

Enforcement act threatens Canadian food sovereignty

OTTAWA - Bill C-27, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) Enforcement Act, would mean the end of independent policy on food production, inspection and enforcement in Canada, according to the Beyond Factory Farming (BFF) Coalition.

Cathy Holtslander of the BFF Coalition says, "Canadians want made-in-Canada food and agriculture regulations that ensure quality, health and safety. Bill C-27 would empower the CFIA to restructure the regulations governing Canada's food and agriculture to put trade ahead of public safety and integration with the United States ahead of democratic Canadian control of what we eat."

Bill C-27 would empower the CFIA to:

--Make bilateral agreements that force Canada to adopt the regulatory practices of other countries, primarily the US.

--Authorize the privatization of Canadian food inspection services.

--Share any information about Canadians with foreign governments and private companies, for the investigation, enforcement or administration of any law.

--Shift regulation from the precautionary principle to risk management in the enforcement of all food and agriculture Acts.

Recently, the federal government endorsed recommendations for sweeping changes to Canada's regulatory system, which it calls "Smart Regulation." Smart Regulation aims to integrate Canada's regulatory practices with those of the United States in everything from border control to pharmaceuticals and food in order to promote trade.

"Quite simply, Bill C-27, combined with the federal government's commitment to so-called 'Smart Regulation', would turn over Canada's food and agriculture regulatory system to the USDA, the FDA and private corporations," says Holtslander. "We would completely abandon our power to set and enforce independent rules."

"The BSE border closing shows how dangerous it is to put all your eggs in one basket. Canada's over-reliance on the US market for cattle also provided the rationale for the CFIA to mirror American livestock production rules. This locked us out of other markets such as Japan and Europe that have stronger rules based on consumer and environmental health and safety protection."

With Bill C-27, the federal government is continuing to create a policy environment where rewriting regulations reduces, rather than enhances, the health and safety of Canadians and the integrity of Canadian agriculture. This system favours market expansion by large agri-business corporations at

the expense of independent family farmers and smaller food processing businesses.

Canadians opposed to Bill C-27 can fax a letter of concern to their MP from the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition website, www.beyondfactoryfarming.org. The BFF Coalition submission to the Committee is also available on the site.

The BFF Coalition is a network of local, provincial and national groups including the Council of Canadians. It promotes livestock production that supports food sovereignty, ecological, human and animal health, as well as sustainability and community viability and informed citizen/consumer choice.

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