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Tackling antibiotic resistance from a food safety perspective in Europe



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Antibiotics have revolutionized the treatment of infectious diseases in humans. But their use and misuse in food animals, not only for treatment, but also for disease prevention and growth promotion, has resulted in the development and spread of antibiotic resistance. This is now a significant public health problem: each year in the European Union alone, over 25 000 people die from infections caused by antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Antibiotic resistance is also a food safety problem: antibiotic use in food animals –for treatment, disease prevention or growth promotion – allows resistant bacteria and resistance genes to spread from food animals to humans through the food-chain.

This publication explores the options for prevention and containment of antibiotic resistance in the food-chain through both national coordination and international cooperation, including the regulation and reduction of antibiotic use in food animals, training and capacity building, surveillance of resistance trends and antibiotic usage, promotion of knowledge and research, and advocacy and communication to raise awareness of the issues.

This publication is primarily intended for policy-makers and authorities working in the public health, agriculture, food production and veterinary sectors, and offers them ways to take a holistic, intersectoral, multifaceted approach to this growing problem.

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