

On Antimicrobial Resistance

Background

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death. As a result of drug resistance, antibiotics and other antimicrobial medicines become ineffective and infections become increasingly difficult or impossible to treat.

It is recognised that antibiotic resistance poses a serious risk to both human and animal health, since resistant bacteria can be transferred between animals, animal products and people. The World Health Organisation has warned of a post-antibiotic era, where antibiotic resistance would cause more deaths than cancer.

The European Commission presented in 2015 its Action Plan against the rising threats from Antimicrobial Resistance¹ containing actions for implementation with EU Member States and identifying areas where measures are most needed. And in 2016 it published its One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance² aiming to make the EU a best practice region, to boost research, development and innovation, and to shape the global agenda.

Healthy animals produce safer food.

Consumers in the EU and beyond should have access to the freshest and safest European farmed fish products on the market. Therefore, European fish farmers, and their veterinarians continue to work in concert to develop Veterinary Health Plans, optimised global surveillance and monitoring programmes. No fish farmer wishes to lower growth performance and lose fish through disease and infections. The EFAP strongly supports the improvement of veterinary skills and networking throughout Europe so as to improve and access best on-farm practices.

Antibiotics are sometimes used to treat farmed and pet animals for the same reasons as they are used to treat people: they are selectively used to treat and control specific diseases. Responsible prescription and use of antibiotics in all types of food-producing animals, including fish, is a key consideration.

The focus for professional fish farming is on disease prevention rather than cure: antibiotics are therefore not used unless considered to be essential for disease treatment. Highest Priority Critically Important Antibiotics (HP-CIAs) are very rarely used in European aquaculture, and only if their use is justified by sensitivity testing. The prophylactic use of antibiotics does not occur in European fish farming and is forbidden within the EU. The treatments with veterinary medicines that are unavoidable are fully traceable in order to ensure the absolute absence of drug residues in fish delivered to the market.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council
Action plan against the rising threats from Antimicrobial Resistance (2015) (link to full text)

² European One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance (2016) (link to full text)