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## **Leading Catholic Hospital System Takes Action for Sustainable Food Production**

*Catholic Healthcare West presses suppliers to prohibit animal cloning and genetically engineered foods.*

**San Francisco, CA** – January 5, 2009 - Catholic Healthcare West (CHW) announced today that its food purchasing dollars will be focused on promoting sustainable food production practices, in part by seeking alternatives to foods produced with genetically engineered sugar, as well as meat and dairy produced with animal clones. The CHW position was developed in recognition of the serious health and environmental concerns these technologies raise and the threat they pose to healthier and more sustainable food production options. Among the concerns CHW is raising about genetically engineered and cloned foods are genetic contamination, increased pesticide use, animal cruelty, and the deep ethical and moral issues associated with these untested new technologies.

CHW recently asked eight of its largest food suppliers for their policies on genetically engineered sugar beets, which are being planted for commercial use for the first time this year. Results from the survey found that its suppliers would prefer non-genetically engineered sugar beets. Only Diamond Crystal indicated their intent to avoid buying genetically engineered sugar and that they will seek out suppliers that do not use genetically engineered foods through a validation process. CHW intends next to survey its meat and dairy suppliers on their potential use of animal cloning since the U.S. FDA recently decided to allow marketing of food from animal clones.

“We are working with our purchasing organization, Premier, and developing relationships with allied healthcare partners in looking for food companies that will provide us with meat and dairy products that are not from animal cloning, and foods that are made without genetically engineered sugar beets,” stated Pat Burdullis, CHW’s administrator of non-clinical supply chain contracts. “If these same food companies can provide foods that are natural and non-genetically engineered for their European customers, we believe they should provide us with the same level of service.”

Genetic engineering and animal cloning are controversial in food production, since the technologies have not been subject to long-term safety testing and could create irreversible environmental damage. Genetically engineered crops can contaminate natural foods and have promoted the use of herbicides that may be harmful to human health and natural systems. Scientists say that animal clones are often abnormal and suffer from a host of often painful defects. A *New England Journal of Medicine* article stated that, “[It] may be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to generate healthy cloned animals.”

“Genetic engineering and animal cloning are in direct conflict with our sustainable food service vision and corporate sustainability goals,” stated Sr. Mary Ellen Leciejewski, CHW’s ecology program coordinator.

“We have numerous unanswered concerns about the imminent introduction of genetically engineered sugar beets and marketing of food from animal clones. Previous genetically engineered crops have increased pesticide use, and animal cloning is a cruel and unnecessary technology in meat and dairy production. Our aim is to promote alternative approaches that produce foods that are safer and healthier for our patients, staff, and visitors and that can sustain the farmers and food producers in our communities.”

CHW has successfully advocated with its suppliers for safer, more environmentally friendly products, most recently with regard to its PVC/DEHP-free IV products now being provided by B.Braun.

With respect to food production, CHW is advocating for public polices that meet the following safeguards:

- Before marketing, genetically engineered food or food from animal cloning must be fully evaluated through independent, peer-review for any effects on animal welfare, human health, and the environment.
- Foods with genetically engineered ingredients and foods from animal cloning (including foods from the offspring of clones) must be labeled as such.
- Genetically engineered seeds and plants are rigidly separated from other seeds and plants so that natural foods (those produced by non-genetically modified techniques) are protected from contamination; cloned animals and their offspring must be rigorously tracked throughout the food chain.
- Genetic engineering patent holders are held legally liable for contamination of non-genetically engineered crops and growers are protected when their crops are contaminated by genetically engineered crops.

#### **About Catholic Healthcare West**

Catholic Healthcare West (CHW), headquartered in San Francisco, CA, is a system of 41 hospitals and medical centers in California, Arizona and Nevada. Founded in 1986, it is one of the nation’s largest not-for-profit healthcare systems and the largest Catholic healthcare system based in the Western United States. CHW is committed to delivering compassionate, high-quality, affordable health care services with special attention to the poor and underserved. The CHW network of nearly 10,000 physicians and approximately 53,000 employees provides health care services to more than five million people annually. In 2008, CHW provided \$967 million in charity care and unsponsored community benefit. For more information, please visit our website at [www.chwHEALTH.org](http://www.chwHEALTH.org).