

# Briefing document

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## Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

### Background:

Since the 1990s, when antimicrobial resistance (AMR) was recognised as a serious threat to public health, the Commission has launched various initiatives and actions across sectors. With about 25,000 patients dying each year in the EU from infections caused by drug-resistant bacteria and related costs of over 1.5 billion Euros in healthcare expenses and productivity losses (2007 data), antimicrobial resistance is a growing health concern in the EU. The Commission is revising the EU legislation in order to better address this issue through a "One Health" approach involving all aspects of antimicrobial resistance: human and animal health, food and feed safety, environment, research and innovation, and international cooperation.

In the UK, the [latest paper](#) published by the Review on Antimicrobial Resistance-commissioned by the British Prime Minister - proposes to reduce the use of antibiotics in agriculture and the quantities being dispersed into the environment by setting a global reduction target and national limits – ie an agreed level per kilogram of livestock and fish – along with restrictions on the use of antibiotics important for humans. The Review on AMR is tasked with recommending, by the summer of 2016, a comprehensive package of actions to tackle AMR globally.

### EU Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance:

In November 2011, the Commission launched a five-year [Action Plan](#) (2012-2016) to combat the threat of AMR to human and animal health. The Plan covers 12 concrete actions at EU and national level to respond to the following seven areas where measures are deemed most necessary:

- Making sure antimicrobials are **used appropriately** in both humans and animals
- **Preventing** microbial infections and their spread
- **Developing new effective antimicrobials** or alternatives for treatment
- **Cooperating with international partners** to contain the risks of AMR

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- Improving **monitoring and surveillance** in human and animal medicine
- Promoting **research and innovation**
- Improving **communication, education and training**.

In September 2015, the Commission published [Guidelines for the prudent use of antimicrobials in veterinary medicines](#). One of the key deliverables of the Action Plan, the guidelines set out principles and measures to be considered by Member States when developing and implementing national strategies to combat AMR. A separate [Staff Working Document](#) provides a number of practical examples.

Significant advances have been made in most areas since the Commission launched the initiative. They can be followed through the Action Plan [Implementation Roadmap](#) (updated in November 2015), and the [progress report](#) published in March 2015.

## **Veterinary medicines and medicated feed**

The Action Plan in particular aims to **strengthen the regulatory framework on veterinary medicines and medicated feed** and, in September 2014, the Commission adopted two proposals for Regulations:

- The [proposal on veterinary medicinal products](#) pays particular attention to combating the development of AMR in animals and humans – it contains specific provisions such as restricting the use in animals of certain antimicrobials that are reserved for human use.
- The [proposal on medicated feed](#) provides a prohibition on the preventive use of antimicrobials included in medicated feed. It also establishes an EU-wide residue limit for veterinary medicines in ordinary compound feed.

### Worth noting:

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) publishes yearly specific summary reports on the occurrence of AMR in both zoonotic and indicator bacteria from food-producing animals and foodstuffs in the EU. The latest [EU summary report](#) (February 2015) is based on 2013 data and finds that:

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- **Resistance to commonly used antimicrobials in *Salmonella* isolates was frequently detected in humans and animals and derived meat products.** The continued spread of particularly multi drug resistant clones reported in both human and animal (broilers, pigs and cattle) isolates is of concern.
- The levels of resistance to common antimicrobials in *E.coli* isolates were high in meat from broilers, considering all antimicrobials and all reporting member states, and lower in meat from pigs and cattle.
- Resistance to commonly used antimicrobials in *Campylobacter* isolates was frequently detected in humans and animals (especially broilers, pigs and cattle).

In another [report analysing possible relationships between the consumption of antimicrobial agents and the occurrence of antimicrobial resistance in humans and food-producing animals](#), it is found that, for food-producing animals, the strongest associations between consumption of antimicrobials and the corresponding resistance in bacteria were found for the antimicrobials studied in relation to *E. coli*. In some cases, a positive association was also found between antimicrobial consumption in animals and resistance in bacteria from humans.

⇒ **Work at EU level will focus in the coming years on the possibilities to obtain data on antimicrobial consumption by animal species.**

## What's next?

- As the AMR Action Plan is due to expire in 2016, the Commission launched an [evaluation process \(until March 2016\)](#) to assess the achievements so far and decide what additional EU measures should be taken in the medium and long term.
- The Netherlands will organise a [Ministerial Conference on Antibiotic Resistance](#) on the 9-10 February 2016 in Amsterdam, gathering EU Ministers of Health and Agriculture. The Conference will focus on the progress of the EU strategy and the need for measurable actions in the near future. **By the end of June 2016, the Dutch Presidency of the EU Council aims to adopt conclusions on antibiotic resistance.**
- **Discussions on the veterinary medicines and medicated feed proposals** are ongoing at the EU Council and the European Parliament. The European Parliament

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is expected to adopt a first reading position on the draft Regulations in May 2016. At Council level, both files were debated during a meeting in December 2015 where EU Agriculture Ministers stressed the importance of tackling antimicrobial resistance. Although there has not been much progress so far, the draft Regulations **are likely to gain momentum in the first half of 2016 as antibiotic resistance will dominate the agenda of the Dutch Presidency of the EU Council** (1 January until 30 June 2016).

- **The European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on the proposal for a new Animal Health regulation in June 2015.** The Regulation will establish a general framework with key principles and responsibilities for all players, with a focus on the control and prevention of transmissible animal diseases. The Regulation aims to contribute to a better husbandry, less pathogen pressure and, indirectly, to a reduced need for the use of antimicrobials. **The text of the future Regulation is undergoing further procedural steps awaiting adoption by the co-legislators and subsequent publication in the EU Official Journal, likely to be around May 2016.**
- International cooperation is a key element of the AMR action plan. EU Institutions and relevant agencies from USA, Canada and Norway cooperate within the **Trans-Atlantic Task Force for Antimicrobial Resistance (TATFAR)** due to adopt its work plan for 2016-2020 in the first quarter of 2016.
- The Food and Veterinary Office sent a questionnaire on the distribution and use of antimicrobials in animals to all EU Member States in August 2015, with a response deadline of November 2015. **The FVO will also carry out nine fact-finding missions in Member States during 2016; with a final overview report to be drafted by the first quarter of 2017.**

## Further Information:

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