

Report: Perdue, Tyson (and Other Companies) Are Removing Antibiotics from their Products:

When it comes to the major companies growing and producing chicken for human consumption, Perdue is definitely ahead of the game in terms of healthy and antibiotic free chickens. For roughly the last nine years, Perdue has been perfecting the most effective and cheapest regimen for raising chickens without antibiotics of any kind (Strom). Approximately half of the chicken Perdue sells can be labeled “no antibiotics ever” (Strom). Mortality rates and costs rose as Perdue began removing antibiotics, but the company made the effort over a 14-year span and consistently kept their farms clean in order to reduce those factors (Strom).

Other companies such as Tyson and Foster Farms are also moving to factor out the use of antibiotics, but they continue to use ionophores, antibiotics not used in human medicine – antibiotics specific to animals in order to promote growth, prevent disease, and lower costs. The commitment by Tyson means that more than one-third of chicken in the U.S. industry has pledged to remove the use of “medically important antibiotics” (Swanson). Gary Mickelson, a spokesperson for Tyson explained, “We’re working with our research partners on antibiotic alternatives; however, until they’re available we currently plan to continue using ionophores. We’re not going to compromise animal well-being for marketing reasons” (Strom). The statement seems straightforward and honest, but a coalition of nonprofits fighting against the use of antibiotics use animal feed have pointed out that it is “impossible to know how extensive the use of ionophores is in the industry, which is not required to report its use of antibiotics to regulators” so most civilians are unsure of what is in the meat they serve to their families. One of the major reasons

companies are beginning to reduce or remove the use of antibiotics is because of outrage from the public who is continually becoming more and more concerned about what is in the food they consume.

Major industries like McDonald's, Chick-fil-A, Pilgrims, Panera Bread, Chipotle, Whole Foods, and Applegate have all either announced to reduce their use of antibiotics or have wholly sworn off the drugs completely. However, although their efforts are necessary and appreciated, critics claim that the change is too little too late. Ana Swanson of The Washington Post writes:

Today, antibiotic-resistant infections cause at least two-million illnesses and 23,000 deaths in the U.S. each year – more deaths than caused by drug overdoses, cars, or firearm assaults. Sickneses and deaths caused by antibiotic-related superbugs, like methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) and Clostridium difficile colitis (C Diff) are becoming frighteningly common. Antibiotic resistant bacteria threaten not just the very sick, but those undergoing procedures like joint replacements, C-sections, organ transplants, or chemotherapy, as well as patients with diabetes, asthma, and rheumatoid arthritis. A report commissioned by the UK government estimates that, by 2050, antimicrobial-resistant infections could ill 10 million people a year across the world – more than currently die each year due to cancer.

The FDA, The American Public Health Association, The World Health Organization, and the American Medical Association are all pushing for a ban on the use of antibiotics in animals for human consumption. However, not much has been done to change policies and regulations.