

The New York Times editorial board recently called on the US Food and Drug Administration and the Obama Administration to address the threat of drug resistant microbes caused by the common use of antibiotics in our food supply. In an editorial published on Tuesday, September 21, 2010, the editorial board supported proposed legislation from Congresswoman Slaughter that addresses this issue. The entire editorial is below. The original editorial can be found [here](#).

For more information about Congresswoman Slaughter's proposed legislation, known as PAMTA, [click here](#).

We Are What We Eat

New York Times Editorial Board

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Most of the antibiotics sold in the United States — 70 percent — go to the animals we eat, especially pigs and chickens. To speed up growth and to prevent the spread of disease in crowded conditions, growers put small amounts of antibiotics into animals' daily feed. The result is nearly the same as if we were eating the antibiotics ourselves: an increase in antibiotic resistance in humans and the emergence of drug-resistant microbes.

In a July letter to Congress, Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned that there is "a clear link between antibiotic use in animals and

antibiotic resistance in humans." Despite that warning, the regulatory agencies have been too slow and timid in their response.

After more than a year of review, the Food and Drug Administration is preparing to issue an extremely modest set of guidelines, which merely recommend that agricultural producers use antibiotics only under veterinary supervision and only in cases of illness and emergency. We far prefer the approach taken by Representative Louise Slaughter, a Democrat of New York, who submitted a bill last year that would make those recommendations mandatory, while gradually phasing out the agricultural use of medically important antibiotics.

Livestock producers do not agree. Nor, apparently, does Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. In a recent speech to cattlemen, he alluded to Ms. Slaughter's bill and said, "Antibiotics need to be used judiciously, and we believe they already are." Mr. Vilsack and the producers need to listen to Dr. Frieden. The F.D.A. needs to make its guidelines mandatory, and the entire Obama administration needs to get on board.