

The Consumer Voice in Europe

BEUC STATEMENT FOR EUROPEAN ANTIBIOTIC AWARENESS DAY 2018



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The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), is the umbrella group for over 40 national independent consumer associations. Our members have long been informing consumers about antibiotic resistance and the role they can play, as patients, in helping to preserve these vital drugs: they should go easy on antibiotics. But if we want to keep antibiotics working, farm animals should too.

In 2014, exactly on Antibiotic Awareness Day, we [launched a campaign](#) calling for a tightening up of EU rules on the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals. Four years later, the European Parliament last month [adopted a long-awaited law](#) which will restrict the use of antimicrobials in food-producing animals and thus help to fight antimicrobial resistance.

This new EU law is a significant answer to a looming health crisis. As the World Health Organisation itself noted, antimicrobial resistance is one of today's biggest global health threats. We welcome that, under the new rules, the routine preventive use of antimicrobials will be prohibited. The European Commission will draw up a list of antimicrobials to be reserved for treatment of humans only. Moreover, the updated legislation imposes new obligations on Member States for the collection of data on both the sales and the use of antimicrobials per animal species – although those are only to be phased-in very gradually.

Eventually, third country producers exporting animal products to the EU will have to respect the ban on antimicrobial use for growth promotion and the new restrictions on those antimicrobials which are vital in human medicine. It is only fair that meat imported to the EU should not be derived from animals which are fed antibiotics to stimulate their growth – and the industry's profits.

But law is only as good as enforcement; therefore, EU consumer groups will remain vigilant on the effective implementation and application of the new legislation. Latest data from the European Medicine Agency¹ found that although overall sales of antibiotics are coming down, the picture across the continent remains patchy. With the new law, we hope to see all EU Member States step up their game to end the improper use of veterinary antibiotics in farming.

END

¹ The latest ESVAC (European Surveillance of Veterinary Antimicrobial Consumption) [report](#) found that, overall, sales of veterinary antimicrobials across Europe have decreased by more than 20% between 2011 and 2016. Yet, while sales of veterinary antimicrobials dropped in 16 of those 25 countries that provided data for 2011-2016, six countries recorded sale increases during the same period.



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