

Press release

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Compassion in World Farming introduces 'Antibiotic Anna' to Brussels, on behalf of The Alliance

Farm antibiotics increasing the threat of untreatable human diseases

A new report ***Case Study of a Health Crisis*** finds there has been an alarming rise in new farm superbugs, especially MRSA and E. coli that are passing to humans. The report links this rise to the fact that nearly 50% of all antibiotics are used in farming and argues that one of the fundamental causes of food and animal-related antibiotic resistance is factory farming.

Most pigs, poultry and dairy cows receive antibiotics routinely, whether or not they are unwell, with some European pigs spending an average of 20% of their lives on antibiotics. Over the last decade entirely new E.coli and MRSA superbugs have become major problems on European farms due to the overuse of antibiotics. These are spreading between farms and also passing to humans, making it more difficult for doctors to treat affected patients, with potentially fatal delays in identifying an effective antibiotic when needed.

The recently founded **Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics** - consisting of Compassion in World Farming, the Soil Association and Sustain - has launched its first report to coincide with the expected publication of the EU Commission's 5-year strategy on antimicrobial resistance [17 Nov] and European Antibiotic Awareness Day [18 Nov]. New antibiotics are now rarely developed and the Alliance aims to help 'Save Our Antibiotics', by preventing their overuse within EU farming. [1] [2]

The Alliance is calling for the overall use of antibiotics on EU farms to be halved by 2015 - with an emphasis on ending all routine, prophylactic use. It also wants major restrictions placed on the farm use of antibiotics that are 'critically important' in human medicine. Key recommendations to curb antibiotic use on farms in the EU are offered. Veterinary surgeons must shoulder the responsibility of implementing reduction strategies but all of us - farmers, retailers, consumers, doctors and regulators - need to play our part in ensuring a farming industry that is not reliant on the use of non-essential antibiotics.

Joyce D'Silva, Director of Public Affairs at Compassion in World Farming, says:
"Farm animals in the EU are being routinely treated with antibiotics as a cheap insurance policy. This indiscriminate overuse on the factory farm makes a world without effective antibiotics for humans ever more likely."

The report recognises the essential need to retain antibiotic treatment for sick animals, to prevent suffering and maintain good animal welfare, but argues this too can be significantly reduced by improving the conditions under which most farm animals are kept. [3]

Richard Young, Soil Association Policy Advisor, says:
"Organic farmers have shown it is entirely possible to raise healthy animals with minimal use of antibiotics. We cannot get rid of factory farming overnight, but we could immediately start a Europe-wide programme of change to look after animals in ways that naturally keep them healthy."

"Factory farmed animals are kept in confined, crowded and stressful conditions. This leads to the suppression of their immune systems and rapid spread of disease. The report provides clear evidence showing that ultimately consumers are paying the price for this."

Professor Christopher Butler, Head of the Institute of Primary Care and Public Health at Cardiff University who wrote the foreword of the report, says:

"Antibiotics have saved numerous lives and have rightly been termed 'wonder' drugs. However, more and more antibiotics have been consumed for less and less benefit in many settings. All too often, antibiotics are prescribed in situations where the risk of harm outweighs the chance of benefit from the antibiotics. A significant contribution comes from over-reliance on routine use of antibiotics in intensive farming. It is not tenable to regard animal medicine as having marginal relevance to human health. Systems are interlinked. The challenge now is to focus on antibiotic stewardship programmes that take a holistic view, incorporating all domains of antibiotic use."

In October the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on the European Commission to address the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance on farms passing to humans. [4]

To read a four page, abridged version of the report, please click [here](#)
To read the full report and findings please click [here](#)

Ends

For further information, case studies, images, or to arrange interviews contact:

Lara Richardson, Compassion in World Farming Media Manager
01483 521952 or 07814 038 196 or email lara.richardson@ciwf.org

Clio Turton, Soil Association Press Office Manager
0117 914 2448 / 07795 562 556 or email cturton@soilassociation.org

Jeanette Longfield, Sustain Coordinator
020 7837 1228 or email jeanette@sustainweb.org

Notes to Editors:

[1] Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics

A new Alliance to 'Save Our Antibiotics' - three established organisations have joined forces to halt the indiscriminate use of these vital products and highlight a better way forward to protect human and animal health for the future. They are:

- Compassion in World Farming
- Soil Association
- Sustain

The Alliance asserts that the reason antibiotics are being over-used is because factory-farmed animals:

- live caged, confined or penned in crowded, stressful conditions;
- are weaned very early (piglets, calves);
- are often physiologically stretched to the limit to maximise their productivity.

For more information on this report or to join the Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics (organisations only) please contact CIWF, the Soil Association or Sustain.

[2] About the Alliance partners:

Compassion in World Farming was founded over 40 years ago in 1967 by a British farmer who became horrified by the development of modern, intensive factory farming. Today we campaign peacefully to end all cruel factory farming practices. We believe that the biggest cause of animal cruelty on the planet deserves a focused, specialised approach – so we only work on farm animal welfare.

The Soil Association was founded in 1946 by farmers, scientists, doctors and nutritionists to promote the connection between the health of the soil, food, people and the environment. Today the Soil Association is the UK's leading membership charity campaigning for healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use.

Sustain advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, promote equity and enrich society and culture.

[3] Please see below for details of organic farmers who are happy to talk about their use of antibiotics. Contact the Soil Association press office for direct phone numbers:

Adrian Dolby, Farm Manager at Barrington Park Estate. The farm has been organic since 1995 and enterprises include beef, sheep and poultry.

Helen and Sam Wade, farming partners at Eastleach Downs Organic Farm. A small family farm which raises organic pigs and sells their pork products direct to customers. Helen was previously a non-organic pig farmer.

Huw Bowles, Corporate Affairs Director at the Organic Milk Suppliers Cooperative (OMSCo). and Tim Downes, organic dairy farmer and OMSCo supplier. OMSCo farmers operate to strict organic standards that help keep cows healthy. Routine reliance on antibiotics is not permitted under organic standards but, as MRSA was found in British milk earlier this year, their use remains a concern. OMSCo give support to their farmers to minimise use of antibiotics and have set up a monitoring system with the aim of reducing antibiotic use even further. Tim Downes from Shropshire, runs an organic dairy, beef and arable farm and supplies organic milk to OMSCO.

[4] [Read details here](#)