

California Medical Association Improving Health Through Sustainable Food Purchasing

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Resolution 705-07

Adopted October 29, 2007

WHEREAS, industrial agriculture contributes to environmental degradation, including poor air quality, CO₂ and methane emissions that lead to global warming, contamination of soil and water, loss of habitat and biodiversity, and massive reliance on nonrenewable resources; and also contributes to the loss of farmland and the decline of rural communities; and,

WHEREAS, industrial agriculture relies on application of high levels of synthetic fertilizers and toxic pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides, exposure to which can lead to elevated cancer risks and disruption of human reproductive, immune, endocrine and nervous systems; and,

WHEREAS, nontherapeutic antibiotics routinely fed to industrial livestock pass through the food chain to humans and contribute to human antibiotic resistance, and eliminating the use of nontherapeutic antibiotics in livestock can help ensure that human antibiotic treatments remain effective; and,

WHEREAS manure from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) has resulted in severe air and water pollution; and nitrates from this manure are linked to blue baby syndrome, birth defects, thyroid disorders, and cancer; , and airborne particles and gases from CAFOs are linked to extremely elevated rates of respiratory and intestinal disorders in nearby residents; , and CAFOs are implicated in many outbreaks of food-borne illness such as E. coli and Salmonella; , leading the American Public Health Association to call for a moratorium on CAFOs ; and,

WHEREAS the food purchasing decisions made by health care institutions can affect the health of patients, staff, and visitors; and the massive purchasing power of the health care industry can influence the direction of U.S. agriculture by purchasing food that is produced in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner; and,

WHEREAS physicians and their health care systems can play an important leadership role in supporting healthy food systems by modeling and advocating for food that is healthier for their communities, as exemplified by the fact that 40 hospitals in California have signed a pledge to purchase more sustainably raised food ; therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the CMA encourages hospitals to adopt policies and implement practices that increase the purchasing and serving of food that promotes health and prevents disease, including meat and dairy products produced without nontherapeutic antibiotics, meats derived from non-Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) sources such as free-range animals, food grown on non-industrial agricultural operations such as small and medium-sized local farms; and food grown according to organic or other methods that emphasize renewable resources, ecological diversity, and fair labor practices, and be it further

RESOLVED: That the CMA calls on physicians and other health care professionals to serve as models and educators by participating in and promoting a healthier and more sustainable food system that improves eating habits, increases patient and public health, and supports the long-term social, economic, and environmental well-being of communities in California and throughout the world.