thing to do is to make it completely funded by those who choose to participate. That's it. That's the only thing that might be tolerable. All the rest is just very bad money management.

KZ: Comments on the cost or liability?

DE: Is there somebody here in this room that can tell us anything about cost—what a system like this actually costs?

CB: There's a study that was just brought out. Interestingly the original initial study that was done by the Kansas State, I believe, was not publicized. And it took about a year for USDA to decide to then get a final study published. Judith McGeary of Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance has done a good beginning analysis. Frankly, the study is a four hundred page report with a thirty page synopsis at the front end, so not easy to get through. But there are a number of very false assumptions in it. So in fact, no one does have a good study right now. One of the assumptions is the— In fact, make no attempt to figure out the cost for identifying individual poultry. Their assumption in the study was that all poultry owners would be able to use group and lot identities. They also made some amazing assumptions about the cost that it would take and that it would be possible to have an independent group of business men who would be wandering and identifying your animals for you if you didn't want to own the wand and the computer. And you could get them to come out to your farm and identify your animals for three dollars and eighty cents or some otherwise amazing amount of money. Which means, as nearly as I can tell, at minimum wage they'd be—it would take them a half an hour of their day and there'd be no technology cost involved. So it's an extremely, [s/l facially] incorrect report. The reports out of the—Australia—are that the cost per head for cattle are about thirty-seven dollars. A cost per head for cattle out of the U.K. are about sixty dollars a head. And if we're listening to the pork producer today who said that they're already loosing twenty-two dollars a head, I'm trying to figure out how they're going to add sixty dollars a head to their cost or even thirty dollars a head and still try to make a business. That's now a fifty-five dollar loss per pork, per swine, per piggy, however you want to put it. So that's what we know about the cost right now.

DO: Aside from the actual cost— My name is Dawn Oaks. My husband is a licensed egg distributor in the state of Kentucky. I guess this is a great example when you start talking about cost and you're talking about tracking. We have to have a license ID by purchasing a license through the state in order to sell our eggs. The ID number has to be on the carton. We pay twenty dollars a year for our license ID, we're never inspected, we've never been visited. And even if we were, by the time a family—I can easily, for my family of six, use a dozen eggs fixing breakfast in the morning—and if I'm not recycling, the carton goes in the garbage. So there goes your tracking number. You can track animals, but if you're not testing them at the slaughter house door for disease, by the time that animal is chopped up— I mean, how many micro chips are we going to put in the animal? And if we put it in enough to detect exactly where that hamburger came from, how many micro chips are we going to end up consuming? And what is that going to do

our bodies, not to mention the mishaps that happen at slaughter plants where these micro chips will—? I mean parts is parts. We've heard it before in the food processing industry. How many of these micro chips and some of this technology are going to end up in the food supply causing more instances of cancer, more— We have enough people in this country already who are afraid to take their children for vaccinations because of possible links between mercury and autism. How safe are people going to feel eating the meat in our country? Is it really going to increase public safety, or is it going to make people afraid to eat the meat because it's now been instilled with a micro chip and any other radiation or anything that goes with it? Scientists may tell you otherwise, but that's how the American public is going to perceive it because the American public is very afraid of the public food source in our country today.

JS: I am Jerry Salyer. I spent five and a half years as a United States naval officer, and so I— You'll have to pardon me if my perspective on the government may not be quite as rosy as, perhaps, some people would like. The number of stories— A part of that time I did a tour in the Persian Gulf, so I'm actually one of those disgruntled veterans that the Homeland Security Department is warning you about. So we need to track people, we need to track animals; we just need more and more experts who know how things really are to take care of us. But I can assure you part of that time—about six months of that time—was spent on a fleet staff out in the Pacific. And, I mean, it's like the Keystone Cops. So, frankly, I mean— No, I have no experience with the USDA. And again—you know—I would not say that to be—personally insult anybody—because I have many friends who are still in service, and I've known many decent people there—so I'm sure there's plenty decent people in the USDA as well. But the idea that you can take this vast organization and pop up these bright ideas to be imposed from above and then it's going to work out well is ludicrous. And many cases, a lot of the proposals that I saw that got floated down were mainly—it was mainly self-serving careerism. And I—you know—I don't mean to sound overly cynical, but I have to suspect that that probably plays a role in a lot of these projects too. I'm just kind of curious, does anybody—? I mean, what—? So if this—I mean I haven't—you know—and I'm sure people—you know—some people could eat me alive in terms of the facts and the details of these reports. I'm just kind of curious, what—? If a farmer just says— If this goes through and a farmer says no, I'm not going to put this in my animals, I mean, what happens to him? Can anybody tell me? I mean will it be illegal? I'm just—I mean maybe I got worked up about this for no reason.

DM: The answer to your question is—and my name's Dave Morris—I'm with USDA, I'm on the National Animal Identification Staff—there are currently no rules or regulations in place relative to the National Animal Identification System. It is a voluntary effort at this

point. So to answer your question, there are no penalties at present relative to not using that. And I think it's clear and important here to point out that for little small producers, they do not have to tag their animals. And of the technologies that are available for animal identification, there are twenty-nine that are currently approved. Of those twenty-nine approved devices, eleven do not use any micro chip, any RFID. RFID is not a requirement of the National Animal Identification System recommendations.

CH: I'm Charlie Hatcher, Animal Identification Coordinator for Tennessee. Also a veterinarian, also fifth generation dairy farmer from Williamson County, also president of Franklin Farmer's Market. Tomorrow I will go to the Farmer's Market and we'll sell our milk from eight o'clock until 1 o'clock, so I know of what I speak about. The cost-wise, we name all our cows and we put their name in one ear and we put a RFID button in the other ear so we can track our offspring and we control the genetics and so forth as well that way. But the combination set costs almost four dollars. Now just the panel tag itself, if you just write a number on it, it's about a dollar twenty-five. So just as a side note, we had some low path AI Bird Flue in Tennessee just recently. We figured just the losses to the poultry industry was around thirty-four million dollars. So I know there's been some discussion about what does export market have to do with the local level? It has a lot to do with the local level. That determines your prices at the local level, so you can't underestimate what— If you can cut your response time down, what effect it has on the export market, because as soon as we got in trouble in Tennessee, we couldn't ship any meat. Meat was being packaged as soon as we shut that farm down to go to Russia, and they had to do something with that meat. I don't know what they ended up doing with it, but we lost Russia, we lost Japan, we lost Taiwan, we lost— One of the companies was losing a million dollars a day. Then it affected the backyard flocks that were around these commercial flocks. So everything's on a local level; it's all local. Oh, one more thing, everybody— And I talk to people that drink our milk everyday. They want to know where their milk comes from. They want to know how the animals are treated. We rotationally graze. I milk Sunday mornings—every Sunday morning I milk. Go to Farmer's Market every Saturday morning. Am I a factory farmer? Milk fifty-six cows. There's been a lot of discussion about the difference between a small and large farmer. Animal disease has no preference whether it's a small farmer or a large farmer. There's been some confusion about food safety and animal health here. There's a difference between contamination of E. Coli on a carcass at a processing plant than there is animal disease on a farm.

TC: Hello, my name is Tonya Cran, and I am a consumer. I'm a musician and an artist. Usually when I have a mic, I'm singing through it, so this is a little strange. I would like to address you personally, Mr. Morris. I have a question. The farmers have told me—the

local farmers—that if they don't tag their animals, there will be fees and penalties associated with it. So I am confused. Now, I'm honestly asking you why am I getting conflicting information?

DM: Thank you for the question. There are no rules or regulations. There's been no rule-making in place. There's nothing in the code of federal regulations, and I would ask, probably, to ask them to provide that information for you to back that up, because there is nothing to support that in terms of codified language that there would be penalties if they didn't comply. We are not recommending that small producers tag their animals unless they enter into commerce. Our interest in traceability is in commerce for those animals that may be at higher risk of disease transmission, such that we would have interest, then, in being able to trace that back. In regard to the location identification for small producers, our interest is being able to more efficiently notify them if indeed a disease threat existed in the immediate vicinity or in the region, that they would be informed about it ahead of time, and they could take whatever precautions they so chose relative to protect their herds and their flocks and their livelihoods.

TC: Is the Farmer's Market considered to be commerce? You said that they only have to tag their animals if they participate in commerce.

DM: That's correct, but what happens at the Farmer's Market is, in general, the products from the animals that are part of the production unit on those small farms, so we're not tracing food products at that point. We're tracing live animals if indeed the need existed, but only if the need existed.

TC: So the Farmer's Markets, the farmers that are here, there really isn't any reason. They're not at risk for fees and penalties? They're just acting preventatively in case this becomes mandatory?

KZ: What that is telling me and what I'm hearing from you is that the definitions and the explanations haven't been clearly given to the public, so that's the kind of information we want to capture in these sessions and provide to the secretary. We don't want to do—

TC: The reason why I'm wearing this is because I have read all of the sites, all of the information. And, again, it's conflicting information.

KZ: Which is good to know.

TC: Yeah.

KZ: And it's something the secretary's office is going to need to address.

TC: Right.

KZ: Thank you.

TC: Thank you.

DE: Mr. Hatcher.

CH: Yes.

DE: Dr. Hatcher?

CH: Dr. Hatcher.

DE: Dr. Hatcher. You said a rhetorical question. You said you milk on Sunday morning. You have fifty-six cows, I believe.

CH: Yeah. Fifth generation . . .

DE: Fifth generation dairy farmer.

CH: Since 1831.

DE: Since what year?

CH: Fifth generation dairy farmer since 1831. All right.

DE: You're familiar with Morrison's—Feed and Feeding.

CH: Oh, yes, yes. Yeah.

DE: So am I. My family's been farming a lot longer than yours has here.

CH: Actually, I'm a trained animal and nutritionist as well.

DE: I'm not. But you asked a question, am I a farmer? In—

CH: No. The question was, am I a factory farmer?

DE: Well, externalities, positive and negative of any system, allows some people to externalize the costs of the commons and to degrade the experience of everybody else that participates because they get some external benefit. And, I don't know— Are you familiar with the tragedy of the un-regulated commons, the economic theory of the tragedy of the commons? In any environment which is shared and un-regulated, like Boston Common, where each farmer was allowed four cows, and they knew the whole thing could support sixteen cows, each guy knew that from experience. Everybody has an incentive to cheat. And that's always true in any un-regulated environment. By you asking, am I a farmer—am I a industrial farmer—you've moved the light away from yes, you are a fifth generation farmer, but you also have other incomes that produce your farm—that you live on. And I wonder if you really are trying to make your living doing farming like some of the people in here are trying to live on the land, create just a boundary that they produce their own food, and they have enough that people that subscribe to them can directly interact with them, look them in the eye, and get their food back. I think that this system that you all are talking about setting up removes the eye contact and the one-on-one relationship or burdens it in such a way that that's a problem that these people seem to be concerned about. I'm more concerned— I'm not so concerned about family farms. I'm concerned about the food supply and the industry externalizing the cost to the healthcare industry of making food safe to process and to ship and to have shelf life by making it unfit for people to consume in abundant quantities and also maintain their health.

CH: No, what I was getting at there's been a lot of conversation about small farmers and—

DE: Yes, sir.

CH: —concern there, and I was just trying to make the point that animal disease doesn't have a distinction between small or large. And that was the point I was trying to make. And really, this whole concept about factory farming is, I mean, that's just a description, but it's— And it doesn't come across very positive.

DE: Well, I eat factory-farmed meat and factory-farmed vegetables and factory-farmed produce every day. I'm not against the food industry. I'm concerned that when I talked to two hundred high school students, a few at a time lately, that they're ready to take the government apart about this issue. High school students are scared to death of the food supply, scared to death of what they're being fed; and this is country people whose families are living on the farms. This is a real concern. There is a perception that

confidence is a fraud. And increasing confidence and doing things that increase marketability and confidence are a fraud. I used to live in Japan, and I lived in the city in Tokyo. And the every morsel of every food I ate was controlled by a person who I knew out in the country. We didn't eat anything, but we knew where it came from. And this paranoia was expensive. But that's the barrier to these markets in Japan and Germany and places like that is people don't trust our food, and they really know that there is something about Americans that makes us less healthy than them. And they think that our food supply generally is bad. They don't know why, but they generally don't trust it. Specifically, if they can identify something then, okay. But I know that when I was in Germany last week, they were telling me, we won't eat that food; that is terrible! And you shouldn't be eating it, either. You know— I mean this is just like the mantra from these people in foreign countries is that American products are bad because of— And— you know—they'll have a hundred explanations, but the perception is that we have bad products, and we're giving—using—a seconds market, a defective market, to feed them to our people; and we're sending the best stuff out of the country. They believe that. Thank you.

KZ: Anyone who we have not heard from? I want to make sure that they have a chance to speak or address a concern or an issue.

MS1: [s/I I'll say something].

KZ: Sure.

MS1: I travel to Italy quite often. I travel to Italy quite often, and I don't see beef on the menus in the restaurants. They stay away from beef. They will not buy even their own beef, because they're not very sure where it comes from. They eat wild hog; they eat rabbit, horse meat, pigs. They will not eat beef. So until we get past the point to where we remove the uncertainty that the food is not healthy, I don't care how many regulations like this you put in place. It will not sell it. Thank you.

KZ: Are there any other topics you would like to discuss or have raised? All right. On behalf of Secretary Fulsac and Marquita and myself, I just want to thank you guys for coming out and expressing your opinions and statements. It will all be transcribed and delivered to the secretary's office, and they'll be issuing a report in a few months that explains, sort of, the outcomes of these meetings. Thank you.