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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **FDA Rarely Tests For Toxic Pollutants Found in Salmon Study**

#### **Consumers Left in the Dark When Buying Salmon and Seafood**

Minneapolis - U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) fish safety testing does not include, except for limited samples through their Total Diet Study, PCBs and dioxins - pollutants which were found to be widespread in farmed salmon in a study published last week. The largest study ever to compare pollutants in wild and farmed salmon, published in the latest issue of the journal *Science*, found that farmed-raised salmon contained eight times higher concentrations of PCBs and eleven times higher concentrations of dioxin than wild-caught salmon.

"The much higher contaminants being found in farmed salmon should drive the FDA to immediately expand their testing program to include toxic pollutants, like PCB's and dioxin," said David Wallinga, MD, co-director of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy's Food and Health Program. "Our public health agencies, like the FDA, should be acting to tell consumers which salmon, and seafood in general, are safer to eat. Keeping the public in the dark by not testing for known toxins doesn't instill much public confidence."

The *Science* study analyzed two metric tons of wild and farmed salmon sold in North America, South America and Europe. Using Environmental Protection Agency health guidelines, the study concluded that consumers can safely eat four to eight meals of wild salmon a month, while consumption of more than one eight-ounce portion of farmed salmon a month in most cases poses an "unacceptable cancer risk." The study found that European farmed salmon had significantly greater contaminant loads than those farmed in North and South America. The *Science* study can be found at:  
[http://www.pewtrusts.com/pdf/salmon\\_study.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.com/pdf/salmon_study.pdf)

"The clear message for consumers from the study is that wild salmon is much safer and healthier than farmed salmon," says Kathleen Schuler, Environmental Health Scientist with IATP. "FDA's existing fish consumption advice for women of child-bearing age and children doesn't distinguish farmed and wild fish; it also considers risks only from mercury contamination, and not risks from other known toxins like PCBs and dioxins."

The vast majority of seafood, including farmed salmon, purchased in the U.S. is imported. Under the 2002 Farm bill, Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) is scheduled to go into effect for fish and shellfish in September 2004. COOL will require salmon to be labeled as "farmed" or "wild," and also include the country of origin. This is an important first step in helping inform consumers.

IATP calls for the following additional government actions:

- The FDA should expand testing for key pollutants in seafood sold in the U.S., including imports, such as PCBs and dioxin, but also PCB-like flame-retardant chemicals that are now being found in fish. FDA testing must include both farmed and wild fish, and fish from all the major fisheries (Atlantic and Pacific) consumed by Americans
- In fish consumption advice, the FDA should distinguish between farmed and wild fish - due the significant differences in pollutant levels.
- People should be able to eat salmon and other fish without worry. Therefore, the EPA should work to reduce or eliminate point sources of pollution that contribute to toxic contaminants affecting seafood. Incinerators and coal-fired power plants are some of the largest sources of dioxin and mercury emitted into the atmosphere, and eventually into the food chain.

IATP's Food and Health Program has published a Smartfish Guide for Minnesota consumers. It can be found at: [www.iatp.org/foodandhealth](http://www.iatp.org/foodandhealth)

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