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Proposal A1193 – Irradiation as a phytosanitary measure for all fresh fruit and vegetables.

The proposal to allow the use of irradiation as a phytosanitary measure for all fresh fruits and vegetables is a concern to me. I feel that any treatment to human food that decreases the nutritional value of the food should require further investigation to properly compare the costs and benefits. The disregard for a “small” (between 10-17%) source of nutrients for the population that are highly susceptible to irradiation (vitamin E and thiamine) is very concerning and should not just be ignored as the “supporting document – risk and technical assessment report” does. The decrease in vitamin E in the population could lead to deficiencies which could cause nerve and muscle damage that results in loss of feeling in the arms and legs, loss of body movement control, muscle weakness, and vision problems. A reduction in the dietary intake of thiamine could lead to beri beri or Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome.

I also feel that the implementation of irradiation as a treatment for fruits and vegetables will quickly become the norm, as it is easier to just treat all items rather than those specifically identified as being transported across quarantine borders. This would lead to a much larger impact on the nutritional value of the fruits and vegetables available for consumption than has been identified in the supporting document – risk and technical report.