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Keep Antibiotics Working Coalition Disappointed in Long Awaited Antibiotics Report from President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST)

Report Fails to Recommend FDA Take Immediate Action to Address Crisis of Antibiotic Resistance or Collect Much-Needed Data on Use

Washington, DC -- With the epidemic of antibiotic resistance continuing its global spread, the White House signaled a new U.S. effort on the problem with its release today of a report from the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST).

The report clearly lays out the dire implications of increasing resistance, noting that it already costs the U.S. economy \$70 billion annually and "threatens patient care, economic growth, public health, agriculture, economic security, and national security." The report also makes clear that resistance occurs largely because of the use of antibiotics, however its recommendations to the FDA on animal agriculture do not go far enough.

Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW), a coalition of health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, animal welfare, and other advocacy groups, issued the following statement in response:

"While the Council rightly acknowledges the seriousness of antibiotic resistance and its link to antibiotic overuse, their recommendations related to animal agriculture fall dangerously short. Instead of recommending that FDA move to address overuse of antibiotics for disease prevention and the farming practices that create the need for them, the report recommends a wait and see attitude on reducing antibiotic use in food animals. Waiting for an agency that has failed for over 40 years to take action on the overuse of antibiotics in livestock feed is not a wise strategy.

"To make matters worse, the report fails to make a strong call for FDA to put in place a system to collect information on antibiotic use that is needed to determine if FDA's policies that the Council endorses are actually working. The Council does make a much needed recommendation to increase research on alternatives to antibiotics for use in food animals, but there is little incentive for the industry to adopt alternatives if it is cheaper and easier to carry on with routine use of antibiotics.

"The World Health Organization has already declared that we have entered the onset of [a post-antibiotic era.](#) We need FDA to implement more stringent policies for drug

companies now if we are to have any hope of preserving the medically-important antibiotics we have left.”

During the public comment period, Keep Antibiotics Working [submitted a letter](#) to PCAST expressing concern that Guidance 213 and its proposed Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) rule in their current forms will not do enough to significantly reduce the use of antibiotics in food animals. KAW urged PCAST to recommend that FDA modify its current guidelines to help address the existing loophole in Guidance 213, which allows for the continued use of drugs for routine disease prevention.

“In terms of dose, duration, and number of animals the drug is being administered to, this type of use can be identical to growth promotion, which the FDA is asking the companies to phase out because it puts public health at risk,” said Steve Roach, Senior Analyst for Keep Antibiotics Working. “The drug industry has [already made clear](#) that it will use this overlap between growth and prevention to market drugs after growth claims are removed from the label. Advertisements by drug makers [Novartis](#) and [Elanco](#) show clearly that the drug companies have no compunction about selling disease prevention drugs based on their growth promoting benefits. Even when antibiotics provide medical benefits, it is often to counter problems caused by poor diets and unhealthy conditions on farm.”

KAW also stressed that the FDA should create a system to monitor how antibiotics are used on farms, without which it will be very difficult to determine the impact of FDA’S actions. Ideally a system to monitor the impacts of the program would have been in place before implementation, but FDA has not made progress. This is another area where the PCAST report falls dreadfully short by failing to recommend that FDA move forward with creating a system to collect information on how antibiotics are actually used on farm.

“In terms of animal agriculture, in many ways this report is a step backward not a path forward,” added Roach. “The Council’s recommendation on growth promoters was made by the World Health Organization already in 2000 and the 2001 Interagency Public Health Action Plan to Combat Antimicrobial Resistance made a much stronger call for the collection of antibiotic use data. Perdue’s announcement earlier this month that it had removed all antibiotics from its chicken hatcheries demonstrates that FDA’s actions endorsed by this report are following - not leading - industry.”

With such ineffective leadership on the part of the FDA, stronger Congressional action is essential, which is why KAW has been advocating for swift action on the Preventing Antibiotic Resistance Act (PARA), introduced last year in the Senate, and its companion bill in the House, the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA). The bills would help curb routine antibiotic misuse on the farm by requiring the FDA to phase out the use of medically important antibiotics in food animals that are not sick unless such use is shown to be safe. These pieces of legislation face an uphill battle against the deep pockets of the agricultural and pharmaceutical lobbies.

If you’d like to connect with members of the Keep Antibiotics Working coalition for further comment, contact Katie Andriulli at kandriulli@mrss.com or (917) 438-4605.

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Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW) is a coalition of health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane, and other advocacy groups with more than 11 million supporters. Learn more at www.keepantibioticsworking.com.