

Antibiotic Use in Danish Pigs Alarms Minister

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DENMARK - Food Minister, Mette Gjerskov, alarmed by rise in antibiotic consumption in Danish pigs.

After several years of decline in the use of antibiotics in Danish agriculture, figures for antibiotic use in pig production a significant increase from 2011 to 2012. In absolute terms on an annual basis, the increase was 5.5 per cent but when the total production of pork in the same period has decreased, the rise as high as 10.5 per cent.

At the same time, purchases of antibiotics in January 2013 were 12 per cent higher than in January 2012.

"It is alarming that there are so marked an increase in antibiotic consumption for pigs. Obviously sick animals are treated, but it is vital to keep the consumption of antibiotics as low as possible. Heavy consumption of antibiotics leads to more and more bacteria become resistant to antibiotics. And it puts us in a situation where we have trouble treating sick people. 25,000 Europeans die each year in the account," said Ms Gjerskov.

In autumn 2012, the government and all parties in parliament came to an agreement, which included among other measures a 'yellow card' system that set strict limits on the use of antibiotics for pigs. The agreement brings action against inappropriate medication of groups of pigs, increased efforts against illegal imports of antibiotics and encouraged more research and monitoring of resistance.

"I would urgently need an analysis of the levels of antibiotics to ensure that consumption evolves in a more responsible direction. If the analysis shows that there is a need for amendments, the parties need to agree to a further discussion," said Ms Gjerskov.

Pork production has fallen from 2,008,000 tonnes in 2011 to 1,916,400 tonnes in 2012. The decrease in production is mainly caused by the increase in Danish exports of live pigs, which are fattened and slaughtered abroad.

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