

Reducing Antimicrobial Resistance

At-a-glance

Objective: The aim is to address antimicrobial resistances by reducing the use of antimicrobials in livestock production while maintaining productivity.

Lead countries/organization(s): all 27 EU Member States

Place: all 27 EU Member States



The Commission has complemented [EU Guidelines on the prudent use of antimicrobials in animal health](#) with guidelines on their use in human health. The European Commission issues twice a year a progress report as regards the 2017 “EU AMR Action Plan”.

Background and Objectives

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) – the ability of microorganisms to resist antimicrobial treatments, especially antibiotics – has a direct impact on human and animal health and carries a heavy economic burden due to higher costs of treatments and reduced productivity caused by sickness. AMR is responsible for an estimated 33,000 deaths per year in the EU. It is also estimated that AMR costs the EU €1.5 billion per year in healthcare costs and productivity losses.

Actions

Farm to Fork Strategy: The Farm to Fork Strategy aims to reduce the overall EU sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50% by 2030. To achieve this, and efficient implementation of the new EU Regulation on veterinary medicines is instrumental, as it provides for a wide range of concrete measures to fight antimicrobial resistance and to promote a more prudent and responsible use of antimicrobials in animals. More generally, curbing antimicrobial resistance is a priority for the European Commission which is reflected in the EU's overall legal framework.

One Health: Already in June 2017, the European Commission adopted the EU One Health Action Plan against AMR. The key objectives of this plan are built on 3 main pillars:

- Making the EU a best practice region
- Boosting research, development and innovation
- Shaping the global agenda

Research: Health is an important topic in the EU research and innovation programme Horizon Europe, with an allocation €8,25 billion over the 2021-2027 period. This includes international research partnerships and cooperation projects. A roadmap towards the creation of the **European partnership on One Health antimicrobial resistance** has been created. The **European Partnership for Animal Health and Welfare** aims to deliver key knowledge, services and products to significantly improve the control of animal infectious diseases and animal welfare in a coordinated way which will sustain animal production and protect public health.

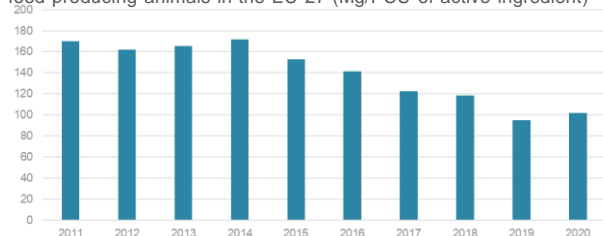
Animal Welfare: Better animal welfare improves animal health and food quality, reduces the need for medication and can help preserve biodiversity. The Commission will revise the animal welfare legislation, including on animal transport and the slaughter of animals, to align it with the latest scientific evidence, broaden its scope, make it easier to enforce and ultimately ensure a higher level of animal welfare.

Common Agricultural Policy: The CAP supports animal welfare and thereby contributes to AMU reduction. For the CAP in the period 2023-2027, improving animal welfare and combatting antimicrobial resistance is included in the specific objectives of the policy under “responding to societal demands on food & health”. The CAP also funds a number of projects with and by farmers under its [European Innovation Partnership](#) programme, for example in [Spain](#) and [Italy](#) to reduce antibiotics in pig production.

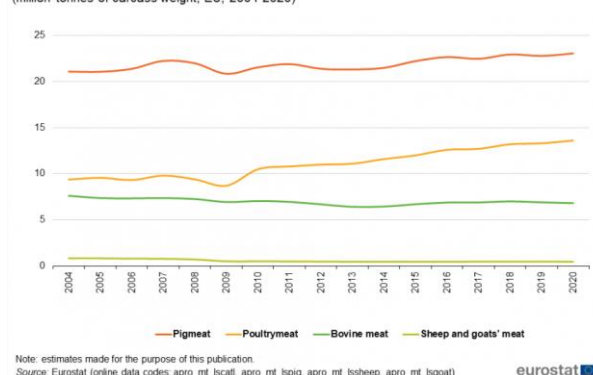
Results

Overall EU sales of veterinary antimicrobials for animal production decreased by 40% between 2011 and 2020, while production increased (see [ESVAC report](#)).

Sales of veterinary antimicrobial agents marketed mainly for food-producing animals in the EU-27 (Mg/PCU of active ingredient)



Meat production
(million tonnes of carcass weight, EU, 2004-2020)



The reduction of the use of antimicrobials decreases the risk of antimicrobial resistance in animals and humans, which costs human and animal lives and has enormous economic costs.



Successes and Lessons Learned

The One Health approach and the combination of actions have resulted in a successful decrease in the use of antimicrobials in livestock production in the EU. With the new EU Regulation on veterinary medicines the concrete measures to fight antimicrobial resistance continue.

Improvements in animal welfare contribute to animal health and thereby to a reduction in the use of antimicrobials. The Common Agricultural Policy has helped improve animal welfare. Additional funding possibilities and specific indicators for actions that benefit animal welfare are foreseen in new CAP Strategic Plans that will start in 2023.

Advisory services should be encouraged as they have proven to be effective in raising farmers' technical knowledge on reducing use of antimicrobials on farms and best animal welfare practices.

To enable consumer choice for livestock products produced under higher animal welfare conditions, and to better transmit value through the food chain, the Commission is considering options for animal welfare labelling.