

Press Release
25th October, 2018

Today, new EU legislation has passed, banning preventative mass medication of groups of healthy animals

New legislation, aimed at ending the overuse of antibiotics in farming has been approved today. Cólín Numan, Campaign Manager and Scientific Adviser for The Alliance to Save our Antibiotics says: *“This is a long awaited victory – for healthy farm animals that should not be dosed with antibiotics, and for human health.*

“We have been campaigning for years for the adoption of farming practices that prioritise animal health and welfare, reducing the need for antibiotics in the first place and, to save our antibiotics for unhealthy people who desperately need them, not healthy animals who don’t.”

This landmark legislation will ban preventative mass medication of groups of healthy animals in 2022. The overuse of antibiotics in farming has been rife for decades, to compensate for low-welfare, cramped conditions that encourage the development of resistant bacteria which can then spread to people.

Antimicrobial resistance occurs when organisms develop mutations that render antibiotics ineffective. The World Health Organization has called for ‘critically important drugs’, those that treat human diseases when nothing else is effective, to be banned for use in livestock. Until now, countries failed to follow this advice.

Estimates suggest that farm animals account for 73% of the world’s antibiotics use, in the EU, two thirds of our antibiotics are used by ‘food animals’ and in France, approximately 50% of antibiotics are used on farm animals. The figures are staggering.

It is important to note that this new legislation does not prevent sick animals from being treated, nor does it discount those individual animals that are high-risk for an infection from being administered antibiotics in order to prevent the infection from developing. The key point here is that individual animals will be treated, as opposed to treating a herd of cows (for example) antibiotics through their feed or water.

Cólín continues: *“We warmly welcome this huge step towards a more responsible use of antibiotics in livestock.”*

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Notes to Editors

1. The [Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics](#) is an alliance of health, medical, civil society and animal welfare groups campaigning to stop the overuse of antibiotics in animal farming. It was founded by [Compassion in World Farming](#), the [Soil Association](#) and [Sustain](#) in 2009. Our vision is a world in which human and animal health and well-being are protected by food and farming systems that do not rely on routine antibiotic use.