



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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The Honorable Bob Bergland
The Secretary of Agriculture

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The "Food Issues Update" monthly newsletter was started by us several years ago as an experiment to provide an information forum for the entire U.S. food system as policy changes occurred in agriculture, nutrition, and food.

As you know, the U.S. food system represents 25 percent of the GNP, 20 percent of the labor force, and a most significant element of our trade budget. Since 1972, increasingly more attention has been placed on this system. Farmers are now not the only ones who recognize the importance of food. Health groups, labor groups, manufacturers, financiers, trade groups, and many public and consumer groups are all taking a more active role in directing the food system. "Food Issues Update" has been successful in providing an information bridge to these various interest groups and has acted as an integrating agent.

Interest in the newsletter has grown consistently, especially from legislators, researchers, consumers, and farm groups. Now that the newsletter has met with widespread interest, we believe the Department of Agriculture, which is responsible for policies in these areas, may wish to maintain and expand this information forum. Your Office of Governmental Affairs has expressed interest in this matter.

The General Accounting Office is planning on phasing out publication of "Food Issues Update" and feels that this newsletter could be a useful information document for the Department of Agriculture to publish. The Department could use "Food Issues Update" to keep various interest groups abreast of emerging policy, integrate policy interests, and highlight new developments in agriculture, nutrition, and food.

Enclosed are some sample copies. Please consider this opportunity and have your representative call our Assistant Director, William Gahr, at 275-5525 to discuss the possibility of the Department publishing the 1979 series.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Elmer B. Steals

Comptroller General
of the United States

Enclosures