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Thanksgiving Treat: Food Service Company Announces First Ever Policy to Reduce Antibiotic Use in Turkeys

Groundbreaking Policy Helps Combat Antibiotic Resistance Crisis in Humans

Washington DC — The Keep Antibiotics Working Coalition commended today's announcement by Bon Appétit Management Company (BAMCO) of a new groundbreaking purchasing policy for turkey to help combat the antibiotic-resistance crisis in human medicine. The new policy requires BAMCO's suppliers to produce turkey without using antibiotics that are important in human medicine as feed additives. This policy is the first ever adopted by a major food company to restrict the purchase of turkey with the goal of reducing antibiotic use.

Palo Alto, CA-based BAMCO (www.Bamco.com) has 192 locations in 26 states, \$300 million plus in revenues and serves more than 55 million meals per year, including more than 700,000 pounds of turkey per year. BAMCO's west coast turkey supplier, **Livingston, CA-based Foster Farms**, already has implemented the policy in 111 west coast cafes located in **California, Oregon, Washington and Colorado**. According to the National Turkey Federation, 30% of all turkey is consumed during the holidays, including Thanksgiving.

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 chicken, swine, and beef cattle. These additives are not used to treat illness; instead, they are intended to promote slightly faster growth and to compensate for overcrowded and unhealthy conditions at industrial-scale farms known as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). 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.

“Resistance erodes our supply of antibiotics that can combat the bacteria causing potentially deadly infections,” said Rebecca Goldberg, Ph.D., senior scientist at Environmental Defense. “We applaud Bon Appétit for recognizing that overusing antibiotics in turkey production contributes to this public health crisis, and taking important steps to reduce the inappropriate use of antibiotics, just as they have done previously with their chicken purchasing policy.”

KAW member organization Environmental Defense helped BAMCO develop its new antibiotic use policy and has been a key player in the creation of other meat purchasing policies. They include a chicken and pork purchasing policy announced in August by Compass Group USA, Inc., the second largest food service company in the United States, and chicken purchasing policies implemented in 2004 by BAMCO and by McDonald's Corporation, the world's largest restaurant chain. Compass Group USA requires that its suppliers of pork and chicken not use medically important antibiotics as growth-promoting feed additives. McDonald's only purchases chicken produced without the use of medically important antibiotics as feed additives to promote growth. BAMCO's policy further restricts antibiotic use. The company only purchases chicken produced without the use of medically important antibiotics as feed additives for prophylactic use as well as growth promotion. Both McDonald's and BAMCO have policies to preferentially buy other animal products produced with reduced amounts of antibiotics.

"Bon Appétit Management Company is committed to sourcing food that is healthy for our guests, communities and the environment," said Fedele Bauccio, CEO of Bon Appétit. "The reduction of antibiotics in feed is critical to our personal and environmental well being."

"Corporate policies are important first steps. Next, the federal government needs to ensure that all meat producers adopt and comply with strong policies," said Margaret Mellon, J.D., Ph.D., Director of the Food and Environment Program, Union of Concerned Scientists. "Since the FDA can't or won't act on a timely basis, Congress needs to pass 'The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act,' which would require meat and poultry producer to track and provide the amounts of antibiotics used in their operations."

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 more than 350 organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association and American Public Health Association.

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