

## **Alliance statement**

The Alliance to Save our Antibiotics is concerned that David Cameron's target announced today to reduce farm antibiotic use to the level recommended by the O'Neill review is not ambitious enough in its scope.

The report suggested a reduction target of 50mg of antibiotics for every kg of livestock by 2018. The UK sold 57mg of antibiotics for every kg of livestock in 2014, meaning that David Cameron's target could be achieved with minimal improvements to veterinary prescribing practices.

Crucially, this target does not take species-specific use into account. In the UK, pigs and poultry account for the vast majority of veterinary antibiotic consumption - around 90% - due to the intensive way these species are often farmed. In contrast, sheep (which are mainly farmed extensively) account for a fraction of total UK antibiotic use, even though there are many more sheep than pigs in the UK.

Proportionally, since the UK has relatively few pigs and many sheep in comparison to most EU countries, this makes the average use per kg of meat produced in the UK appear fairly low. However, use per animal in pigs and poultry in the UK is at least 3.5 times higher than in Nordic countries and the Netherlands.

The Alliance to Save our Antibiotics is calling for a target to cut UK farm antibiotic use by 50% by 2020 and 80% by 2025, including a target to cut the use of antibiotics classified as critically important in human medicine by 80% by 2020 and 95% by 2025.

David Cameron also announced new measures to restrict - and possibly ban - farm use of antibiotics which are classified as critical for human health.

This coincides with a report published on Thursday 26 May by the European Medicine Agency (EMA) which states that resistance to last-resort antibiotic colistin is "likely" to be transferring from farm animals to humans in the European Union, but fails to recommend a ban on its use in livestock.

If Mr Cameron is serious about protecting vital drugs like colistin for the future, he must show that today's announcement was not just hot air by immediately banning the use of colistin in farm animals.