



**Statement of U.S. Representative
Christopher Smith, Cochairman of the
Congressional-Executive Commission on
China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on “Pet Treats and
Processed Chicken from China: Concerns for
American Consumers and Pets”
Tuesday, June 17, 2014**

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you very much, Chairman Brown. Thank you for calling this important hearing. I want to welcome our distinguished witnesses to this hearing on the important issue of the safety of our food products from China.

This is the second hearing on food safety that the Commission has done in the past year, and I especially want to thank Chairman Brown and our very dedicated and professional staff for their work to raise awareness about this issue, as well as all other human rights, rule of law, and governance issues.

The safety of food, feed, and drugs from China are a cause of real concern. American consumers are rightly anxious. We have pet treats that may have sickened and/or killed many pets across America. A virus may decimate 10 percent of American pigs, possibly from vitamins or feed from China. We have food products, including processed chicken, that may not have labeled as being made in China. In fact, it may have been labeled “Made in America.”

I want to thank Chris D'Urso for bringing this last issue to my attention. The maze of labels and labeling requirements called Country of Origin Labeling makes it difficult for American consumers to make reasoned choices about the foods they eat and those foods that they feed to their pets.

Christopher D'Urso is one of the most outstanding young men that I have encountered. Not only did he achieve a perfect SAT score and ranked number one in his class, but his record of public service at such a young age is extraordinarily rare.

Last year we met and he brought information to me and to my staff, and to the Commission staff, about his research and findings regarding Origin of Labeling laws for the United States. The thoroughness and the level of understanding in such a complex and international issue was indeed impressive.

Having researched this issue since 2012, he pointed to the inadequacies of many of our current laws. In fact, consumers have the right to know the country of origin products, especially when they eat those products. I believe his future contributions will be significant.

On the issue of food safety, both Chinese and American consumers share serious concerns about food products made in China. I know I look, but again, we don't always know that what we're looking at is actually the truth. We really hope there can be more cooperation, accountability, and transparency in the future.

This past week was food safety awareness week in China. China's food industry has faced a real crisis of confidence over the past seven years. Despite government efforts, the number of scandals continue to grow: Meat that glows in the dark; exploding watermelons; 40 tons of bean sprouts containing antibiotics; rice contaminated with heavy metals; mushrooms soaked with bleach; and pork so filled with stimulants that athletes were told not to eat them, they would test positive for banned substances. All on top of the melamine-tainted milk powder that sickened some 300,000 children in 2007. As we all know, the World Health Organization [WHO] has said that melamine can cause kidney failure, bladder and kidney stones, and even may be a carcinogenic.

In response to that scandal, China passed its first ever food safety law. Nevertheless, we all know well that there is often a gap between what Chinese law says and what is enforced. China is still struggling to keep its food supply healthy.

The Chinese government is trying to crack down, we are told, recently closing some 5,000 food-producing businesses and arresting over 2,000 people. But experts on food safety say a needlessly complex bureaucracy and fierce determination to turn a profit means there will continue to be food safety scares and a Chinese public wary about its own supply.

While we think that this issue would have been solved already if China transferred resources to food safety from censoring the Internet and cracking down on free speech and political dissent, unfortunately, the government still seems to want safe pork but a silent public.

There is a direct connection between better human rights conditions in China and food safety. While China has had unprecedented economic growth for decades, it lags behind in ensuring the rights of its citizens and in developing transparency, official accountability and rule of law, things it certainly needs to tackle like the issue of food safety.

Transparency is absolutely necessary for any government to protect the health and well-being of citizens and to effectively manage problems related to food and drug safety. Remember the secrecy about the SAARS? Free speech and free press and freedom of association would allow crusading journalists in civil society to expose health scandals and work toward open solutions.

Those who try to skirt the law for profit would be exposed and citizens could work together with their government to ensure better and healthier food and water. A free press and muckraking journalists and novelists like Upton Sinclair—who we all recall wrote *The Jungle* about unsanitary meat, and it led to the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, that eventually morphed through legislation into the FDA—certainly helped to bring better food safety to the United States.

It may be tempting to say that China is on a learning curve that will eventually produce better food safety. But they need journalists, they need people who can speak out, use the Internet, and expose what is happening.

Let me conclude by saying U.S. trade policy must put health and safety of U.S. consumers and their pets as its top priority. Safety before profits is the message that has to be sent to producers, processors, and manufacturers.

If U.S. inspections are blocked or delayed for any reason, we should consider swiftly pulling products from shelves. In addition, the United States must tell authorities in China that they are held accountable for implementing and enforcing laws on food and drug safety.

The United States should be negotiating as part of its diplomatic relations better and smarter inspections, again, transparency in the food and drug supply chain, and closer collaboration between our food safety experts. Our labeling of food and feed products must be clear so that consumers know what they are buying and from whom, and where it comes from.

Last, the United States must continue to make human rights a top priority of U.S.-China relations, free speech, and an active civil society will do much more to ensure safer food and expose corruption.

I yield back, and I thank you.