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Keep Antibiotics Working Applauds First Purchasing Policy by Food Service Company to Reduce Antibiotic Use in Pork Production

Groundbreaking New Policy to Help Combat Antibiotic Resistance Crisis in Human Medicine

Washington DC — The Keep Antibiotics Working Coalition (KAW) commended today's announcement by Compass USA of a new groundbreaking purchasing policy that will help combat the antibiotic-resistance crisis in human medicine by reducing the use of key antibiotics in the production of chicken and pork.

Charlotte, NC-based Compass USA, Inc., the second largest food service company in the United States, will require that its suppliers of pork and chicken not use medically important antibiotics as growth-promoting feed additives and that they report their overall antibiotic use to Compass USA. This policy is the first ever adopted by a major food company to restrict the purchase of pork with the goal of reducing antibiotic use. Compass USA is partnering with the largest pork producer in the United States and Compass' main pork supplier, **Smithfield, VA-based Smithfield Foods**, to implement its policy.

The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates 70 percent of all antibiotics use in the U.S. — about 25 million pounds annually—are routinely fed to poultry, swine, and beef cattle not to treat illness. Instead, antibiotic feed additives are used for two reasons: 1) to promote slightly faster growth and 2) to compensate for overcrowded and unhealthy conditions in concentrated animal feeding operations. More than half of these drugs are identical or similar to antibiotics that are important in human medicine. This practice increases the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in our food supply and the environment.

“Antibiotic resistance is eroding our supply of effective antibiotics, threatening our ability to combat bacteria that cause potentially deadly infections.” said David Wallinga, M.D., MPA, a senior scientist and director of the Antibiotic Resistance Project at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. “We applaud Compass USA and Smithfield – the nation’s largest pork company – for recognizing that overusing antibiotics in livestock production contributes to this public health crisis, and taking important steps to reduce the use of antibiotics, especially in swine.”

KAW member organization Environmental Defense helped Compass USA develop its new antibiotic use policy and has been a key player in the creation of other meat purchasing policies such as the ones adopted in 2003 by food service company Bon Appétit and McDonald's Corporation. Bon Appétit only purchases chicken produced without any use of medically

important antibiotics as feed additives. McDonald's only purchases chicken produced without the use of medically important antibiotics as feed additives to promote growth. Both companies have policies to preferentially buy other animal products produced with reduced amounts of antibiotics.

“While these corporate policies are admirable, they are only important first steps,” said Margaret Mellon, J.D., Ph.D., Director of the Food and Environment Program, Union of Concerned Scientists. “Even with the policies in place, the public has no information on the kinds and amounts of antibiotics used by these companies and their competitors. We need the federal government to ensure that *all* meat producers adopt and comply with strong policies. Congress needs to pass ‘The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act.’”

The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (S. 742/H.R. 2562), introduced by **Senator Olympia Snow (R-ME)** and **Rep. Sherrod Brown (D-13th/OH)**, would level the playing field by phasing out all uses of medically important antibiotics as feed additives in poultry, pork, and beef cattle. The bill has been endorsed by nearly 300 organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association and American Public Health Association.

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