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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 Geneva.

Family farm/sustainable agriculture groups urge passage of animal antibiotics bill

Bill would protect public health, restrict unnecessary antibiotic use in food animals

MINNEAPOLIS – Family farm and sustainable agriculture organizations sent a letter to President Barack Obama and Senate leaders today urging them to support a bill that would restrict the nontherapeutic use of medically important antibiotics in food animals.

The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA) S. 619, withdraws the approval of seven specific classes of medically important antibiotics for nontherapeutic feed additive use. More than 70 percent of all antibiotics in the U.S. are added to animal feed to promote growth and manage stresses of animals in confinement housing. Under the bill, the FDA would review each antibiotic to determine if there is a reasonable certainty of no harm to public health. Farmers would not lose their ability to treat sick animals with antibiotics on the farm.

“This bill is critically important for public health—including the health of farmers,” said Jim Harkness, president of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. “Other countries, including the European Union, have taken action on antibiotic use in agriculture. The FDA believes we should act. We have thousands of farmers around the country who are already raising livestock without antibiotics. Now, it’s time for Congress to act.”

Some agriculture groups oppose PAMTA, including the National Pork Producers Council and the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, claiming that it will compromise food safety; but in the letters sent to the Senate and White House today, family farm and sustainable agriculture groups write: “... the real threat comes from irresponsible industrial animal production practices. Producers pack huge numbers of animals tightly together in confined spaces and often feed them physiologically-incompatible diets, practices that leave the animals susceptible to disease and discomfort. The overuses of antibiotics that PAMTA would prohibit are propping up this unsustainable system at the expense of public health and animal welfare.”

The American Medical Association, the Centers for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science have all called for restrictions of antibiotic use for nontherapeutic purposes in food animals.

Organizations signing the White House and Senate letters include: Ashtabula Lake Geauga County Farmers Union (Ohio); Family Farm Defenders; Farm Aid; Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy; Land Loss Prevention Project (N.C.); Land Stewardship Project; Michael Fields Agricultural Institute; National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition; National Family Farm Coalition; Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts; Rural Advancement Foundation International; Rural Vermont; and Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

You can read the full letter at: www.iatp.org.

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