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Center for Infectious Disease and Research and Policy

### **EPA urged to deny proposal for more antibiotic spraying on citrus fields**

Representatives from the Center for Biological Diversity, Public Interest Network, and US PIRG (Public Interest Research Group) today delivered 45,000 petition signatures to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), calling on the agency to deny a proposal that would allow for expanded antibiotic spraying on citrus fields.

Under the proposal, citrus growers would be allowed to spray more than 650,000 pounds of streptomycin on citrus fields to treat the bacteria that causes citrus greening disease. The groups say spraying streptomycin on citrus fields does not cure the disease and would be an irresponsible use of an antibiotic that's considered critically important for human health by the World Health Organization (WHO).

"The more you use antibiotics, the greater the risk that bacteria resistant to the drugs will flourish and spread," Matt Wellington, director of US PIRG's antibiotics program, said in a press release. "The bottom line is that the potential problems created by spraying massive amounts of streptomycin on citrus fields could outweigh the original problem the EPA wants to solve."

The groups say that, if the proposal is allowed, it would be the largest-ever use of a medically important antibiotic in plant agriculture in the United States.

In December, the EPA approved a proposal for wider use of oxytetracycline on citrus trees to combat citrus canker and citrus greening disease.

**Mar 13 Center for Biological Diversity [press release](#)**