

Responsible use of antibiotics for dairy animals

Raw milk is tested according to the legislation to ensure food and consumer's safety



The European dairy industry processes milk and dairy ingredients in around 12,000 plants in the EU and partners with around 750,000 farmers, over a different range of territories. The animals giving the milk need our particular care and attention, and healthy cattle – as well as sheep, goats and buffaloes – are [the core to produce safe and high-quality milk](#).

Antimicrobials are necessary in special cases for treating animal diseases and therefore for safe milk – those antibiotics are only used appropriately in the dairy sector. Raw milk is tested on legal basis and more over on possible residues before processing. It will be used for dairy processing only if it is free of residues from antibiotics, according to the regulatory framework.

"In the food production process, resistant germs from livestock farming can be transferred to the processed food, e.g. milk or meat. The germs are killed through heat treatment (boiling, baking, frying, roasting or pasteurising." (BfR, FAQ, 21.01.2016)

Antibiotic residues

Antibiotics have always been of concern for the dairy industry. For many years, procedures have been in place in dairy plants to ensure that milk entering in the dairy processing chain is free of residues from antibiotics:

- Milk always undergoes final inspection before processing. Only if it passes and the milk is deemed to meet the prescribed quality criteria, it can be unloaded and processed.
- If a batch of raw milk contains residues of antibiotics, it will be discarded and disposed in full compliance with the [animal by-product legislation](#).
- It also has to be highlighted that cheeses or fermented products cannot be produced from milk containing antibiotic residues because, technologically, the antibiotic residues inhibit the function of the fermentation cultures.

Antimicrobial resistance

The use of antimicrobials, either in human or veterinary medicine, might result in the development of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and might have an impact on human and animal health.





The dairy industry is fully aware of the importance of limiting the resistance of disease-causing bacteria to antibiotics. Reducing the risk of antibiotic resistance requires "fewer antibiotics" and "better antibiotics", i.e. antibiotics with a specific effect instead of broad-spectrum antibiotics are recommended:

- ***"The focus here should be on measures which keep animals healthy so that treatment with antibiotics does not become necessary in the first place"*** (BfR, FAQ, 21.01.2016). Animal welfare and health are assured by systematic, traceable animal health management with modern measuring methods and regular external monitoring.
- Dairy farmers are encouraged to obtain regular advice from the veterinarian and other specialist professionals. Since healthy cows are essential for the production of high-quality raw milk and the manufacture of safe foods, tests are carried out on an ongoing basis to act quickly in the case of disease. If a cow does get sick, antibiotics may only be administered upon the advice of a veterinarian for reasons of animal welfare.

Some examples of European and International documentation

Prudent use of antimicrobials is a long-term stance of the dairy industry ensuring consumers' and animal's health by monitoring the use (and possible unwanted presence) of residues in raw milk, on a European and global level – here are some links to existing work:

- Combating antimicrobial resistance is a priority for the **European Commission**, which launched in 2011 a 5-year Action Plan against the rising threats from AMR. The measures include the development of "Guidelines for prudent use of antimicrobials in veterinary medicine".
- Further inter-EU agency collaborations have resulted on the **ECDC/EFSA/EMA** first joint report on the integrated analysis of the consumption of antimicrobial agents and occurrence of antimicrobial resistance in bacteria from humans and food-producing animals.
- On a global level, the issue of antimicrobial resistance is addressed by the **WHO** Global Action Plan to Combat Antimicrobial Resistance, prepared in collaboration with FAO and OIE, and the **FAO** Resolution of Antimicrobial Resistance.
- The **International Dairy Federation's** guidelines, [IDF Guide to Prudent use of Antimicrobial Agents in Dairy Production](#), were developed considering both FAO Code of Practice to Minimise and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance (CAC/RCP 61-2005) and Guidelines on Risk Analysis of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance (CAC/GL 77-2011).

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