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Letter from Henry Spira to John Bryan

Henry Spira
Animal Rights International

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Animal Rights International

April 23, 1993

Mr. John Bryan
Chairman of the Board and CEO
Sara Lee Corporation
3 First National Plaza
70 West Madison Street
Chicago, IL 60602-4260

Dear Mr. Bryan:

A few months ago we wrote to the President of your subsidiary company, Sinai Kosher Sausage Corp., to draw their attention to the practices of one of their meat suppliers, -- Long Prairie Packing Company of Long Prairie, MN. We have received no acknowledgment from Sinai and thus we are writing directly to you. As detailed in our December 31, 1992 Fedex letter to Sinai, Long Prairie Packing Co. continues the painful practise of shackling and hoisting conscious cattle while progressive plants continue to change over to more humane systems.

Shackling and hoisting was described in the trade publication Meat & Poultry (9/87) as follows:

"Shackling and hoisting of conscious animals for ritual slaughter is an area of our profession in need of major housecleaning... [I visited one plant where steers were] hung up in a row to await slaughter. They were hitting the walls, and their bellowing could be heard out in the parking lot. To get the shackles on the live cattle, the operation was equipped with a pen with a false bottom that tripped the animal to make it fall down. In some plants, the suspended animal's head is restrained by a nose tong connected to an air cylinder. Stretching of the neck by pulling on the nose is painful. Suspension upside-down also causes great discomfort because the rumen presses down on the diaphragm.

"Hoisting of live cattle can also be very painful for plant employees... In some plants accidents were greatly reduced when the shackling of live animals was stopped. Plants that continue to hoist live animals may also be in a precarious legal position. Owners could be sued by former injured employees on the grounds that an old and dangerous technology had been used when safer, newer technologies were available."

ANIMAL RIGHTS INT'L. (ARI): COALITION TO ABOLISH THE LD50 and DRAIZE TESTS. COALITION FOR NONVIOLENT FOOD
Box 214 • Planetarium Station • New York, NY 10024

Coordinator: Henry Spira. Consultant: Peter Singer. Advisory Committee: Victoria Alippe, Roger A. Carns, Barbara S. Clapp, Sonia Cortis, John A. Hoyt, Paul C. Irwin, Sid and Helaine Lerner, Linda W. Petrie, Gus W. Thornton, D.V.M., Georgia Tillinghast, Jeanne Waller, Palmer Wayne.
Science Advisor: Andrew N. Rowan, B.Sc., M.A., D.Phil. Legal Advisor: Elinor Moibegott, Esq.
In Memoriam: Leonard Rack, M.D., Founding Science Advisor.

THE COALITION COMPRISES INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS WITH MEMBERSHIP IN THE MILLIONS

April 23, 1993

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It may interest you that we recently discussed a similar problem with the management of Hebrew National. They attempted to work out the problem amicably with the supplier in question. When the supplier did not respond with a sense of urgency, Hebrew National promptly replaced them. By insisting on certain standards from their suppliers, Hebrew National has made farm animal well-being a matter of corporate policy, --an action for which they should be justly proud.

This kind of thinking is becoming a mainstream concept among forward-looking members of the corporate sector as well as among the general public. The American Meat Institute, the industry trade association, in their current publication "Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines for Meat Packers" by Dr. Temple Grandin, recommends that "for both humane and safety reasons... the practice of hanging live cattle and calves upside-down should be eliminated."

Often we have been reminded of Sara Lee's long standing commitment to quality, by your slogan "Nobody doesn't like Sara Lee". Having set such high standards for yourself we do not believe that you are willing to endorse the low-grade slaughter practices at Long Prairie Packing. Avoidable cruelty is an ingredient which has no place in any of your products.

Unlike the relatively obscure Long Prairie Packing Co., Sara Lee's image is a powerful national presence. In plain words, widespread public awareness of shackling and hoisting could convince many people they don't like Sara Lee quite so much any more.

We think this is an opportunity to reaffirm your commitment to quality by insisting that those privileged to do business with you abide by the same high standards you impose on yourself. You would also be demonstrating your commitment to a corporate culture that believes the environment and its inhabitants are deserving of attention and respect.

We look forward to discussing this with you at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,

Henry Spira
Phone: (212) 873-3674
FAX: (212) 721-5264