

# SAFE FOOD COALITION

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**For Immediate Release**  
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## **CONSUMER GROUPS APPLAUD DENIAL OF INDUSTRY PETITION TO INCREASE POULTRY SLAUGHTERHOUSE LINE SPEEDS**

### **Announcement of Upcoming Process to Lift Line Speeds at Individual Plants Raises New Concerns**

Washington D.C. — USDA’s Food Safety Inspection Service has denied a petition from the National Chicken Council requesting that the agency eliminate line speed caps for some chicken slaughter plants. The Safe Food Coalition, and tens of thousands of others, had asked USDA to deny the petition. “We commend FSIS for rejecting the National Chicken Council’s request,” said Thomas Gremillion, Director of Food Policy at Consumer Federation of America. “Waiving line speed restrictions could easily increase food safety risks, and this proposal lacked any credible safeguards.”

In the [letter](#) rejecting the petition, FSIS Acting Deputy Under Secretary Carmen Rottenberg indicated that the agency lacked the evidentiary basis to allow plants to operate without a line speed cap. The letter goes on to say that the petition’s proposed criteria for raising line speed caps would only duplicate existing requirements. “The data clearly did not support this petition and we are pleased that FSIS has confirmed that,” said Patricia Buck of the Center for Foodborne Illness Research & Prevention.

However, the letter indicates that FSIS may still issue “new technology waivers” that raise line speed caps for some plants. Pursuant to a 2014 rulemaking, the agency currently allows 20 plants operating under USDA’s “New Poultry Inspection System” to operate at up to 175 birds per minute. Other plants, regardless of the inspection system, cannot exceed 140 birds per minute. According to Rottenberg, “in the near future,” the agency will announce new criteria that it will use to evaluate whether individual plants may qualify for line speed waivers. The content of the criteria remains to be seen, but the existing procedures at FSIS for evaluating “new technology” waivers do not provide for public comment on applications, which raises transparency concerns. “FSIS established these line speed restrictions through notice and comment rulemaking and any changes should also go through that process,” said Tony Corbo of Food & Water Watch.

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*The Safe Food Coalition is made up of consumer, public health and victim groups who work on issues related to food, and organizations representing labor in the food industry.*