

CENTRE FOR SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

MAIN OFFICE: 41, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi-110 062 INDIA

Tel: +91 (011) 4061 6000, 2995 5124, 2995 6110 Fax: +91 (011) 2995 5879 Email: cse@cseindia.org Website: www.cseindia.org

BRANCH OFFICE: Core 6A, Fourth Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110 003

Tel: +91 (011) 2464 5334, 2464 5335



LEAVES
OF
IMPORTANT
SURVIVAL
TREES
IN
INDIA —
MAHUA,
KHEJDI,
ALDER,
PALMYRA
AND
OAK

March 6, 2018

Ms. Sania Mirza
Sania Mirza Tennis Academy
2-64, Murthuzaguda, Moinabad
Ranga Reddy District
Telangana 500075

Subject: Your endorsement of a false and misleading claim as part of an advertorial by the All India Poultry Development and Services Private Limited featuring on the front page of the Times of India, New Delhi edition on 27 February, 2018

Dear Ms. Sania Mirza,

We, at the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), are truly proud of you and your achievements. You are an icon for the youth of India. Millions of young women and men aspire to emulate your success. They are influenced by your actions and messages. Having said this, we are deeply disappointed that you have associated yourself with a blatantly false and misleading advertorial issued by the All India Poultry Development and Services Private Limited (AIPDSPL), featured on the front page of the *Times of India*, New Delhi edition, on 27th February, 2018.

In the advertorial, you seem to be endorsing a claim that the Indian poultry industry is using antibiotics only for treatment of chicken (therapeutic use) and that there is no misuse of antibiotics by this sector. The advertisement also uses a 2014 study of CSE to support a claim that antibiotics are not indiscriminately misused in poultry farms, and that the chicken produced in India is absolutely safe to consume. The information in the advertorial is false, misleading and libelous.

The truth of the matter is that antibiotics are rampantly misused in India by the poultry industry to fatten chicken in less time and with less feed for commercial gains. They are routinely given to all birds in the name of disease prevention, even in the absence of any clinical signs of disease. This is a well-known malpractice; CSE has consistently brought this fact to public attention through extensive studies conducted over the last several years. Even the government – both at the Centre and in states – acknowledges the problem of antibiotic misuse in the poultry sector.

Our 2014 study, which the AIPDSPL has completely misrepresented, had found that banned, critical and highly prescribed antibiotics are being misused by the poultry industry. Similarly, a study done by us in 2017 drove home the point that the misuse of antibiotics is turning our poultry farms into breeding grounds of super-bugs. Tests conducted by our laboratory found that bacteria like *E. coli* from the poultry farms were 100 per cent multidrug-resistant. Predictably, the AIPDSPL has conveniently decided to ignore this latest study of ours in its advertorial.

Recently, companies like Venky's have been indicted for selling colistin to poultry farms. Colistin is a last-resort antibiotic; when all antibiotics fail, it is used to treat life-threatening infections. The World Health Organization (WHO) has put this and few other antibiotics in the category of "critically important to humans", so that they are restricted for use in animals. Yet, it is freely available and used in the country to fatten chicken. The misuse of antibiotics in the food animal industry like the poultry industry is accelerating antibiotic resistance. Resistant bacteria from animals are now causing drug-resistant infections in humans.

Founder Director
ANIL AGARWAL

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Chairperson
M.S. SWAMINATHAN

Director General
SUNITA NARAIN

Deputy Director General
CHANDRA BHUSHAN

Members
A.K. SHIVA KUMAR
B.D. DIKSHIT
BHARATI CHATURVEDI
G.N. GUPTA
JAGDEEP GUPTA
MAHESH KRISHNAMURTHY
N.C. SAXENA
N.J. Rao
WILLIAM BISSELL



Antibiotic resistance (ABR) is now considered as one of the world's biggest health threats. The threat is so serious that countries came together to discuss and commit to fighting antimicrobial resistance at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2016. This was only the fourth time in the history of the UN that a health topic was discussed at the General Assembly (HIV, non-communicable diseases, and Ebola were the others).

All around the world, many common infections are becoming resistant to the antibiotics medicines used to treat them, resulting in longer illnesses and more deaths. At the same time, no new antibiotics have been developed since 1987 to replace older and increasingly ineffective ones. It is estimated that every year, 0.7 million people die worldwide because of ABR. The death toll is expected to rise to 10 million by 2050 if no action is taken. Unfortunately, India has one of the highest rates of ABR because of poor sanitary conditions coupled with misuse of antibiotics in humans and animals.

We are writing to apprise you that knowingly or otherwise, you have been part of an endorsement that is based on false and misleading information. The advertorial is aimed at benefiting the advertising association and the poultry industry by misguiding the people of this country. The advertorial is a clear indication that the poultry companies, represented by AIPDSPL, are not serious to tackle the problem of antibiotic misuse. Instead it is denying the problem and hindering serious action towards this public health crisis of antibiotic resistance.

As a celebrity, what you endorse has huge impact on choices that people make. We urge you to exercise greater caution and be more sensitized and responsible towards products/ideas/claims that you choose to endorse, specifically if they have public health significance.

We hope that you agree to our point of view and would publicly disassociate yourself from this advertorial of AIPDSPL. We look forward to your proactive action in this regard.

Please let us know if you have any questions. We will be happy to address them.

Yours truly

Chandra Bhushan
Deputy Director General
Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)
New Delhi