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PRESS STATEMENT

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HHS “Eat Real Food” Presser a “Red Herring” Focused on Marketing and Boosting US Seafood Industry While Ignoring Radioactive Contaminated Shrimp, Says Health Advocate

[Washington, DC—February 12, 2026] Yesterday the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) held a [briefing](#) it billed as “an update on the implementation of the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030](#) with key government and industry stakeholders.”

In addition to HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, featured presenters included Bureau of Prisons Director William Marshall, Department of War Under Secretary Mike Obadal, Chef Andrew Gruel, American Medical Association President Bobby Mukkamala, designers and marketers of the “Eat Real Food” campaign, makers of an “Eat Real Food” Super Bowl commercial with boxer Mike Tyson, and Mike Tyson himself.

They emphasized the “Eat Real Food” marketing campaign and repeated slogans denouncing processed and sugary foods and past federal policies promoting them, but went out of their way to exonerate the US food industry and praise Tyson Foods (no relation to the boxer). Journalists were invited, but the presenters took no questions.

Noticeably absent from the briefing was any reference to widespread, ongoing [recalls of imported shrimp contaminated with the radioactive isotope Cesium-137](#) or calls for stronger standards or labeling to protect consumers.

Last month HHS and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released the “Eat Real Food” [food pyramid graphic](#), which prominently featured shrimp for the first time, even as the FDA expanded warnings about Cesium-137 contamination leading to [shrimp recalls in 31 states](#), and even as the Department of Homeland Security [reported](#) radioactive contamination would “very likely” continue and spread beyond Indonesian shrimp imports already intercepted. Amid [falling shrimp sales](#), the National Fisheries Institute [was quick to endorse the new “Eat Real Food” guidelines](#)’ focus on seafood “including salmon, shrimp, and canned tuna.”

In yesterday’s HHS briefing, RFK and other presenters boosted US food producers and at times denounced competition from imported foods as unhealthy and unfair.

“People understand we should be eating more seafood,” said Andrew Gruel. “We have the lowest per capita consumption of any county in the Western world. We have the most sustainable fisheries of any country in the world thanks to the Magnuson-Stevens Act of 2007. Yet we import more seafood than any other country.”

*Commenting on these developments, **Kimberly Roberson, director of the Fukushima Fallout Awareness Network (FFAN)**, issued the following press statement:*

*“[Yesterday’s HHS event](#) was part red herring and part nothing burger” said **Kimberly Roberson**. “It offered nothing of substance in terms of updates on implementation of the new dietary guidelines, unless you count the federal prisons and the US Army embracing the ‘Eat Real Food’ slogan as implementation. And it misdirected attention away from substantive problems, like boosting US seafood in the face of ongoing shrimp recalls due to radioactive contamination.*

“Instead of real information, the event offered a self-congratulatory high-five to the marketers behind the ‘Eat Real Food’ campaign, including design and branding gurus, the director of the Mike Tyson ‘Eat Real Food’ TV ad aired during the Super Bowl, and Mike Tyson himself.

“The noticeable lack of substance partly reflects the fact that ‘Eat Real Food’ is a marketing campaign reframing the obvious, aimed not so much at protecting the public or improving health as at aggrandizing the current administration, demonizing earlier policies, and boosting certain players in the US food industry, including US shrimp producers.

“Of course it’s a good thing to eat more ‘real foods’ and less sugar and processed foods. That’s not new or controversial and no one would dispute it. What’s controversial is the shaky evidence basis, since HHS abandoned the [advisory body of independent scientists it used to rely on](#), and instead substituted its own ‘[foundation](#)’ of privately contracted scientists it hired in 2025.

“[What’s new in the resulting recommendations](#) is higher protein intake, the embrace of saturated fats like red meat and butter as ‘healthy fats,’ the removal of health equity and underserved populations from consideration including 48 million Americans who face food insecurity, and the highly politicized tone of what ought to be an utterly non-partisan issue. The presenters solicited applause for President Trump as the only president to confront the truth about these issues, and one went so far as to denounce those who would criticize the guidelines as suffering from ‘Trump derangement syndrome.’

“But all politics aside, we have a serious and growing problem with radioactive contamination of US food which the HHS marketing campaign is obscuring. Secretary Kennedy and Secretary Rollins know full well that shrimp is a vector of Cesium-137 contamination and the target of massive recalls. This made headlines nationally, from the [Associated Press](#) to [Martha Stewart Living](#).

“HHS and FDA were warned repeatedly about it. After Fukushima, a 2013 FDA Citizen Petition demanded tighter regulation and lower allowable radioactivity limits in food, including Pacific seafood, on which FFAN collected [1600 comments and tens of thousands of companion signatures](#).

“Last year we [wrote](#) twice to Secretary Kennedy and the Make America Healthy Again Commission asking them asking them ‘to finally address the impact of radiation contamination of U.S. food on the trajectory of cancer and chronic illness by setting and enforcing much safer levels for Americans.’ We also called for this in press releases and hand-delivered letters to MAHA leaders on Capitol Hill.

“To date FDA has yet to even consider more protective standards or warning labels about potential radioactive contamination of food. Consumers are therefore in the dark and can’t make informed decisions.

“Even amid the ongoing radioactive shrimp recalls, the new dietary guidelines continue to recommend pregnant women consume up to 12 ounces of shrimp weekly. Yet as we [pointed out directly](#) to HHS, FDA, and other agencies, research clearly proves that pregnant women, fetuses, and children are much more vulnerable to radiation than the general population.

“At least 45 states issue advisories about mercury-contaminated fish aimed at pregnant women and young children, advising them to avoid fish with higher mercury levels like shark, swordfish, and certain tuna. Why can’t we do that for radioactive contaminated seafood?

“So far the federal government has done nothing besides FDA issuing warnings about Indonesian shrimp imports. In general FDA has downplayed the problem, [claiming](#) ‘Cs-137 is readily excreted and does not accumulate in seafood.’ Meanwhile Trump’s Executive Orders rolling back radiation standards and related regulations propose to quintuple allowable public radiation exposure (from 1 millisievert to 5 millisieverts a year), as if this will make no difference to public health.

“Yet according to a [report](#) by the [International Commission on Radiological Protection](#) (ICRP), the international body that advises governments on managing radiation risks, when we ingest it, even in the tiniest amounts, Cesium-137 accumulates in our bodies and causes health damage.

“But the ICRP report also says, ‘There may be situations where a sustainable agricultural economy is not possible without placing contaminated food on the market. As such foods will be subject to market forces, this will necessitate an effective communication strategy to overcome the negative reactions from consumers outside the contaminated areas.’

“That’s what was on display in yesterday’s HHS presser: a ‘communications strategy’ designed to misdirect, boost seafood, and overcome negative reactions from consumers and get them to accept radioactive contamination – in this case shrimp -- as normal.

“Among the event’s more cringeworthy moments was an obviously coached Chef Andrew Gruel reading wonkish and questionable talk points boosting the US seafood industry, citing the [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act](#), calling US seafood the most sustainable in the world, and claiming Americans eat less seafood than in any other country. One likely reason we tend to eat less seafood is lack of consumer confidence due to mercury contamination. But neither this, nor revelations of Cesium-137 in shrimp, prevent HHS messengers like Gruel from exhorting us to eat more of it.

“Other unfortunate statements in yesterday’s HHS briefing include the US Army Under Secretary declaring ‘Eat Real Food’ will help make our soldiers the ‘most fueled, most fit, and most lethal weapons system on the planet’ and a branding guru involved with the ‘Eat Real Food’ TV ad introducing pitchman Mike Tyson this way: ‘Mike Tyson is famous for biting, now we say, Bite like Mike!’

“This is tone-deaf PR and absurd political theater, not the substantive focus on nutrition and health Americans need and deserve. Communications campaigns, no matter how politicized and over-the-top, can’t make America healthier. Stronger, science-based protective standards can.”

NOTE TO EDITORS AND PRODUCERS: Kimberly Roberson is available for comment and interviews. For more information, or to arrange an interview, please contact Stephen Kent, skent@kentcom.com, 914-589-5988