



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Press Statement

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Fast Food Chains Must Stop Feeding Us with Meats Sourced from Antibiotic-Fed Animals

On the occasion of World Consumers Rights Day the Consumers Association of Penang calls on the authorities to ban the use of antibiotics in animal feed.

We also call on the fast food chains to stop feeding Malaysians with meats sourced from antibiotic-fed farm animals.

The European Union and many countries have banned the non-medical use of antibiotics in animal feeds to combat the crisis caused by antibiotic resistance. Many antibiotics, including the most potent ones, are becoming increasingly ineffective against diseases – causing a global public health crisis.

Antibiotics are routinely introduced in animal feeds as growth promoters. In the US, 70% of antibiotics are used for animals. In Malaysia the use of antibiotics in animal feeds continues unabated.

Consumers International, the global umbrella body for consumer associations around the world, launched a report which highlighted the failure of fast food chains to phase out the selling of products made of meats from animals raised with the routine use of antibiotics.

According to the report, McDonald's has commitments in only 2 (US and Canada) out of the 100 countries they operate in.

KFC has made no meaningful commitment and Subway has made a commitment in only 1 out of the 111 countries which they operate in.

In Malaysia, there is sufficient evidence to show that antibiotic resistant bacteria are present in the many food products sold in Malaysia.

The Department of Veterinary Services in 2012 found that half of domestic chickens tested were found to be resistant to 3 types of antibiotics. Imported chickens have even higher levels of antibiotic resistance, with 50-87% of them having resistance to different types of antibiotics.

Furthermore, 75% of live chickens sold at wet markets in Selangor tested positive for *Campylobacter*. And 25-95% of the bacteria were resistant to different types of antibiotics. More than a third of bacteria samples showed multidrug resistance.

Frozen burger patties taken from supermarkets and retail shops showed the presence of multidrug-resistant strains of *Listeria monocytogenes* in nearly half of the samples.

The routine overuse of antibiotics in animal farms in Malaysia is not surprising. During a CAP survey in Kedah and Perlis, we found the antibiotic erythromycin to be widely available in shops selling animal feed. We were told that the antibiotic should be routinely fed to the animals as a growth promoter.

Erythromycin is also used for treatment of diseases in human beings. In the same survey we could also buy erythromycin at pharmacies in the rural areas without a prescription, flouting our laws.

Antimicrobial or antibiotic resistance is one of the most serious health threats Malaysia faces. Infections from resistant bacteria are now common and some pathogens have even become resistant to multiple types or classes of antibiotics. With the increasing ineffectiveness of ‘drugs of last resort’, we are on the brink of a public health disaster.

Left unchecked, antibiotic resistance will kill 10 million a year in 2050. It is expected to kill 4.73 million in Asia alone.

In view of the catastrophic antibiotic resistance crisis, CAP urges the Ministry of Health and Agriculture to:

- Ban antibiotics use in animal feeds in light of the EU ban on antibiotics in animal feed
- Create a national system to monitor antibiotic use and abuse in food animals
- Educate and train livestock farmers on the responsible use of antibiotics

CAP also calls upon consumers to stop patronizing fast food chains that are not phasing out the use of meats from antibiotic-fed farm animals.

To reduce their exposure to antibiotic residues and antibiotic resistant bacteria, consumers should avoid taking fast foods and reduce their intake of meat.

S.M. MOHAMED IDRIS
President
Consumers Association of Penang