

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA

IN RE PORK ANTITRUST LITIGATION

Civil No. 18-1776 (JRT/JFD)

This Document Relates To:

THE DIRECT PURCHASER PLAINTIFF CLASS
ACTION

**ORDER GRANTING MOTION FOR
PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF THE DIRECT
PURCHASER CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT
WITH HORMEL FOODS CORPORATION**

Direct Purchaser Plaintiffs (“DPPs”) have entered into a Settlement Agreement with Hormel Foods Corporation (“Hormel Foods”) and filed a Motion for Preliminary Approval of the Direct Purchaser Class Action Settlement with Hormel Foods Corporation (“Motion”). (Mot. for Approval of Settlement, Apr. 5, 2024, Docket No. 2177.) The Court previously granted DPPs’ motion for class certification. (See Mem. Op. & Order (“Cert. Order”), Mar. 29, 2023, Docket No. 1887.)

Having reviewed the Motion, its accompanying memorandum and declarations and the exhibits thereto, the Settlement Agreement,¹ and the file, **IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that the Motion [Docket No. 2177] is **GRANTED** as follows:

Preliminary Approval of Settlement Agreement

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all capitalized terms shall have the same meaning as in the Settlement Agreement between Direct Purchaser Plaintiffs and Hormel Foods Corporation (also referred to herein as “Settlement”).

1. This Court has jurisdiction over this action and each of the parties to the Settlement Agreement. Upon review of the record, the Court finds that the proposed Settlement Agreement, which was arrived at by arm's-length negotiations by experienced counsel, falls within the range of possible approval and is hereby preliminarily approved for settlement purposes, subject to further consideration at the Court's Fairness Hearing. The Court preliminarily finds that the Settlement Agreement appears to be fair, reasonable, adequate, and in the best interests of the Certified Class, raises no obvious reasons to doubt its fairness, and raises a reasonable basis for presuming that the Settlement Agreement and its terms satisfy the requirements of Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 23(c)(2) and 23(e) and due process so that notice of the Settlement should be given to the Certified Class.

2. The Settlement was entered into on behalf of the Class previously certified by this Court:

All persons and entities who directly purchased one or more of the following types of pork, or products derived from the following types of pork, from Defendants, or their respective subsidiaries or affiliates, for use or delivery in the United States from June 29, 2014 through June 30, 2018: fresh or frozen loins, shoulders, ribs, bellies, bacon, or hams. For this lawsuit, pork excludes any product that is marketed as organic or as no antibiotics ever (NAE); any product that is fully cooked or breaded; any product other than bacon that is marinated, flavored, cured, or smoked; and ready-to-eat bacon.

Excluded from this Class are the Defendants, the officers, directors or employees of any Defendant; any entity in which any Defendant has a controlling interest; and any affiliate, legal representative, heir or assign of any Defendant. Also excluded from this Class are any federal, state or local governmental entities, any judicial officer presiding over this action and the

members of his/her immediate family and judicial staff, any juror assigned to this action, and any Co-Conspirator identified in this action.

(See Cert. Order at 4–5.)

3. The Court previously approved the final exclusion list. (See Order, Jan. 24, 2024, Docket No. 2086.) As Certified Class members have already been provided an opportunity to exclude themselves, the Court finds that an additional opportunity to opt out is not warranted or required here.

4. The Court previously appointed the law firms of Lockridge Grindal Nauen P.L.L.P., and Pearson Warshaw, LLP as Co-Lead Class Counsel for the Certified Class. (See Cert. Order at 68.)

Approval of the Notice Plan

5. The Court hereby directs notice to be distributed to the Certified Class members pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(c)(2). Notice to members of the Certified Class shall be the responsibility of Co-Lead Class Counsel. The Court previously approved A.B. Data, Ltd. as the settlement administrator for previous DPP settlements. A.B. Data, Ltd. is hereby appointed as Settlement and Notice Administrator and ordered to effectuate the notice plan. Huntington Bank is hereby appointed as the Escrow Agent for the Settlement.

6. The proposed notice plan set forth in the Motion and the supporting declarations comply with Rule 23(c)(2)(B) and due process as it constitutes the best notice that is practicable under the circumstances, including individual notice via mail and email

to all Certified Class members who can be identified through reasonable effort. The direct mail and email notice will be supported by reasonable publication notice to reach Certified Class members who could not be individually identified.

7. The proposed notice documents: the Long Form Notice (Docket No. 2180-2), Short Form Notice (Docket No. 2180-3), and Summary Publication Notice (Docket No. 2180-4), and their proposed manner of transmission taken together comply with Rule 23(c)(2)(B), Rule 23(e)(1), and due process because the notices, forms, and manner of transmission are reasonably calculated to adequately apprise Certified Class members of (i) the nature of the action; (ii) the definition of the class certified; (iii) the class claims, issues, or defenses; (iv) how to object to the Settlement; (v) that the exclusion period has passed; (vi) that a Certified Class member may enter an appearance through an attorney if the member so desires; and (vii) the binding effect of a class judgment on members under Rule 23(c)(3).

8. Non-substantive changes, such as typographical errors, can be made to the notice documents by agreement of the parties without leave of the Court.

9. The Settlement and Notice Administrator shall cause Notice to be mailed by first class mail, postage prepaid, to all members of the Certified Class whose names and addresses can be derived from information provided by the defendants or developed in notifying class members of DPP settlements. The Long Form Notice shall be provided to all persons who request it in response to the Email (Short Form) Notice or the Publication

Notice. The Settlement and Notice Administrator is hereby directed to cause the banner ad to be published for four weeks in digital ad campaigns on websites for Supermarket News (www.supermarketnews.com) and Nation's Restaurant News (www.nrn.com). Comparable alternative websites relevant to the Class may be used if any of these websites will not accept such ads or if advertising space or inventory are not available at the time the advertisements are placed.

10. The Settlement and Notice Administrator shall continue to maintain and operate the current case-specific toll-free telephone number and website from previous settlements in this matter. As part of that operation, the Settlement and Notice Administrator shall update the website with copies of the Long Form Notice, Short Form Notice, and other current material from this Action. The Settlement and Notice Administrator shall receive calls from the toll-free telephone line and respond appropriately to inquiries regarding the Certified Class.

Schedule for Class Notice and the Fairness Hearing

11. The Court hereby sets the below schedule for the dissemination of notice to members of the Certified Class, for members of the Certified Class to object to the Settlement; and for the Court's Fairness Hearing, at which time the Court will determine whether the Settlement should be finally approved as fair, reasonable, and adequate. This Court may order the Fairness Hearing to be postponed, adjourned, or continued. If that occurs, the updated hearing date shall be posted on the Settlement Website, but

other than the website posting, the Parties will not be required to provide any additional notice to Certified Class members. The Fairness Hearing may take place remotely, including via telephone or video conference.

DATE	EVENT
June 3, 2024.	Settlement Administrator to provide direct mail and email notice, and commence implementation of the notice plan.
July 3, 2024 (30 days after the commencement of Notice).	Co-Lead Class Counsel shall file and post on the case website a motion for interim payment of litigation expenses.
August 3, 2024 (60 days after the commencement of Notice).	Last day for Certified Class members to object to the Settlement and/or DPPs' motion for interim payment of litigation expenses, and for Certified Class members to file notices to appear at the Final Fairness Hearing.
14 days before Final Settlement Fairness Hearing.	Co-Lead Class Counsel shall file and post on the case website a motion for final approval of the Settlement and all supporting papers, and respond to any objections to the proposed Settlement.
September 19, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. (Zoom).	Final Fairness Hearing and hearing on DPPs' motion for interim payment of litigation expenses.

DATED: May 6, 2024
at Minneapolis, Minnesota.

s/John R. Tunheim
JOHN R. TUNHEIM
United States District Judge