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Press Conference: Food and Water Watch: Poison Free Poultry Statement by Caroline Taylor, Executive Director, MCA Civic Center Plaza in Downtown Silver Spring Tuesday November 9th, 12pm

Food and Water Watch has provided a very compelling argument for us to eliminate the use of arsenic in the production of poultry, not merely in the State of Maryland but nationwide. I speak today on behalf of Montgomery Countryside Alliance and those farmers in the nationally recognized 93,000 acre Agricultural Reserve who labor to produce our food sustainably, without unnecessary and dangerous additives. I am also here as an environmentalist, consumer and mother of two children.

The body of evidence is clear: there is no compelling reason for farmers to employ the use of a heavy metal, with known adverse health effects, in the production of our food. Our work with producers has focused on best land management practices that both sustain natural resources and promote better health for consumers. History has demonstrated, repeatedly, that short term “fixes” often have dire long term consequences. It wasn't so very long ago that a jingle sang: “*DDT is good for me!*”

The danger of toxins in livestock feed go well beyond the health of the end consumer. Arsenic is, by definition, non-degrading. Ninety percent of this element is excreted into soil and streams by poultry and livestock, which then contaminates our groundwater and, eventually, the Chesapeake Bay. The Ag Reserve's only source of drinking water is the federally designated Piedmont Sole Source Aquifer, a multistate groundwater source. The potential for contamination of this irreplaceable resource is a very serious health concern. Groundwater tests throughout Maryland's coastal plains found arsenic concentrations up to 13 times the US EPA standard. Obviously, arsenic in the soil of crop producing fields provides yet another path to our dinner plates.

I am also here today as a mother of two who works to ensure that I make the best choices for my children's dietary health and wellbeing. Our family eats more chicken these days, as we've been advised to limit our consumption of red meat, but a burger or steak free of arsenic will be my only choice if arsenic use continues. My daughter Allie, thinking a slogan for this event might be nice, suggested: “**Don't Botox my Chicken.**” I like it. Even an 11 year old sees the common sense in not adding something to our food that yields no real benefit, and every conceivable harm.



Thanksgiving Recipe Harvested From the Ag Reserve

Even as the days grow shorter the very best produce is still growing on Ag Reserve Farms. The two most popular fall crops, apples and sweet potatoes, are grown right here in the Reserve, and will make a fresh, local and wise addition to your Thanksgiving table! Please enjoy the following farm-tested recipe, and please visit our website to find out where to get the best local food all year 'round: www.mocoalliance.org

Sweet Potatoes with Caramelized Apples

(You will give thanks for this! *Serves 8*)

Ingredients:

6 large local sweet potatoes	4 tablespoons orange juice
4 medium local apples, cored and cut into thin slices	4 tablespoons heavy cream
4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) of butter, divided	1 tablespoon lemon juice
4 tablespoons brown sugar, divided	1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
½teaspoon ground cinnamon	Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

- 🍷 Prick sweet potatoes several times with a fork and bake at 375° for 1 hour, or until very soft; when they cool enough to handle, mash in a bowl and set aside
- 🍷 Toss apples with lemon juice; heat 2 tbsp butter in heavy skillet over medium-high heat; once butter has melted add 2 tbsp brown sugar and stir to dissolve; add apples to the pan and cook until brown and soft, stirring occasionally, then set aside
- 🍷 Spoon mashed sweet potatoes into a casserole dish and smooth the top flat; pour browned apple slices over sweet potatoes and smooth again
- 🍷 Heat remaining butter in heavy skillet, over high heat; add remaining sugar, cream, cinnamon and orange juice; simmer and stir until reduced and syrupy, and drizzle over top of browned apples
- 🍷 Heat casserole dish in oven until warmed through, about 30 minutes; the temperature isn't too important here (so long as you don't burn it!), so it can be warmed beside your turkey or anything else that is being cooked at a moderate temperature (less than 400°)

This recipe provided courtesy of your friends at Montgomery Countryside Alliance and the dedicated Montgomery County farmers who grow food for us in the Ag Reserve.