

**Trans Atlantic Consumer Dialogue
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Thanks to Sue Davies and Commissioner Dalli for giving us the big picture on food issues that are facing both the U.S. and the E.U. and for Sue's brief on nutrition and obesity.

I will turn our attention now to the issues around food safety that are so core to the relationship between consumers and their government. The recent outbreak in Germany illustrated the challenge of food safety. A relatively new pathogen in sprouts caused over 3300 illnesses, resulting in 38 deaths and 824 cases of HUS. This tragedy is a reminder that the biological world does not stay still or wait for sensible new policies to be adopted. It is constantly moving and we should strive to develop policies that anticipate problems before they erupt into major outbreaks.

It is for this reason that TACD this year adopted a resolution on the use of antimicrobials in animal and food production, urging both governments to develop policies to protect and preserve the use of important antibiotics for human medicine, as recommended by the World Health Organization. On World Health Day in April, WHO called for governments to reduce the need for antimicrobial use on the farm through better policies and animal husbandry practices. Their call has been joined by FAO and OIE.

TACD supports this call and urge the governments in the EU and the US to adopt more sustainable policies that will protect the use of critically important antimicrobials in human medicine. To accomplish this objective, the Trans Atlantic Consumer Dialogue has adopted the following resolution:

- We support a total ban on the use of antimicrobials as growth promoters and in plant or crop production. Their use on farms to treat animals should require a veterinarian's prescription.
- Second, we urge governments to create and fund systems to monitor usage in food producing animals. Surveillance systems should operate farm-to-table and integrate the findings of public health, veterinary and food safety laboratories.
- Finally we urge governments to help farmers improve animal production methods so that antimicrobials are not required.

I am happy today to also bring you news of progress in the United States for modernizing our food safety system. Late last year, the U.S. Congress passed new legislation that will improve regulation on 80 percent of our food supply, the portion regulated by our Food and Drug Administration. The Food Safety Modernization Act will mandate process control systems for all food processors, requiring facilities to anticipate problems before they occur and utilize controls that will prevent them. It is our hope that this new law will significantly reduce the numbers of outbreaks and illnesses that are experienced each year by U.S. consumers. Our Centers for Disease Control estimates that each year one in every six Americans will experience a food-borne illness and 3000 people will die from it.

This new law is quite important, even revolutionary, with its emphasis on prevention. However, more remains to be done. The meat inspection program in the United States is based on a model developed in 1906. We understand that the European Union is implementing a new review of its meat hygiene legislation, and organizations affiliated with the Trans Atlantic Consumer Dialogue hope to participate in this review and perhaps encourage the United States to develop strong and harmonized practices in this area.

Finally I want to say that the challenges faced by the EU recently with the outbreak in Germany are not unique. In the U.S. we have faced similar problems, including over 40 outbreaks linked to sprouts and also outbreaks that went on unchecked for weeks and

months while investigators sought the food source. Such events often lead consumers to question the effectiveness of government programs.

Given our experiences with food safety, it is clear that such events are predictable unless governments take an aggressive approach to anticipating the hazards before they occur. While not all superbugs can be eliminated, they can be reduced by more controls on the use of antimicrobials. It is our hope that our new resolution in this area will inspire more action and more control among all governments in the E.U., as well as the U.S.

Many thanks.