

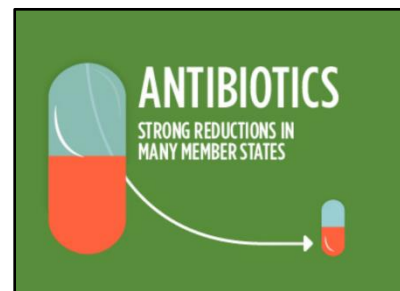
EUROPEAN POULTRY SECTOR: At the forefront in the reduction of the use of antibiotics

Brussels, 16 December 2020 – The European poultry sector promotes a responsible use of antibiotics. The poultry sector is committed to continuously improving production conditions in terms of resource conservation and animal welfare. It has achieved a lot in this respect: the current standards that apply to EU poultry meat are among the highest in the world.

Significant antibiotics use reductions already achieved

Several EU Member States have developed comprehensive plans to mitigate the use of antibiotics in poultry production and have achieved impressive results.

Among best performers, the Italian poultry sector has seen their use of antibiotics slashed by 82% in all poultry species (and by 87% only in broilers) from 2011 to 2019, while the Dutch poultry sector has reduced their use by 75% since 2009. In addition, significant reductions are also seen in other Member States: the French poultry sector has achieved 5 years in advance its objective of reducing by 60% the use of antibiotics. Breeders, hatcheries, and all professionals in the sector prioritise preventive measures: by constantly improving the well-being and the daily monitoring of their animals, they manage to limit the risk of contracting any disease.



Antibiotics are only prescribed by veterinarians ‘as little as possible, as much as necessary’

In Europe, antibiotics are never administered to animals as a preventive measure, but only if the birds are sick – and on prescription by a veterinarian. When a bacterial infection occurs, just like people, animals need an antibiotic treatment to cure the disease and make sure that their health does not deteriorate further. *“Antibiotics remain an essential tool for guaranteeing animal health and welfare, but their use must be prudent and rational”* says Birthe Steenberg, secretary General of AVEC. *“The EU poultry sector is fully committed to a responsible use of antibiotics which means to use “as little as possible – but as much as needed”.*

European poultry is free from antibiotic residues

Consumers may be reassured in all respects that any antibiotic residue is completely disappeared from the meat before it is placed on the market. If the birds are sick and the antibiotic treatment is unavoidable, as with all other drug applications, sufficient time must elapse before slaughter to make certain that the active ingredients are sufficiently broken down and are no longer detectable in the meat. This withdrawal period ensures that the meat that is later purchased and prepared by consumers no longer contains any traces of medication. In addition, the meat in the slaughterhouses is also regularly inspected for traces of antibiotic residues.

The Reduction of Use of Antibiotics in the Farm to Fork Strategy

The Farm to Fork Strategy launched in May 2020 includes an ambitious target to reduce the use of veterinary antibiotics. Although the significant progress already made in the meat sector, the European Commission proposes to go further and take action to reduce overall sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals by 50% by 2030. AVEC welcomes positively this ambitious target on the reduction of the use of antibiotics.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the achievements that have already been made in several Member States and the frontrunners should not be penalised for their early and successful actions.

A promotion campaign to inform about the EU Poultry sector

“This is European poultry! High-quality poultry with European guarantee” is a two-year campaign supported by the European Commission launched by AVEC and five national poultry organisations (from France, Germany, Italy, Poland and The Netherlands). The main objective is to inform European consumers and professionals about the high standards of the EU poultry production and the commitment of the sector on sustainability, environment and animal welfare. More information about the project is available at <https://eu-poultry.eu/>.

Whether you want to learn more about EU poultry production, animal welfare and sustainability of the sector, please download the latest press kit and leaflet [here!](#)

For any additional information

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