



# BEYOND PESTICIDES

701 E Street, SE ■ Washington DC 20003  
202-543-5450 phone ■ 202-543-4791 fax  
info@beyondpesticides.org ■ www.beyondpesticides.org

September 17, 2018

Ms. Michelle Arsenault  
National Organic Standards Board  
USDA-AMS-NOP  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Room 2648-S, Mail Stop 0268  
Washington, DC 20250-0268

## Re. LS: Antibiotics in day-old chicks

These comments to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) on its Fall 2018 agenda are submitted on behalf of Beyond Pesticides. Founded in 1981 as a national, grassroots, membership organization that represents community-based organizations and a range of people seeking to bridge the interests of consumers, farmers, and farmworkers, Beyond Pesticides advances improved protections from pesticides and alternative pest management strategies that reduce or eliminate a reliance on pesticides. Our membership and network span the 50 states and the world.

Antibiotic resistance is a major threat to human health, and exposure to antibiotics promotes resistance.<sup>1</sup> Agriculture provides the largest source of exposure to antibiotics.<sup>2</sup> The organic standards prohibit the routine use of antibiotics, with the exception of the use of antibiotics in chicks prior to day two of life because the Organic Foods Production Act exempts day-old chicks from organic management.<sup>3</sup> The exemption came about because untreated day-old poultry was not commercially available at the time, but major poultry producers, including Perdue and Tyson Foods, have recently phased out the use of antibiotics in hatcheries for organic and nonorganic production, changing the availability of untreated chicks.

This inconsistency means that the organic label on poultry fails to meet consumer expectations. In a 2015 national survey of consumers on food labels by Consumer Reports, 82% of those surveyed said that they think federal organic standards should mean no antibiotics or other drugs were used.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> T.F. O'Brien, 2002. Emergence, Spread, and Environmental Effect of Antimicrobial Resistance: How Use of an Antimicrobial Anywhere Can Increase Resistance to Any Antimicrobial Anywhere Else, *Clin Infect Dis.* 34 Suppl 3:S78-84.

<sup>2</sup> Shea, K.M., 2003. Antibiotic resistance: What is the impact of agricultural uses of antibiotics on children's health?. *Pediatrics*, 112(Supplement 1), pp.253-258.

<sup>3</sup> 7 U.S.C. § 6509(e)(1).

<sup>4</sup> Consumer Reports National Research Center, *Natural Food Labels Survey: 2015 Nationally-Representative Phone Survey*, Survey Research Report (Jan. 29, 2016) (online at [http://greenerchoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CR\\_2015\\_Natural\\_Food\\_Labels\\_Survey.pdf](http://greenerchoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CR_2015_Natural_Food_Labels_Survey.pdf)).

Despite the OFPA exemption for day-old poultry, NOP is not prohibited from applying individual aspects of the organic standards to day-old chicks. The provision states that NOP is not required to apply organic standards to day-old poultry. Prohibiting the administration of antibiotics to eggs or day-old chicks adds a singular requirement that would assure consumers and produce consistency with other organic products. Therefore, the OFPA exemption for day-old chicks from organic management does not prevent the NOSB from recommending a prohibition on all antibiotic use in organic poultry production.

We request that the NOSB place this issue on the Livestock Subcommittee work agenda, and recommend a clear prohibition on antibiotics at all stages of life for all farm animals used in organic food production. We recommend making the following addition (in bold) to 7 CFR 205.238(c)(1):

*(c) The producer of an organic livestock operation must not:*

*(1) Sell, label, or represent as organic any animal or edible product derived from any animal treated with antibiotics, any substance that contains a synthetic substance not allowed under §205.603, or any substance that contains a nonsynthetic substance prohibited in §205.604. **The prohibition on antibiotics treatment includes poultry not under organic management prior to day two of life.***

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Terry Shistar, Ph.D.  
Board of Directors

---