



**INSTITUTE FOR
AGRICULTURE AND
TRADE POLICY**



**THE CENTER FOR
FOOD SAFETY**

PRESS RELEASE

**For immediate release
March 15, 2013**

Press Contact

Andrew Ranallo
Communications Associate, IATP
+1 (651) 334-0044
andrew@iatp.org

Elisabeth Holmes
Center for Food Safety
+1 (415) 826-2770
eholmes@centerforfoodsafety.org

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.

Center for Food Safety is a national, nonprofit, membership organization founded in 1997 to protect human health and the environment by curbing the use of harmful food production technologies and by promoting organic and other forms of sustainable agriculture. CFS maintains offices in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, California and Portland, Oregon. More information can be found at www.centerforfoodsafety.org.

New petition asks FDA to prohibit yet another unnecessary antibiotic use

Agriculture organizations ask FDA to halt antibiotic use in fuel byproduct sold as animal feed

WASHINGTON, D.C. – According to a petition submitted today to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), antibiotic use in ethanol production is illegal, unnecessary and adds to the catastrophic public health threat from antibiotic-resistant infections in humans. The petition, submitted by the Center for Food Safety (CFS) and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), makes the case that while FDA claims to be addressing the public health threat from nearly 30 million pounds of antibiotics given to food animals annually, it currently does not regulate, monitor or require reporting of this particular and unnecessary use of antibiotics. CFS and IATP believe the practice should be prohibited.

Today's petition comes just one day after Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-25), the only microbiologist in Congress, introduced the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA). The legislation is designed to stop the overuse of antibiotics on the farm- a practice that is accelerating the growth of antibiotic-resistance disease.

Despite the ready availability of effective alternatives, ethanol producers widely use antibiotics as a tool to manage bacterial outbreaks in their fermentation vats. According to FDA and university testing, those same antibiotics remain present in the nutrient-rich leftover corn mash from the ethanol production process, known as "distillers grains with solubles" (DGS), when it is repurposed and sold as livestock feed to cattle, dairy, swine and poultry producers. Therefore, in addition to receiving enormous amounts of antibiotics intentionally added to their feed or drinking water, food-producing animals also receive non-therapeutic doses of antibiotics through DGS.

"Prohibiting antibiotics in distillers grains should be a no-brainer for the FDA, especially when their own research acknowledges the rising threat of antibiotic resistance," said IATP's Dr. David Wallinga.

Unfortunately, the agency has been slow to take action on antibiotics in distillers grains despite evidence indicating it should do otherwise. Twice—in 2008 and again in 2010—the FDA found antibiotic residues in DGS. In defiance of its own findings, FDA has refused to publish the complete 2008 study results. While the agency has announced that it intends to publish draft guidance for industry, more binding action is vital to protect public health.

“The FDA is asleep at the wheel. We know there are alternatives, and the threat of antibiotic resistance is only increasing,” said Elisabeth Holmes, staff attorney with the Center for Food Safety. “We’re not saying ‘Don’t sell DGS,’ we are asking the agency to stop leaving decisions that affect public health in the hands of the pharmaceutical and ethanol industries.”

Livestock farmers rely on DGS as a nutritious and cost-effective feed, and the sale of distillers grains can make up 20 percent of an ethanol plant’s revenue stream, yet the health threats are too great to justify the unnecessary use of antibiotics to produce DGS when there are viable alternatives.

POET, the world’s largest ethanol producer, produces in excess of 1.6 billion gallons of ethanol and 9 billion pounds of DGS each year. All 27 of POET’s ethanol plants have been antibiotic-free since August 2011, demonstrating its feasibility. Still, the vast amount of ethanol from most producers remains laden with antibiotics, with its byproducts sold as livestock feed.

A copy of the petition to the FDA can be found at <http://bit.ly/YycI88>.

For more on ethanol and antibiotic resistance, see:

Bugs In the System (2012) <http://www.iatp.org/documents/bugs-in-the-system>

Fueling Resistance (2009) <http://www.iatp.org/documents/fueling-resistance-antibiotics-in-ethanol-production>

<30>