INSTITUTE FOR AGRICULTURE AND TRADE POLICY

PRESS RELEASE

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About IATP

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Washington D.C.

IATP applauds ethanol producer POET's move to antibiotic-free ethanol production

POET joins growing number of ethanol producers rejecting antibiotics

MINNEAPOLIS – POET, the world's largest ethanol producer, announced Monday the launch of an antibiotic-free ethanol production process in select plants. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) applauded the initiative, and called for the rest of the ethanol industry to remove antibiotics from their production. "We applaud POET's decision to eliminate antibiotics in some of their plants as a first step toward becoming antibiotic free" said IATP's Julia Olmstead, co-author of the 2009 report Fueling Resistance? Antibiotics in Ethanol Production. "This is a clear indication that antibiotics in ethanol production are unnecessary, and a growing marketing liability."

Since 2009, IATP has pushed for a ban on antibiotic use in ethanol production, citing concerns over the rising overuse of medically unnecessary antibiotics in agriculture and increases in antibiotic resistance. Use of antibiotics in ethanol production continues today, despite the availability of several effective, economical alternatives. According to IATP's 2009 Fueling Resistance? report, more than 40 percent of U.S. ethanol plants are using some form of antibiotic-free antimicrobial.

Ethanol producers have traditionally relied on antibiotics to control bacterial outbreaks in fermentation tanks that can reduce ethanol yields. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) testing in recent years, however, has indicated the presence of antibiotic residues in dried distillers grains with solubles (DDGS), leading to safety concerns.

DDGS contaminated with antibiotics residues are generally permitted for livestock feed, but the FDA does not allow feeding DDGS contaminated with the residue of virginiamycin—an antibiotic frequently used in ethanol production—to layer hens. The elimination of antibiotics will allow the Sioux Falls, S.D.–based POET to market certified antibiotic-free DDGS, a byproduct of ethanol production that's sold as livestock feed.