

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
CONNECTICUT

COMMITTEES:

AGING

ARMED SERVICES

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

JUDICIARY

VETERANS' AFFAIRS, RANKING MEMBER

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

724 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

(202) 224-2823
FAX: (202) 224-9673

90 STATE HOUSE SQUARE, TENTH FLOOR
HARTFORD, CT 06103

(860) 258-6940
FAX: (860) 258-6958

915 LAFAYETTE BOULEVARD, ROOM 230
BRIDGEPORT, CT 06604

(203) 330-0598
FAX: (203) 330-0608

<http://blumenthal.senate.gov>

June 10, 2015

Mr. Craig Jelinek, CEO
Costco Wholesale Corporation
999 Lake Drive
Issaquah, WA 98027

Dear Mr. Jelinek,

As the ranking member of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, I am contacting you regarding the troubling findings of an undercover investigation recently conducted by the Humane Society of the United States into Hillandale Farms, a major supplier of eggs to your company. As you know, that investigation revealed that a Costco egg supplier confines its hens in tight, dank cages – and that Costco nonetheless sells those eggs in cartons emblazoned with an image of free-roaming hens in an idyllic-looking pasture and the phrase “Farm Fresh.”

Your supplier’s practices and claims are deceptive and outrageous.

Captured in video are birds locked in cages with the corpses of other birds, confined so tightly they are unable to spread their wings. As you know, unsanitary conditions and overcrowding at poultry farms may increase the likelihood of Salmonella and the virulence of bird flu.

This supplier was at the center of a major multistate outbreak of Salmonella in 2010, so Costco should have been particularly on guard in its audits of their facilities. Your company has made statements for the last eight years about your intention to sell only cage-free eggs. This video belies Costco’s claims to consumers about its supposed public health priorities and humane treatment of animals. Costco’s Animal Welfare Audit Expectations guide says that the company subscribes to the “Five Freedoms” of animal welfare, which include freedom from discomfort and freedom to exhibit natural behaviors—neither of which comport with your sale of eggs from caged hens.

The revelations cast doubt on Costco’s consumer credibility – and its commitment to public health priorities and humane animal policies. I urge you to recommit to this goal by providing a timeline with deadlines describing how and when Costco will be cage-free. As you know, several other companies have made this commitment and have provided deadlines as to when they plan to reach this goal.

I am concerned your company is supporting conditions that pose a serious public health risk. Please respond in writing by June 24, 2015 regarding corrective measures you plan to take regarding the allegations made about your supplier and the labeling of the product in your stores.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate