

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE FOR HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH



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Antimicrobials, such as antibiotics, are substances or agents that kill or inhibit the growth of microorganisms, other than viruses. They are commonly used in the treatment of human disease and they play a vital role in reducing the risk of complications in clinical procedures. In addition, they are frequently used in agriculture and livestock production, especially pigs and poultry, in order to prevent diseases and endure overcrowding, and for non-therapeutic purposes as disinfectants or preservatives.

However, its misuse or excessive use in modern medicine is contributing to helping treat the disease was everyday more ineffective and the duration and severity of the infection or disease is greater, causing permanent damage. Antimicrobial resistance is a serious threat to global public health, by which 25,000 people die in Europe each year with an estimated cost of €1.5 billion. Also, it causes a major impact on ecosystems (both terrestrial and aquatic), biodiversity and global food system.

In view of this danger, at the FAO's governing Conference in 2015 (<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/382636/icode/>) called for urgent action, both nationally and internationally to respond to the growing threat of drug-resistant pathogens in the world's food producing systems. Livestock production is the greatest concern in this regard, thus according to some data from the UK, 45% of the antibiotics used in the country are intended for animals. The Netherlands also announced that in the livestock sector, they have used 60% of drugs in recent years.

Therefore, a few days ago there was a vote in the European Parliament for revising the current EU legislation in veterinary medicines, advocating the prohibition of treatments that improve performance or compensate poor animal husbandry and limiting the prophylactic use of antimicrobials, both individually and collectively, unless this is justified by a veterinarian:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2F%2FEP%2F%2FTEXT%2FBIM->

[PRESS%2B20160216IPR14596%2B0%2BDOC%2BXML%2BV0%2F%2FEN&language=EN](https://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs194/en/)

In some European countries, such as Denmark and Sweden had already taken steps to ban these prophylactic treatments. Still, to mitigate this problem, we need to look for measures with a global, comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach for the manufacture and consumption of antibiotics, with the collaboration of the pharmaceutical industry, producers - both large and small -, health professionals, consumers and decision-makers at a national and international level.

At Mensa Cívica, we advocate for greater transparency and monitoring throughout the whole pharmacological system, as well as an improvement in general, in terms of both human prescription and animal health, disease prevention, veterinary supervision and nutrition to improve the overall livestock and fish health to reduce the overuse of antibiotics; the research for natural alternatives; the need of setting goals to reduce the use of antibiotics annually, or at least every 5 years, and environmental criteria of good practice; and greater involvement of civil society to adopt good purchasing decisions, since all these externalities are not included in the product price.

For more information, please, go to:

- The Sustain project/campaign "Save our Antibiotics":
<http://www.sustainweb.org/antibiotics/>
- The webpage of EUFIC:
 - http://www.eufic.org/article/en/food-safety-quality/animal-health/rid/Antimicrobial_Resistance_QAs/
 - http://www.eufic.org/article/en/artid/Antimicrobial_resistance_a_shared_responsibility/
 - http://www.eufic.org/article/en/food-safety-quality/animal-health/rid/ATB_infographic/
- European Union (EU) report on antimicrobial resistance, EFSA 2011: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3196>
- The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC):
http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/healthtopics/antimicrobial_resistance/Pages/index.aspx
- The webpage of the World Health Organization (WHO):
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs194/en/>