

Spain, Italy Called on to Reduce Growing Livestock Antibiotic Use

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EU - Antibiotic consumption in livestock production is increasing drastically in Italy and Spain. From 2013 to 2014, consumption appears to have increased by around 20-25 per cent. This is shown in a new statement from the European Medicines Agency.

"The EU must tackle increasing antibiotic consumption - particularly in South European countries," said the Danish Minister for Environment and Food, Esben Lunde Larsen, following a statement from the European Medicines Agency (EMA) that shows that antibiotic consumption in Italy and Spain has risen by around 20-25 per cent from 2013 to 2014. This has prompted the Danish Minister for Environment and Food, Esben Lunde Larsen, to increase pressure on the EU to take action.

"The fact that the consumption of antibiotics appears to have risen by at least one fifth in Italy and Spain is appalling – this is a step in the wrong direction. Therefore, I will address this issue at a future council meeting in the European Union, so we can discuss and plan how to take action against the increasing antibiotic consumption in South European livestock sheds," said the Minister.

The most recent statement from the EMA shows that in 2014 Danish antibiotic consumption was at 44.2 mg/PCU (production correction unit). In comparison, consumption in Spain was at 418 mg/PCU and consumption in Italy was at 359.9 mg/PCU.

According to the statement, Denmark has lower consumption than the Netherlands, Germany and Poland; countries with which Denmark normally compares its antibiotic consumption.

Danish experience to be made more widespread

National figures show that since 2009 consumption of antibiotics in Danish pig sheds has fallen by more than one fifth. This can be attributed to the fact that in 2010 Denmark was the only EU Member State to introduce a yellow card scheme for pig antibiotic consumption. The scheme means that farmers who overuse antibiotics will receive a warning and be ordered to reduce their antibiotic consumption. Moreover, Denmark has recently decided to introduce a differentiated yellow card scheme focussing on critical and broad spectrum antibiotics in particular. Esben Lunde Larsen expects consumption in Denmark to continue to fall over the next few years.

"Denmark is constantly working on reducing its own consumption and consumption in the rest of Europe. I expect that we will continue to see a downward trajectory in Danish antibiotic consumption without compromising animal welfare. Denmark has successfully reduced its antibiotic consumption, and therefore we have a clear goal to disseminate this Danish experience to other EU Member States. However, we cannot fight resistant bacteria on our own. Concerted European efforts are required," said Esben Lunde Larsen.

When the EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis, visited Denmark in May 2016, Esben Lunde Larsen presented a preliminary Danish contribution to the Commission's expected new action plan for antibiotic resistance. As a follow-up to the Commissioner's visit, the Danish proposal for the action plan was brought before the European Commission on 29 September 2016.

More specifically, Denmark is working to improve antibiotic-consumption monitoring.

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