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HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

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Brussels,

Dear Honourable Members,

Thank you for your letter of 16 November 2020 on the routine preventive use of antimicrobials in animal production, and the changes necessary to fulfil the upcoming EU ban of this routine. On behalf of myself and my colleague, Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski, I would like provide the following reply.

We fully share your concerns as regards the threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Addressing AMR through a One Health approach continues to be a priority of the Commission.

[The 2017 EU One Health action plan against AMR](#) includes over 70 actions covering human health, animal health, the environment and research and innovation. The latest European Surveillance of Veterinary Antimicrobial Consumption (ESVAC) report, published in October 2020, shows that sales of antibiotics for use in animals in Europe fell by more than 34% between 2011 and 2018. Additionally the EU Farm to Fork Strategy sets an objective to reduce by 50% the overall EU sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 2030.

Indeed, the new Regulations (EU) 2019/6 and (EU) 2019/4 on veterinary medicinal products and on medicated feed, respectively, bring further restrictions of the prophylactic use of antimicrobials in animals.

As rightfully underlined in your letter, one of the key measures against antimicrobial resistance provided for by Regulation (EU) 2019/6 is that the preventive use of antimicrobial medicinal products in animals will only be authorised in exceptional cases and for the administration to an individual animal or a restricted number of animals. This measure, in conjunction with other measures in this Regulation, also aiming at promoting a more prudent use of antimicrobials, should contribute to achieve the reduction target aspired to in the EU Farm to Fork Strategy. Furthermore, Regulation (EU) 2019/4 completely ends the

prophylactic use of antibiotics. For antimicrobials other than antibiotics, only very specific applications are allowed preventively.

As regards the need to ‘reserve last resort antibiotics for human use’ mentioned in your letter, Regulation (EU) 2019/6 includes provisions to help preserve the efficacy of antimicrobials that are crucial to human medicine. The Commission is already working to: 1) establish criteria for the designation of antimicrobials to be reserved for treatment of certain infections in humans, through a delegated act, and 2) designate such antimicrobials, through an implementing act.

As regards your request that ‘veterinarians should no longer have the right to prescribe and dispense antibiotics’, Regulation (EU) 2019/6 and Regulation (EU) 2019/4 include clear rules on the prescription, advertising and promotion of veterinary medicinal products and medicated feed. Veterinarians should respect their professional code of conduct and ensure that they are not in a situation of conflict of interest when prescribing medicinal products, while recognising their legitimate activity of retail in accordance with national law. In particular, veterinarians should not be influenced, directly or indirectly, by economic incentives when prescribing those medicinal products. Furthermore, the supply of veterinary medicinal products by veterinarians should be restricted to the amount required for treatment of the animals under their care.

As regards your ‘demand for rigorous controls to assure the rules for antimicrobial use in animal farming are appropriately implemented’, Article 123 of Regulation (EU) 2019/6 provides that Member States’ competent authorities shall carry out controls regularly and on a risk-basis, and this, on various relevant actors, including veterinarians and owners and keepers of food-producing animals. Such controls may also be carried out upon the request of a competent authority of another Member State, the Commission or EMA. It is important to recall that the Regulation stipulates that the competent authorities must have procedures and arrangements in place to ensure that the staff performing the controls are free from any conflict of interest. The Commission may also carry out audits on Member States’ competent authorities to confirm the appropriateness of their controls (Article 124). Finally, Member States must lay down rules on penalties applicable to infringements of this Regulation and shall take all necessary measures to ensure that they are implemented (Article 135); such penalties should be effective, proportionate and dissuasive.

We take good note of your suggestions for a mandatory EU labelling for the use of antibiotics, and the development of a health-oriented system for the rearing of animals.

Clearly, better animal welfare would improve animal health and reduce the need for medication as stated in the EU Farm to Fork Strategy. We also need better means to empower consumers to make informed and sustainable food choices.

Therefore, the EU Farm to Fork Strategy contains the commitment for the Commission to propose a revision of the EU legislation on the welfare of farmed animals by 2023, and to consider options for animal welfare labelling to better transmit value through the food chain.

Your letter provides a very important and timely input to this exercise. We can assure you that your suggestions will be duly taken into account.

Yours sincerely,



To:

Manuela Ripa, Greens/EFA;

Sara Cerdas, S&D;

Ville Niinistö, Greens/EFA;

Nicolae Stefanuta, Renew;

Pascal Durang, Renew;

Tiemo Wöelken, S&D;

Jutta Paulus, Greens/EFA;

Michal Wiezik, EPP;

Grace O'Sullivan, Greens/EFA;

Sylvia Spurek, Greens/EFA;

Tilly Metz, Greens/EFA;

Francisco Guerreiro, Greens/EFA;

Günther Sidl, S&D;

Margrete Auken, Greens/EFA;

Kira Peter-Hansen, Greens/EFA;

Sarah Wiener, Greens/EFA;

Ivan Sincic, Non-Attached;

Martin Buschmann, Non-Attached

Piernicola Pedicini, Non-Attached;

Tiziana Beghin, Non-Attached;

Eleonora Evi, Non-Attached

