

Letter to the US Chain Restaurant Industry: Prohibit the routine use of antibiotics in your meat supply

September 15, 2015

Dear CEOs of Top Restaurant Chains,

On behalf of millions of concerned citizens, we urge you to commit to serving meat and poultry in your restaurants that is raised without the routine use of antibiotics. Medical experts tell us that we need to significantly reduce our use of antibiotics, including in animal agriculture, in order to address the growing health threat from antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections.

American consumers are deeply concerned about this issue. According to a 2012 Consumer Reports survey, a majority of consumers want meat raised without antibiotics and are willing to pay more for it. Mainstream food companies like Chick-fil-A, Panera Bread and Chipotle are responding and demonstrating that it is economically viable to greatly reduce or eliminate antibiotic use, particularly in poultry production.

80% of all antibiotics in the US are currently sold for use by livestock producers who routinely administer these drugs in order to promote faster growth and prevent disease in living conditions that are often crowded and unsanitary. The overuse and misuse of these critical drugs enables some of the bacteria to become resistant, proliferate and spread.

Antibiotics should only be used for treating animals when indicated by a genuine therapeutic need, such as a diagnosed illness or to stop a documented outbreak of disease. They should never be administered routinely for purposes such as growth promotion or disease prevention.

Yet this dangerous practice continues, even as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) declare antibiotic resistance to be among the top five health threats facing our nation, and health experts including the World Health Organization, American Medical Association and American Academy of Pediatrics warn that feeding low doses of antibiotics to healthy animals contributes to the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Leadership from the US Chain Restaurant Industry is urgently needed. If you haven't done so already, we urge you to take the following actions:

1. Publicly adopt an antibiotics stewardship policy that prohibits the use of antibiotics or prohibits the routine use of medically important antibiotics for growth promotion or disease prevention and allows use of these drugs only to treat sick animals or for non-routine disease control. Perdue Farms, for example, recently announced it has already implemented such a standard.
2. Let your suppliers know that you expect poultry and other meats sold in your restaurants to meet this standard.

While we will continue to push lawmakers and regulatory agencies to adopt stronger policies, we believe that your industry can use its significant buying power to help stem this public health crisis by developing strong policies to reduce or eliminate antibiotic use in your meat and poultry supply chains.

Sincerely,

Academy of Integrative Health & Medicine
AFGE Local 3354
Albert Einstein College of Medicine
AllergyKids Foundation
Alliance for Prudent Use of Antibiotics
American Federation of Government Employees
American Grassfed Association
Antibiotic Resistance Action Center
Breast Cancer Fund
Cal PIRG
California Church IMPACT
Catholic Rural Life
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Health
Center for Family Farm Development, Inc.
Center for Food Safety
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment
Central Co-op
Chef Ann Foundation
Clean Water Action Council of NE WI
Community Food and Justice Coalition
Consumers Union
CoPIRG
Dignity Health
Dr. Yolanda Whyte Pediatrics
Earth Day Coalition
Ecology Center
Environmental Working Group
familyfarmed
Farm Forward
Farm Sanctuary
Farmworker Association of Florida
Food & Water Watch
Food Animal Concerns Trust
Food Babe
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Food Sleuth, LLC
Fresh Advantage LLC
Friends of the Earth
Government Accountability Project
Grassroots Environmental Education
Green Chicago Restaurant Coalition
Health Care Without Harm
Healthy Food Action
Hoosier Environmental Council
IFOAM-Organics International

Illinois Citizens for Clean Air & Water
Institute of Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders
Institute for a Sustainable Future
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Keep Antibiotics Working
Kewaunee CARES
Land Loss Prevention Project
Land Stewardship Project
League of United Latin American Citizens
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Maryland PIRG
MASSPIRG
Midwest Environmental Justice Organization
MomsRising.org
MRSA Survivors Network
National Center for Health Research
National Consumers League
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Physicians Alliance
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society
NMPIRG
NOFA Interstate
Northeast Sustainable Ag. Working Group
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Oregon State PIRG
Organic Consumers Association
Pesticide Action Network
Physicians for Social Responsibility, SF Bay Area Chapter
Public Health Alliance
Real Food Challenge
Roots of Change
RRBG Farms LLC
Rural Coalition
Rural Development Leadership Network
School Food FOCUS
Science and Environmental Health Network
Slow Food California
Slow Food Nebraska
Slow Food USA
Socially Responsible Agricultural Project
Society for Obesity Awareness & Prevention
Society of Infectious Disease Pharmacists
Southwest Environmental Center
STOP Foodborne Illness
The Black Goat

The Cornucopia Institute
The Humane Society of the US, WI Agriculture Advisory Council
The Rosenthal Group, Inc.
U.S. PIRG
U.S. Right to Know
University of Illinois
University of Illinois at Chicago
UIC School of Public Health
WashPIRG
Waterkeeper Alliance
Wellness Warrior
Western Nebraska Resources Council
Wisconsin Nurses Association
Women, Food and Agriculture Network
World Farmers