

Press Release from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Jackie Hunt Christensen 612-870-3424 or (cell) 612-387-3424

EPA Report Calls Dioxin A Human Carcinogen

IATP Urges EPA to Quickly Phase-out of Dioxin Sources

(Minneapolis, MN) - In response to an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report leaked to the Washington Post acknowledging that dioxin is a human carcinogen, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy today urged the agency to act quickly to eliminate the primary sources of dioxin pollution.

Medical and municipal waste incinerators, like the Hennepin County garbage incinerator in downtown Minneapolis, are among the primary sources of dioxin. EPA estimates that 90 percent of dioxin exposure comes from food. The chemical enters the food chain when dioxin emissions fall on pastures and are eaten by animals. Waterborne dioxin emissions also build up in fish. Dioxin is stored in fat, and thus foods containing animal fats have the highest levels of dioxins.

"For too long now, EPA has put the interests of the dioxin-producing industries ahead of consumers and food producers," said Jackie Hunt Christensen, IATP food safety project director. "The only way to get dioxin out of our food is to stop its production, not try to 'control' it."

The EPA report confirms dioxin's status as one of the most toxic substances ever studied. In addition to causing cancer, it has been linked to birth defects, infertility, learning disabilities, immune suppression and hormonal effects. Exposure to dioxin occurs over a lifetime, and the danger is cumulative, says the EPA. Studies have found people all over the world with dioxin in their bodies.

Dioxin is an unwanted by-product of many industrial processes. EPA has previously identified municipal garbage incinerators, secondary copper smelters, medical waste incinerators, and cement kilns that burn hazardous waste as the top four sources of dioxin air emissions in the U.S.

"We can't stop eating, but we CAN stop making dioxin," continued Christensen. "EPA's announcement sounds a clarion call to get rid of dioxin sources like incinerators like the one in downtown Minneapolis and the manufacture of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic and chlorine-bleached paper products."

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