

## Our Opinion on Using of Irradiation in Food Preservation and Production

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### Abstract

The meat irradiation is a tried and true method that is used to improve the food quality and the food safety of the meat. By the application of this method, the growth of bacteria, viruses, and parasites is successfully inhibited. 'By using postponing spoiling and inhibiting the growth of the microorganisms, also extends the meat shelf life and improves the food quality of the meat'. The right dosage is applied; the meat radiation has no action on the meat colour, the meat taste, or the meat texture. Its effect on the chemical and the nutritional properties of the meat is more complicated, though, as it may change the meat vitamins, the meat fatty acids, and the meat amino acids, and produce the free radicals that oxidise the meat fat. The effect of these modifications is dependent on a number of factors, such as the kind of meat, the meat storage conditions, and the meat radiation exposure. The Meat physical characteristics, such as meat softness, the meat texture, and the meat's dose-dependent ability to retain water, can also be affected by the radiation. Low doses of meat radiation may enhance the meat texture and the meat's softness, while excessive doses cause the meat's protein denaturation, which adversely affects the meat's characteristics. The regulatory and public perception elements of meat irradiation are also examined in this study. Although meat radiation is permitted and regulated in many nations, its use is debatable and causes anxiety in the public. Meat irradiation is a dependable method of improving the food safety and the food quality of the meat; nevertheless, it is important to take into account the action it may have on the chemical, physical, and nutritional characteristics of the meat product when selecting the right dosage and application. The long-term action of the radiation on the meat product and allay the consumer worries, further studies are required.

**Keywords:** meat irradiation, quality, safety, meat.

### Introduction

The Meat is a valuable element of the human diet as it contains essential elements such as protein, vitamins, and minerals. The meat is also vulnerable to microbial pathogens and spoilage, posing significant risks to human health. Ionizing radiation is used in meat irradiation to maintain the food safety and quality of the meat [1,2,3,4,5,6,7 and 8].

For several decades, meat irradiation has been used to lower microbial contamination and extend the storage period. The procedure entails subjecting the meat item to a regulated amount of ionizing radiation, usually accomplished by applying the gamma rays, the electron beams, or the X-rays. The radiation disrupts the DNA and other cellular components of the microorganisms, making them unable to reproduce and causing their death. The procedure also breaks down some of the molecules in the meat product, which can affect its nutritional quality and sensory properties [46,47,48,49,50,51,52,53 and 54].

'Despite its potential benefits, meat irradiation remains controversial, with concerns about its food safety, efficacy, and effect on the nutritional quality and sensory properties of meat products' [55,56,57,58,59,60,61,62 and 63]. Some critics argue that meat irradiation could create harmful compounds or destroy essential nutrients. In contrast, others questioned the need for irradiation, considering other meat safety measures, such as good manufacturing practices and meat testing. The Consumer acceptance of irradiated meat products also needs to be addressed, with some people

expressing concerns about their food safety and acceptability [73,74,75,76,77,78,79,80 and 81].

This comprehensive research aims to critically evaluate the existing literature on meat irradiation and its repercussions on the food quality and food safety of the meat. 'The proof of the irradiation's effectiveness at lowering microbial contamination and prolonging the shelf life of the meats is explored along with its potential effect on the physical and' chemical characteristics, the nutrient content, and the sensory properties [92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99 and 100]. This paper will also address the regulatory framework for meat irradiation, including labeling requirements and government oversight, as well as identify areas for further research and policy development [101,102,103,104,105,106,107 and 108].

### The Sources and the Principles of Meat Irradiation

The Ionizing radiation, such as the gamma rays, X-rays, or high-energy electrons, is used to irradiate the meat. The meat irradiation is determined by the absorbed dose expressed in Gray (Gy) or kilo Gray (kGy), with 1 Gray being equivalent to 1 J/kg of product. The method is considered a safe and effective way to decrease or eliminate hazardous microorganisms, prolong the shelf life, as well as enhance the food quality and food safety of the meat products. The principles of meat irradiation are determined by the ability to disrupt the genetic material of the microorganisms, preventing them from reproducing or causing illness. The irradiation affects the microorganisms'

genetic material (the DNA or the RNA) directly and indirectly. Direct irradiation can break the bonds between the base pairs in the genetic material, killing the cell's reproduction ability. The damage to the water molecules creates free radicals and reactive oxygen species, which damage the genetic material indirectly [134,135,136,137,138,139 and 140]. 'The Irradiation also helps to break down certain enzymes and the proteins in the meat that can contribute to the spoilage and increasing the shelf life' [141,142,143,144,145 and 146]. USA, Canada, as well as several European and Asian nations, allow meat irradiation by using the Cobalt-60, the cesium-137, and the electron-beam accelerators. The Cobalt-60, the most prevalent source of ionizing radiation for meat irradiation, is a radioactive isotope that emits gamma rays capable of penetrating deep into the meat products to destroy harmful microorganisms. Cesium-137 is another source of ionizing radiation, although it is less commonly used than cobalt-60. In addition, the electron-beam accelerators are used for the meat irradiation. These devices generate high-energy electrons that can penetrate the meat products to eliminate harmful microorganisms and extend the shelf life [154,155,156,157,158,159 and 160]. Irradiating meats has several benefits, including multifunctional applications as well as guaranteed food safety and food security. The spectrum produced is effective against the bacterial spores across a broad range of concentrations. The processing does not involve heat, it is safe for the meat, does not significantly lower the nutrient levels, leaves no chemical residues, and is simple to control during use [37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44 and 45]. To effectively lengthen the lifespan of the irradiated meat products, the following principles must be observed as the Radurization uses low doses of 0.1–1 kGy. This amount inhibits respiration, delays ripening, disinfects pests, and inactivates the *Trichinella* parasite. The Radicidation is referred to as a moderate dose. This radiation uses a quantity of approximately (1–10 kGy), which has the action of reducing the spoilage and the microbial pathogens including *Salmonella* sp. and the *Listeria monocytogenes*. This dosage is typically found in frozen meats and its application is identical to that of pasteurization, except the irradiation does not rely on the thermal energy. The Radapertization uses extremely high doses which are above or equal to (10 kGy), ranging between (30 and 50 kGy). This dose is typically used in the sterilization process because its action can kill all microorganisms in the meat up to the level of spores [161,162,163,164 and 165]. The meat irradiation sources and the principles are based on the ability of the ionizing radiation to disrupt the genetic material of the microorganisms, the enzymes, and the proteins in the meat products, culminating in improved food safety and food quality. The use of irradiation is regulated by the national and international authorities to ensure its food safety and effectiveness [166,167,168,169,170 and 171].

### **The Action of the Irradiation on the Meat**

#### **The Microbial food safety**

The Microbial food safety is a critical aspect of meat production and consumption, as these products can be a source of various harmful microorganisms that can cause food-borne diseases. The Meat products are potentially contaminated with various pathogens, such as *Salmonella*, *Escherichia coli*, *Campylobacter*, and *Listeria monocytogenes*, leading to severe illness or death in vulnerable populations [9,10,11,12,13,14,15 and 16].

Contamination might occur at the production, processing, or distribution stage, including on the farm, during transport, in the slaughterhouses or the processing facilities, and in the retail outlets or at the home. The Improper handling and storage of the meat products can also increase the risk of contamination. Food-borne disease outbreaks related to meat have been reported globally, with various types of products being implicated, including ground beef, chicken, pork, and processed meats. These outbreaks have led to significant public health and economic consequences, highlighting the importance of effective interventions to lower the risk of contamination [109,110,111,112,113,114,115,116 and 117].

The Irradiation has been studied extensively for its efficacy in reducing the microbial contamination of the meat. The Exposure of the meat to ionizing radiation, the latter lowers or eliminates the harmful microorganisms that can cause food-borne diseases. Previous research showed that irradiation could effectively lower the levels of pathogens such as *Salmonella* and *Escherichia coli* as well as the levels of spoilage organisms, leading to improved microbial food safety and lower the risk of food borne diseases. The effectiveness of various types of ionizing radiation on the meat, including the gamma rays and the e-beams, has been studied [82, 83, 84, 85, 86,87, 88, 89,90, and 91]. Gamma-ray irradiation is more effective than e-beam irradiation at inhibiting microbial growth in the meat. The UV light effectively eliminates the *Salmonella* spp., the *Pseudomonas*, the *Micrococcus*, and the *Staphylococcus* on the meat. The shelf life of the meat products is extended by eliminating these contaminating bacteria. Gamma irradiation at low doses can improve microbiological food safety, ensure safety, and extend chicken meat's shelf life without affecting the food quality. 'Three kGy gamma irradiated beef lower the growth of the mesophilic bacteria, the coliforms, and the *Staphylococcus aureus*'. The Meat and Drug Administration (FDA) determined that a 3.5 kGy gamma ray irradiation dose effectively eliminates the pathogenic microorganisms from the fresh meat. The meat Irradiation had the action of slowing the growth of the bacterial cells and deactivating their metabolism. The Bacteria are inherently resistant to the action of the irradiation and, in the lag phase or inactive state will be more resistant. In contrast, those in the growth phase will be more vulnerable [64,65,66,67,68,69,70,71 and 72].

#### **The Chemical Properties**

The chemical properties of the irradiated meat refer to the changes that occur to the chemical constituents and compositions of the meat due to exposure to ionizing radiation. Irradiation can cause both desirable and undesirable action on the chemical characteristics of the meat, depending on the dose and the specific compounds in the meat. One of the most significant changes often observed in irradiated meat products is the formation of free radicals. They become reactive molecules that damage cellular components and cause oxidative stress. This leads to lipid oxidation, which causes off-flavors and odors, as well as a decline in nutritional quality due to the loss of essential fatty acids and other nutrients. The irradiation at the lower doses also aids lipid oxidation by reducing the levels of peroxides and other reactive species. This procedure also affects the protein content of the meat, leading to alterations in the composition of the amino acids, protein structure, and digestibility [126,127, 128, 129, 130,131,132 and 133]. These changes have potentially positive and negative actions, mostly on the nutritional value of

the meat, that are contingent upon the particular proteins involved and the dose of the radiation used. The positive action of irradiation includes the fact that the irradiation can cause the formation of reactive species, such as free radicals, which can cause the formation of covalent bonds between the amino acids in the protein molecules. This cross-linking can change the structure of a protein molecule and make it resistant to enzymatic digestion, which causes a decrease in protein digestibility [27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34 35 and 36]. Irradiation can also cause the denaturation of the protein molecules. Denaturation involves opening the protein structure, which can facilitate the interactions between the amino acids and increase the accessibility of the digestive enzymes to the protein molecules, and it can also improve protein digestibility. The irradiation can also cause adverse action; namely, excessive irradiation can cause a breakdown of or a change in the amino acid compounds in the protein molecules, which causes a decrease in the overall amino acid content and, consequently, decreases the protein digestibility. The electron-beam irradiation at less than 3 kGy did not affect changes in the quality of the smoked duck flesh the amino acids, the fatty acids, and the volatiles during the storage [118,119,120,121,122,123,124 and 125].

Aside from these chemical changes, the irradiation also affects the vitamin content of the meat products, with some vitamins being more sensitive than others. The irradiation leads to a loss of the vitamin C, while other vitamins, such as vitamins A and E, are relatively stable. Irradiation has been shown to alter the meat's oxidation-reduction ability, accelerating lipid oxidation, protein breakdown, and flavor and odor changes [147,148,149,150,151,152 and 153].

When combined with certain antioxidants, such as flavonoids, irradiation can help prolong the induction period of lipid oxidation. 'The storage of the irradiated meat at 5–10 C for one week almost did not change the meat pH, the meat texture, the total volatile base nitrogen, or the microbe number'. The higher dose of the UV irradiation increased 2-thiobarbituric acid content, decreased water-holding capacity, and decreased beef color intensity and tenderness. Two point five and 5 kGy gamma irradiation lowered the nitrite content in the chicken sausages and prevented oxidation when combined with the antioxidants. The titratable acidity and the acid value in the meat samples can be lowered by irradiation [17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25 and 26].

#### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

#### Conclusion

'One promising method that might enhance the food safety and the food quality of the meat is meat irradiation'. According to a recent study, irradiation can preserve the nutritional value of meat products, decrease microbial contamination, and increase shelf life. To overcome this issue, more study is necessary as the sensory characteristics can be adversely affected. It is also significant to remember that the labeling regulations for irradiated meat products exist and that irradiation in meat processing is governed by both national and international bodies. Government organizations play a crucial role in guaranteeing the security and quality of the customers.

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