

Contact: Pauline Constant: +32 (0)2 789 24 01
Date: 09/03/2016
Reference: BEUC-PR-2016-003

EU chance to slash antibiotic resistance is now or never

Key points:

- The EU Parliament has a golden opportunity to ban the use of antibiotics for healthy farm animals, including those which are used in patients with severe infections.
- With antimicrobial resistance growing, BEUC calls on the European Parliament to heed its [longstanding call](#) for stricter measures.
- Antibiotic resistance is in the spotlight this year and action is urgent.

The European Parliament can take action to curb antibiotic resistance in a key vote tomorrow¹. The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) urges MEPs to make sure farmers only give antibiotics to sick animals, not to healthy ones.

Antibiotic resistance goes beyond European borders. *Consumers International*, the global voice of consumers, is now [calling on fast food chains to stop the sale of meat raised with the routine use of antibiotics important to human medicine](#). [Several BEUC members have joined the movement](#) by lobbying the EU branches of the targeted fast food outlets and are raising awareness among consumers of the dangers of using antibiotics for healthy animals.

Monique Goyens, BEUC's Director General, commented:

"Antibiotic resistance is a ticking time bomb. The European Parliament has the power to help defuse it tomorrow by preventing farmers from feeding healthy animals with antibiotics. It is becoming clear that this routine practice is fuelling antibiotic resistance and therefore threatens public health. With antibiotic resistance claiming 25,000 lives annually, Europe must act now.

"Antibiotic resistance is too serious a threat to make the headlines today and to be forgotten tomorrow morning. If we do nothing, it could be too late and benign injuries could become deadly again.

"Antibiotics must remain effective to save the lives of patients who have serious bacterial infections. Europe's MEPs must restrict and, where necessary, ban the use of medicines in livestock so that they can continue to work in humans.

"Mapping antibiotics consumption can help spot and tackle misuse of antibiotics in farm animals. The Parliament should support an EU-wide database about why and how antibiotics are used. Today we know how many antibiotics are sold in the EU. But those figures only tell half the story. They do not reveal what animals receive which antibiotics and at what dose."

Background:

The more antibiotics are used, the higher the risk bacteria become resistant. Misuse and overuse on farm animals spurs antimicrobial resistance which can spread to humans in several ways, including food.

In several European countries [more antibiotics are used in animals than in humans](#). As over [90% of livestock antibiotics are ingested via water or feed](#), they usually end up in the stomachs of the whole herd rather than a few sick animals.

Next step:

The proposed measures will become law if the European Parliament and Member States eventually agree on a common position.

¹ On Thursday March 10th, European Parliamentarians will vote in plenary session a report spearheaded by MEP Ms Grossetête, which tightens a Commission text regulating animal medicines. [The European Parliament's relevant committee \(ENVI\) overwhelmingly approved the draft law last Feb 17th](#).

More:

[Our campaign](#)

[Our factsheet](#)

Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs AISBL | Der Europäische Verbraucherverband

Rue d'Arlon 80, B-1040 Brussels • Tel. +32 (0)2 789 24 01 •

press@beuc.eu • www.beuc.eu • www.twitter.com/beuc

EC register for interest representatives: identification number 9505781573-45



This press release is part of an activity which has received funding under an operating grant from the European Union's Consumer Programme (2014-2020).