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## FDA Approves BGH to Detriment of Farmers, Consumers

For Immediate Release

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Minneapolis, MN, November 7, 1993 - On Friday, November 5, 1993, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced the approval of synthetic bovine growth hormone (BGH), also known as bovine somatotropin (BST), for use in dairy cows. The controversial drug, which increases milk production in dairy cows, has been under review for the past several years.

On behalf of farmers and consumers throughout the state of Minnesota, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) condemns the decision of the FDA. Consumer polls have consistently shown that consumption of milk and dairy products will drop significantly upon approval of BGH due in part to the potential residual effects of the use of antibiotics to cure mastitis, or udder infections, prompted by the use of BGH. The FDA also announced that the approval of BGH does not necessitate that BGH-treated milk and dairy products be labeled. This decision to not offer consumers any choice or protection from a synthetic drug is both irresponsible and misguided on the part of the FDA.

In addition, farmers have not demonstrated a willingness to inject their herds with synthetic BGH. Already suffering from an overloaded milk market and low dairy prices, many dairy producers question the necessity of a technology that increases milk production. A recent poll by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for Agricultural Technology and Family Farming demonstrated that 89% of farmers would not use BGH even if labeling were not required. The percentage of farmers who would not utilize synthetic BGH would increase if labeling were required, according to the survey.

The European Union is currently considering a seven-year ban on synthetic BGH. Linda Bullard, an analyst with the European Parliament, predicted that American farmers will suffer a significant loss of market share with the approval of BGH to the benefit of European and Australian dairy producers. "There is no question that America will lose market share in the competitive international dairy market," said Bullard.

Passed by Congress as part of the 1994 fiscal year budget, a 90-day moratorium will now go into effect. The moratorium will expire February 5, 1994.

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The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy is a nonprofit research organization working to create economically and environmentally sustainable communities and regions around the world.