



LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
25TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

August 2, 2013

Alfred Almanza, Administrator  
Food Safety and Inspection Service  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, D.C. 20024

*RE: Animal Legal Defense Fund; Filing of Food Labeling Petition*  
FSIS Petition No. 13-03

Dear Administrator Almanza:

I write today to ask FSIS to consider the Animal Legal Defense Fund's (ALDF) petition proposing new mandatory labeling of meat and poultry products to disclose antibiotic use during the raising of food animals. I am the author of the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), which would restrict the use of eight classes of antibiotics in agriculture to preserve them for human health, and I believe it is the highest obligation of our government to ensure safety and transparency within our food supply to protect the public health of all Americans.

According to numbers published by the Food and Drug Administration, nearly 80% of the antibiotics sold in the United States are fed to otherwise healthy food animals at sub-therapeutic levels either for growth promotion or to compensate for unsanitary living conditions. This practice has led to the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria on the meat that we buy in supermarkets and has caused the rise of untreatable infections in our communities. Immediate action is needed to address this growing public health threat. I am deeply troubled that federal agencies have not taken meaningful action to protect the public health, alert customers to these dangers, and implement labeling that would empower customers to choose safer, antibiotic-free products. ALDF's proposed labeling would help to alleviate some of these concerns.

The Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act charge FSIS with ensuring that meat and poultry products are properly labeled, unadulterated, and safe for consumption. Under these laws, FSIS must ensure that labeling is clear, accurate, and not "misleading in any particular." FSIS has effectively implemented labeling requirements in the past for *trans* fats, which surveys show Americans

seek to avoid in foods. Similar to *trans* fats, many Americans would like to avoid poultry and meat products raised with antibiotics, either for personal health reasons or due to allergies. In light of FSIS's mission to clearly label food products, I encourage FSIS to consider adopting similar labeling standards for antibiotics as they do for *trans* fats.

Should FSIS decide not to implement the changes requested in ALDF's petitions, I would appreciate your responses to the following questions:

1. Does FSIS have a strategy to address consumer confusion over the issue of antibiotic use in meat and poultry and to meet consumer demand for accurate, informative labeling on antibiotics?
2. What is FSIS doing to police the proliferation of labeling claims surrounding antibiotics ("never given antibiotics," "humanely raised on family farms without antibiotics," and "antibiotic-free")?
3. Does FSIS believe establishing one uniform set of claims regarding antibiotics will mitigate consumer confusion regarding antibiotics in meat and poultry and the plethora of antibiotics-related claims? If so, does FSIS has a position on what this set of claims should be?
4. What is FSIS' position on the relationship between the labeling claim "natural" and the use of antibiotics to raise animals? Does FSIS have data on consumer perceptions of what "natural" means and, if so, does it relate to antibiotic use?

Your responses to the above questions, as well as your thorough consideration of the ALDF petition, are invaluable to addressing the public health threat of antibiotic resistance. Should you have any questions, please contact Laura Koontz on my staff at (202) 225-3615 or [laura.koontz@mail.house.gov](mailto:laura.koontz@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



Louise M. Slaughter

MEMBER OF CONGRESS