



**TOOLKIT  
HOW HEALTHCARE  
PROFESSIONALS  
CAN ADVOCATE THE  
RESPONSIBLE USE  
OF ANTIBIOTICS  
IN FOOD PRODUCTION**

# IN 2019, ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR) CAUSED 1.27 MILLION DEATHS GLOBALLY, MAKING AMR ONE OF THE LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH WORLDWIDE.

AMR places a huge burden on the healthcare sector and presents a challenge for healthcare professionals who are losing one of the most critical tools in modern medicine - antibiotics.

One of the drivers of AMR is the overuse and misuse of antibiotics in food production. To support healthcare professionals who want to reduce this impact, Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Europe has developed this communications toolkit to support you in advocating and campaigning on this issue.

This toolkit includes guidelines, advice, and key messages that can be used to communicate about AMR to non-expert audiences, from policymakers to food producers and administrative staff at your hospital. Please share this toolkit with your colleagues and multiply your efforts to make your voices heard.





## WHAT DRIVES AMR?

AMR is a natural process, but certain conditions and practices accelerate its development and spread. It is caused, in part, by the [inappropriate use of antibiotics in healthcare, pharmaceutical pollution, and the misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in food production](#). For this reason, the fight against AMR needs to involve multiple scientific disciplines and sectors.

## AMR IN FOOD PRODUCTION

Antibiotics are a cornerstone of medicine and are essential for human and animal health. However, they are not always used properly. For example, [antibiotics are often used in food production to compensate for poor farming practices](#). In order to optimise financial gain, some farmers engage in practices such as early weaning, tail docking, and keeping animals in overcrowded environments, which may require an increased need for antibiotics. These inappropriate conditions can lead to the development and spread of AMR.

The resistant bacteria that develop and spread in animal farms are also a threat to human health. These [bacteria can spread to humans through direct contact with animals](#) on farms, processing and transport, and through the environment. A [recent study](#) carried out in the UK found antibiotic resistant bacteria in rivers and waterways in areas with high levels of factory farming.

AMR can be reduced by the sustainable and responsible use of antibiotics in agriculture. To make this happen, however, change is needed across sectors - from agriculture to healthcare.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT AMR IN FOOD PRODUCTION:



[Infographic | Safeguarding colistin: A crucial antimicrobial for human health](#)

[Factsheet | Reducing antimicrobial resistance in food production](#)

[Policy recommendations | Improve animal welfare to ensure responsible use of antibiotics](#)

## TACKLING AMR THROUGH POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Appropriate institutional policies and legislation can help ensure that antibiotics are produced, used and disposed of with minimal consequences for human, animal, and environmental health.

One example of success in terms of shared institutional policies is the [One Health approach](#), which recognises the interconnection between people, animals, plants and their shared environment. This approach aims to address global health threats, including AMR, from a multisectoral and transdisciplinary approach working at different levels simultaneously (global, local, regional, national).

The European Union regulates the use of antimicrobials and other pharmaceuticals through legislation that is periodically updated and revised. [The Veterinary Medicinal Products legislation](#), for example, contains measures to support the availability and safety of veterinary medicines and accelerate action against AMR.

## THE ROLE OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Healthcare professionals are consistently regarded as the most trusted members of society, and they can use this trusted voice to advocate for the sustainable and responsible use of antibiotics in food production. Healthcare facilities across Europe procure large quantities of food of animal origin, the production of which can lead to the overuse and misuse of antibiotics.

# USE OF ANTIMICROBIALS IN FOOD PRODUCTION - KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

## IMPACT OF AMR ON HUMAN HEALTH



AMR CAUSED  
**1.27 MILLION**  
DEATHS GLOBALLY IN 2019.<sup>1</sup>

INFECTIONS WITH BACTERIA RESISTANT TO LAST-LINE ANTIBIOTICS CAUSE NEARLY **40%** OF THE HEALTH BURDEN OF AMR IN THE EU/EEA.<sup>2</sup>



IN EUROPE ALONE, AMR CAUSES  
**35,000 DEATHS**  
ANNUALLY.<sup>3</sup>

UNLESS FURTHER ACTION IS TAKEN, THE GLOBAL AMR DEATH TOLL COULD BE



**10 TIMES HIGHER**  
**BY 2050**

MORE THAN THE EXPECTED NUMBER OF DEATHS FROM CANCER AND DIABETES COMBINED.<sup>4</sup>

1. [The Lancet. \(2022\) Global burden of bacterial antimicrobial resistance in 2019: a systematic analysis.](#)

2. [ECDC. \(2018\) Antibiotic resistance – An increasing threat to human health.](#)

3. [ECDC. \(2022\) Assessing the health burden of infections with antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the EU/EEA, 2016-2020.](#)

4. [AMR Review. \(2014\) Antimicrobial resistance: Tackling a crisis for the health and wealth of nations.](#)

5. [Tiseo et al. \(2020\) Global trends in antimicrobial use in food animals from 2017 to 2030.](#)

6. [Van Boeckel et al. \(2015\) Global trends in antimicrobial use in food animals.](#)

7. [EMA. \(2022\) Sales of veterinary antimicrobial agents in 31 European countries in 2021.](#)

8. [Germanwatch. \(2020\) Chicken meat tested for resistance to Critically Important Antimicrobials for Human Medicine.](#)

## AMR IN FOOD PRODUCTION

### GLOBALLY

AN ESTIMATED

**73%**

OF ANTIBIOTICS SOLD GLOBALLY ARE CONSUMED BY ANIMALS.<sup>5</sup>



ANTIMICROBIAL USE IN LIVESTOCK IS SET TO RISE BY

**67%**

BETWEEN 2010 AND 2030.<sup>6</sup>



### IN EUROPE



IN 2021,

**5,219.6 TONNES**

OF ANTIMICROBIALS WERE SOLD FOR VETERINARY USE.<sup>7</sup>

HIGHEST PRIORITY CRITICALLY IMPORTANT ANTIMICROBIALS (HPCIAS) FOR HUMAN USE ACCOUNTED OF

**13.9%**

OF ANTIMICROBIAL SALES FOR VETERINARY USE.<sup>7</sup>

SALES OF PHARMACEUTICALS SUITABLE FOR GROUP TREATMENT ACCOUNTED FOR

**86.6%**

OF THE TOTAL SALES.<sup>7</sup>



SIMPLE RESISTANCE OR MULTI-RESISTANCE TO VARIOUS ANTIBIOTICS WAS FOUND IN MORE THAN HALF OF CHICKEN MEAT SAMPLES FROM THREE LEADING EU POULTRY COMPANIES.<sup>8</sup>

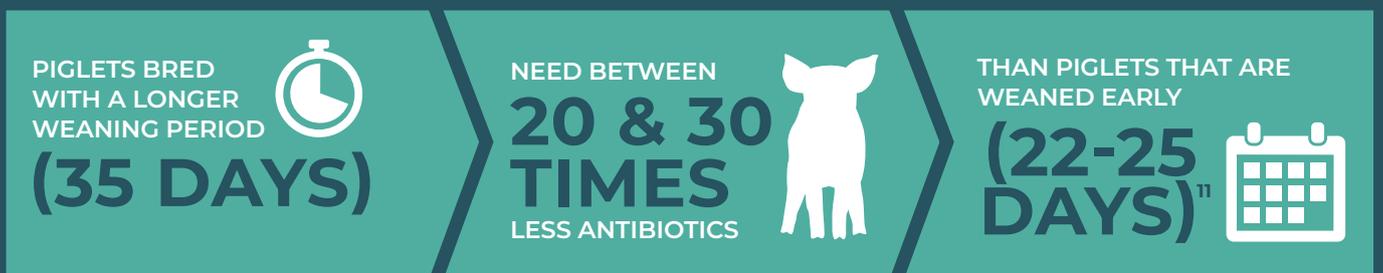
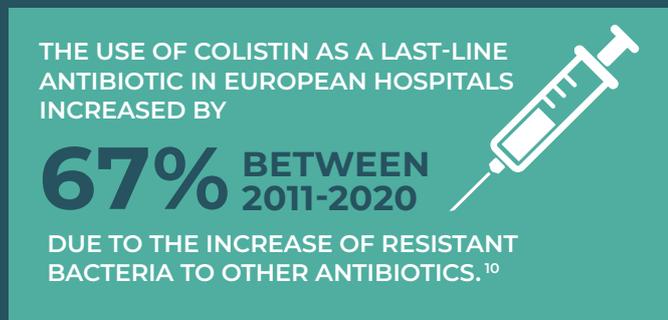
# USE OF ANTIMICROBIALS IN FOOD PRODUCTION - KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

## POSITIVE BENEFITS OF REDUCED ANTIBIOTIC USE

REDUCING ANTIBIOTIC USE IN FARM ANIMALS DECREASES THE PREVALENCE OF:



## CASE STUDY: COLISTIN IN PIG PRODUCTION



<sup>9</sup>. Tang et al. (2017) Restricting the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals and its associations with antibiotic resistance in food-producing animals and human beings.

<sup>10</sup>. OECD. (2022) Antimicrobial Resistance in the EU/EEA A One Health Response.

<sup>11</sup>. Sjolund et al. (2016) Quantitative and qualitative antimicrobial usage patterns in farrow-to-finish pig herds in Belgium, France, Germany and Sweden.

# HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE FIGHT AGAINST THE OVERUSE AND MISUSE OF ANTIMICROBIALS IN FOOD PRODUCTION

## ONLINE: SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a great way to reach out to your community and beyond. You can easily communicate with fellow healthcare professionals, patients, and policymakers - all in the same place.

**Here are some steps you can take to make sure to have an impactful social media presence:**

- **Ensure** your profile establishes credibility - Highlight your profession and mention the organisation where you are working (highlight that the posts are your own opinion).
- **Engage** with key organisations and leaders - Don't focus only on posting, engage with others by commenting, sharing, and liking their posts.
- **Post** about your experience with AMR and the effect on your patients.
- **Write** short and engaging messages accompanied by an image to give your post more reach. [To help you start, we have created some simple messages and images.](#)

## USEFUL RESOURCES

### Create your own visuals

- [Canva](#)
- [Piktochart](#)

### Royalty-free images

- [Pixabay](#)
- [Pexels](#)

## OP-EDS AND BLOGS

Op-eds and blogs are opinion-led, and your ideas and experiences are the most important part of the piece. The longer format makes it possible to develop ideas and support them with facts and figures.

### Tips for writing an engaging and informative piece:

- **Make it clear and simple** - think about what you want to say, then say it as simply as possible.
- **Catch the attention of the reader** - open with the main message/objective but then get straight to the point.
- **Use everyday language** - Avoid uncommon or overly technical language and only use technical words if no common equivalent exists.



### Basic structure for your op-ed or blog:

#### Title

Clearly describe what you are writing about.  
Consider what will interest readers and make them curious to read more.

#### Opening paragraph [3-5 sentences]

State what is new/the key conclusion(s) of the piece - irrespective of chronology.

#### Introduction [1 paragraph]

Introduce the context/background to the issue and help bring readers up to speed. The introduction should reinforce the objective/central argument of your piece, which will then be followed by the substance i.e. the contributing facts, figures, and evidence.

#### Main body

Elaborate your position - support your arguments by offering supporting facts, figures, and examples.

#### Conclusion

Sum up your opinion - repeat and emphasise key message(s).  
Include a call to action - what would you like your readers to do with the newfound knowledge?



### READ BLOG POSTS WRITTEN BY HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS ON AMR:

[Doctors are losing resources in the fight against antimicrobial resistance](#)

[Why the war in Ukraine can drive the spread of AMR](#)

### FEELING INSPIRED?



[Get in touch!](#) We can help pitch your work to media outlets or publish it as part of HCWH Europe's blog post series.

## OFFLINE

### Engage with leadership and procurement staff at your hospital

The most significant change you can make is in your workplace. Engage with the management and procurement staff at your hospital, learn more about procurement practices, and talk to key stakeholders to find out what can be improved.

The healthcare sector has great purchasing power, and the implementation of sustainable procurement practices could influence food-supply chains. For this reason, [we have developed a set of sustainable procurement criteria to promote the responsible use of antimicrobials in food production.](#)

#### Recommendations on how to start to engage with hospital leadership on the topic of antimicrobials:

- **Find allies:** Find colleagues interested in reducing your institution's contribution to AMR and form an action group in which you can discuss the scope of your future actions.
- **Define your goals:** Draft a set of concrete actions that your institution could carry out.
- **Meet the right people:** Identify key bodies/groups within your institution that can help you reach the objectives established by your action group. This could be the management board, the procurement team, sustainability team, or any other department with decision-making authority.
- **Build momentum:** Raise awareness about this issue amongst other colleagues. Try to identify key dates for advocacy activities such as events, thematic coffee/lunch breaks, and other internal communications channels in order to raise awareness and keep your colleagues informed about the activities and objectives of the group.



#### Key dates in the fight against AMR

- **7th June**  
World Food Safety Day
- **2nd October**  
World Farm Animals Day
- **4th October**  
World Animal Welfare Day
- **16th October**  
World Food Day
- **3rd November**  
One Health Day
- **18th November**  
European Antibiotic Awareness Day
- **18-24th November**  
World Antimicrobial Awareness Week

#### USEFUL RESOURCES

[Sustainable procurement criteria | Responsible antimicrobial use in products of animal origin](#)



## PUBLIC SPEAKING/MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

Public speaking or engaging with journalists can be intimidating. Here are some tips to give you confidence when engaging in public speaking or speaking to the media.



### ● Be prepared and research the issue

- Only agree to an interview or speaking opportunity if you are ready and prepared. If you need more time, take more time.
- Prepare a document with key information and messages you want to convey.



### ● Know your audience

- Tailor your messages accordingly - your messages and approach might vary depending on whether you are talking to fellow health professionals or policymakers, for example.



### ● Focus on the big idea

- Be clear about what messages you want to get across. Ideally this would be a maximum of three, but be sure to focus on one big idea. Messages should be clear, punchy, credible, distinct, simple, and repeated.



### ● Prepare proof points

- Support your ideas with facts and figures but work the data into something meaningful and memorable - use vivid images, case studies, examples, and personal experience.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

[Mastering media interviews to promote climate and health](#)



## CONTACT POLICYMAKERS

Change needs to happen across all levels - from individual hospitals to national and international institutions. A good legal framework will make positive changes on a local level possible.

### How to engage with policymakers

- **Take part in consultations:** When developing new legislation, or updating existing legislation, the European Commission looks for feedback from its citizens. [Contribute your ideas to relevant legislation.](#)
- **Contact policymakers directly:** Write a letter to your politicians in your region/country or a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) (if relevant). MEPs can be hard to get a hold of - contact their assistants. [The database of the European Parliament](#) contains key information about MEPs, including contact information and the focus of their work.

### How to write an engaging letter to policymakers

- **Address the right person:** Research who is the right person to contact for this issue. Policymakers usually highlight their interest on their websites and social media.
- **Find the right moment:** Follow the EU institutions, media outlets, and organisations that deal with this issue to stay up to date on key opportunities.
- **Find support:** Mobilise your community and collect signatures and endorsements from individuals and organisations.

### How to structure your argument in an advocacy letter

#### Introduction

Introduce the issue you want to talk about and outline why this issue is important to you. How does it impact your life/work?

#### Support your point

Position the issue in a policy context and describe:

- How would policy changes improve the current status and help solve the issue?
- What would the consequences be if no changes are made
- Use data and examples from your experience to support your points.

#### Call to action

What specifically do you want to change and what can this person/institution do to make it happen?



Letters we have sent to policymakers prompting them to safeguard critical antibiotics for human health:

[Joint statement | The European Commission must preserve vital antibiotics for human health and protect animal welfare](#)

[Joint statement | Advice on the designation of antimicrobials treatment of certain infections in humans](#)

[Petition | Safeguarding colistin for human health](#)

### YOU CAN START ADVOCATING FOR GREENER HEALTHCARE RIGHT NOW

- Join networks of healthcare professionals to engage in campaigns and receive news about key policy changes:
  - [Nurses Climate Challenge](#)
  - [Doctors for Greener Healthcare](#)



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