

To:  
Ms Zanny Minton Beddoes  
Editor in chief  
The Economist

Cc:  
Holly Donahue  
Director, Global Communications  
The Economist

Brussels, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Re: response from farmers and veterinarians to the article "***Many European farmers still give their animals too many antibiotics***" published by The Economist on 2 February 2022

Dear Ms Zanny Minton Beddoes,

On behalf of Copa and Cogeca, representing EU farmers and agri-cooperatives, and of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), we would like to respond and request a correction to the article published in your magazine: ***Many European farmers still give their animals too many antibiotics***, dated February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022.

Communicating correct, science-based information to the general public regarding the use of antimicrobials in animals is part of our responsibility. Antimicrobial resistance is a serious 'One Health' concern in Europe and worldwide and relates to both human and animal health as well as environment. In this regard, it is clear that a 'One Health' approach is important for all health stakeholders in the EU (both for humans and animals) and everyone must play their role in controlling and reducing antimicrobial resistance in Europe.

The chart ***Share of sales used for preventative group treatment*** used in the article combines data from sales of premixes, oral powders and oral solutions. The legend of the chart states that these products are used for prevention of disease in animals. This is factually incorrect: premixes, oral powders and oral solutions are used for treatment when a bacterial disease is diagnosed in a group of animals<sup>1</sup>. Claiming that these veterinary medicinal products are all used for ***preventive*** group treatment is incorrect.

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<sup>1</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> ESVAC report [https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/report/sales-veterinary-antimicrobial-agents-31-european-countries-2019-2020-trends-2010-2020-eleventh\\_en.pdf](https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/report/sales-veterinary-antimicrobial-agents-31-european-countries-2019-2020-trends-2010-2020-eleventh_en.pdf)

Further than this, we note that the **title of the article** is also speculative. Given that there is no data available on all disease incidences in animals across Europe, it is impossible to state categorically that European farmers still give their animals too many antibiotics.

We would want to remind that based on the principles of “prevention is better than cure” and “as little as possible, as much as necessary”, improving animal health by other means rather than treatment is one of the best ways to reduce the need for antibiotic treatment.

Furthermore, prevention is a key measure in order to reduce antibiotic use and tackle antimicrobial resistance, both on the human and on the animal health side.

Farmers and vets, are fully committed to the responsible use of antibiotics in animals. As an example, the combined efforts of all stakeholders have contributed significantly to the 43% reduction in sales of antimicrobials for use in animals in Europe between 2011 and 2020, as reported in the latest ESVAC report.

We would like to thank you in advance for your consideration and prompt correction of the article as appropriate. We remain open to discuss if further clarification may be needed in this regard.

Sincerely,



Nancy De Briyne  
Executive Director, FVE



Pekka Pesonen  
Secretary General, Copa-Cogeca

#### Note to editors

**Copa and Cogeca** are the united voice of 22 million farmers and 22.000 agri-cooperatives in the EU. Together, we ensure that EU agriculture is sustainable, innovative and competitive, while guaranteeing food security for 500 million people throughout Europe.

**Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE)**, representing around 300,000 veterinarians across 39 European countries, aims to enhance animal health, animal welfare, and public health and to protect the environment by promoting the veterinary profession.