



The United Sludge-Free Alliance

Talking Points

Health, Food & Water Talking Points

Spreading sewage sludge on the land that grows our food is not recycling; it is pollution transfer.

Sewage sludge – a.k.a. biosolids - is everything that we pour down the drain from homes, businesses, industries and hospitals. It is the concentrated remains from waste water treatment plants and contains toxins, viruses, bacteria, pharmaceuticals, pathogens, chemicals and heavy metals.

The US EPA requires testing for only nine elements and two bacteria in sewage sludge to determine if it is 'safe'. The EPA's own national testing shows 145 elements of concern in sludge samples. Why have the regulations governing sewage sludge disposal been so lacks?

Over eight million tons of sewage sludge is annually land applied as a "fertilizer" to farms, parks, playgrounds and sold as bagged fertilizer. Is your food grown is sewage?

There are no testing requirements for *any* pharmaceuticals, viruses or infectious diseases by the EPA for sewage sludge to be spread on the land that grows your food. What viruses do you want on your plate?

A 2008 EPA panel concluded that the toxic effects of hormone-disrupting chemicals like phthalates need to be studied *in combination* with other chemicals in order to assess the true impact on human health.

Heavy metals and toxic waste do not disappear because they are heated and squeezed at a waste water treatment plant. On the contrary, the blending of heavy metals with the volatile mix of chemicals, pharmaceuticals and pathogens causes problems in our communities, as well as the land and water we rely on to feed America.

The national testing of sewage sludge/biosolids by the EPA found toxic chemicals such as PCBs, dioxin, and brominated flame retardants, remaining in treated sludge. Other toxins that have been found in sewage sludge include plutonium, radiation, Teflon type chemicals like PFO's and PFOA's and antibacterial soap byproducts.

Bureaucracies charged with protecting our health, food and water refuse to "connect the dots" of the application of hazardous sewage sludge to our food source.

Sewage sludge has been tested for the heavy metal and toxin uptake in the plants and animals that we consume. Known carcinogens like dioxin are found to pass from the sludged soil and concentrate into the vegetables, fruits, meat and milk that we consume.

Stunning research on the impact of dioxin in sludge applied to pastures has found that the dioxin gathers in meat, fats and milk and is known to cause birth defects and is a carcinogen.

2010 Yale study noted that bacteria, including E. coli, are NOT killed by the minimal heating done at the waste water treatment plants. The sludge industry's own studies found that re-growth of

fecal coliform in tested sewage sludge appeared in more than half the sludge AFTER it past testing.

E. coli and *Salmonella*, bacteria once linked to contamination of meats, is now consistently linked to vegetable contamination recalls including lettuce, tomatoes, spinach and pistachio nuts. Who is tracking which farmers use sludge as a fertilizer or water with the effluent from wastewater treatment plants?

When farms use treated sewage water from municipal wastewater treatment plants as a means of irrigating their crops, they are contaminating America's food supply. The run-off from farms that use sewage sludge and irrigate with 'sludge water' can contaminate water supplies.

In 2008, *McElmurray vs. USDA*, the loss of land and livestock after several decades of 'safe' sludge devastated an entire family farm. Because sludge was promoted as a safe fertilizer, McElmurray's cows had thallium levels in their milk that was 120 times the legal limit in water. Thallium - once used in rat poison - is just one toxic element that is not required testing. The farmer's loss is also the loss of America's safe food supply.

USDA certified organic foods and 'sludge-free' and may not use sewage sludge as a fertilizer.

Sewage sludge must be discontinued as a 'fertilizer' without absolute proof of its safety. National standards for sewage sludge must be revised to truly protect America's food source, water supply and communities. Ultimately, pouring known toxic waste on our farmlands compromises the soil and water we rely on and endangers America now and in the future.

It's common sense – don't 'poop' where you eat!