

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

October 27, 2025

Dear Leader Thune and Leader Schumer,

We write to urge you to oppose the confirmation of Dr. Casey Means as U.S. Surgeon General. Dr. Means espouses views on food and agriculture that diverge sharply from mainstream science and the realities of U.S. agriculture, rendering her unfit to serve as the nation's leading public health educator.

To ensure that all Americans have access to affordable and nutritious food, the United States must continue to embrace innovation—modern inputs, precision technologies, and new crop varieties—that enable farmers to produce more high quality food. Historically, science-driven policy has improved productivity and food safety while keeping prices for healthy food low. In contrast, Dr. Means promotes a vision of food and farming divorced from scientific evidence, dismissive of farmers' needs, and inconsistent with the goal of making healthy food even more affordable for every household.

Dr. Means has advocated for a wholesale rejection of “industrial agriculture” and the use of synthetic pesticides, calling a move away from these tools “the SINGLE most effective strategy [she] believes can solve pressing human health and environmental issues.”¹ No major scientific or health institution supports this claim. Dietary exposure to pesticide residues in food is well within safe limits set by the EPA. Modern pesticides are tightly regulated by the EPA and subject to comprehensive risk assessments. Further, modern pesticides are an integral part of maintaining agricultural yields in the face of growing pest concerns; eliminating their use would increase food prices, especially for fruits and vegetables.²

In several podcast appearances last year, Dr. Means questioned the safety of genetically engineered (GE) crops, especially those tolerant to glyphosate, despite decades of scientific review affirming their safety.³ The FDA, European Commission, and the U.S. National Academy of Sciences all conclude that approved GE crops are as safe to eat and as nutritious as other crops. Furthermore, analyses show that genetically engineered crops have reduced pesticide toxicity, increased farm profitability, and cut greenhouse gas emissions by increasing yields and limiting land conversion.

In her recent book, *Good Energy*, Dr. Means tells readers to avoid conventionally grown foods because “industrial agriculture practices—like monocropping, tilling, pesticides, and factory farming of animals—lead to vastly fewer nutrients.” This assertion is not supported by scientific evidence.

¹ <https://www.caseymeans.com/learn/newsletter-24>

² <https://thebreakthrough.org/issues/food-agriculture-environment/maha-making-agriculture-harder-for-all>

³ <https://www.caseymeans.com/learn/podcast-lets-be-honest>

Comprehensive reviews of hundreds of studies have found no consistent vitamin or mineral content differences between organic and conventionally grown foods.⁴ Meta-analyses have found that nutrient variation across foods is far more influenced by crop variety, soil type, and storage practices than by production method.⁵ Industrial agriculture has, in fact, made food more abundant, affordable, and safe for more Americans. Researchers also project that increasing demand for organic food would reduce overall consumption of fruits and vegetables.⁶

By encouraging Americans to avoid conventionally grown food, Dr. Means would promote distrust of science-based regulations and spur farmers to adopt less productive farming practices that require more land and resources. These shifts would jeopardize the livelihoods of American farmers, increase food prices for American consumers, and compromise the competitiveness of U.S. agriculture globally.

These concerns are not hypothetical. In April 2021, Sri Lanka instituted a nationwide ban on synthetic agricultural inputs and ordered farmers to go organic.⁷ The chaos that followed demonstrates what a full scale shift to low-productivity agriculture might look like in the U.S. Within months, Sri Lanka's agricultural yields plummeted by more than 50%, food prices skyrocketed, exports of crops like tea flatlined, and social tensions erupted.⁸ This crisis is a cautionary example of abrupt, ideology-driven agricultural policymaking.

If confirmed as Surgeon General, Dr. Means would have a powerful platform to shape public attitudes and policy regarding diet, nutrition, and pesticides. It is vital that leadership in this office is guided by robust scientific evidence and a sound understanding of agricultural systems, not by ideology or misinformation. Confirming Dr. Means would give dangerous credence to a set of conspiratorial and unscientific beliefs poised to reduce consumer confidence in, access to, and affordability of healthy food.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to vote against the confirmation of Dr. Casey Means as U.S. Surgeon General.

Sincerely,
The Breakthrough Institute

⁴ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2405844024043196>

⁵ <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/27459/exploring-linkages-between-soil-health-and-human-health>

⁶ <https://academic.oup.com/qopen/article/1/1/qoab008/6219100>

⁷ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/05/sri-lanka-organic-farming-crisis/>

⁸ <https://eu-asean.eu/sri-lanka-impact-assessment-study-of-2021-ban-on-conventional-pesticides-and-fertilizers-2022/>