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Contact: Sludge News  
www.sludgenews.org  
Laura Orlando  
[Lorlando@bu.edu](mailto:Lorlando@bu.edu)  
T 617-524-7258

### **Senate Committee to Investigate Dumping of Toxic Sludge on Food Chain Crops**

WASHINGTON, DC – September 2 - The controversial practice of disposing of sewage sludge on agricultural land and public parks will be examined by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works in a public hearing on September 11, 2008.

Sewage is an unpredictable mixture of whatever enters the sewers. The inevitable byproduct of sewage treatment is sludge. Sewage sludge is a toxic mix of heavy metals, synthetic organic compounds (e.g., PCBs, PAHs), detergent metabolites, pharmaceuticals, and pathogens. There are as many as 100,000 chemicals used in American industry, and every year thousands more chemical compounds are put into commercial use. All of these can potentially enter the wastewater stream and any that do can end up in the sludge.

The "land application" of sewage sludge has been promoted by EPA since 1993 as the preferred method of sludge disposal. Millions of tons of hazardous sewage sludge have subsequently been spread on farmland and parks in the United States, and many people living near sludged agricultural sites and many farm animals fed on sludged silage and hay have been made very sick. Many of these people have attempted to stop this practice. Now, since recent events have put a new spotlight on sludge, they are getting some help.

On February 25, 2008, Judge Anthony Alaimo of the 11th Circuit Court ruled that the sludge applications on a farm in Georgia were responsible for killing hundreds of dairy cattle and contaminating the milk supplies, that "senior EPA officials took extraordinary steps to quash scientific dissent and any questioning of EPA's biosolids program." (<http://www.sludgenews.org/news/press.aspx?id=14>)

The U.S. Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee investigation is a welcome first step in a long overdue examination of the policies that have led us to the appalling systematic contamination of our food supply and the degradation of our health from this byproduct of wastewater treatment.

You can find more information about sewage sludge, sludge victims' stories, and the Senate hearings at Sludge News: <http://www.sludgenews.org>.

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